

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

Legitimate reasoning is impossible without severe thinking, and thinking is neither an easy nor an amusing employment. The reader, who would follow a close reasoner to the summit and absolute principle of any one important subject, has chosen a Chamois-hunter for his guide. Our guide will, indeed, take us the shortest way, will save us many a wearisome and perilous wandering, and warn us of many a mock road that had formerly led himself to the brink of chasms or precipices, or at best in an idle circle to the spot from whence he started. But he cannot carry us on his shoulders: we must strain our own sinews as he has strained his; and make firm footing on the smooth rock for ourselves, by the blood of toil from our own feet.—COLERIDGE.

Dr. Torrey's Latest.

DR. R. A. TORREY, the Yankee revivalist, keeps at his old game of bragging and skulking. A few weeks ago he produced a "converted infidel," ostensibly of his own manufacture, on the platform of St. James's Hall, Manchester. This converted infidel was called Reade, and Dr. Torrey declared that he had "stood on this very platform with Bradlaugh." Such language could only be taken to mean that Mr. Reade had been a prominent co-worker of Bradlaugh's. Consequently, we felt bound to say that we had lectured on the Freethought platform at Manchester for about thirty years, and that we had never heard of Mr. Reade in connection with the movement there. We also asked *what* "infidel" society Mr. Reade belonged to, *when* he belonged to it, and *what other* member of it could be mentioned as having *known* him to belong to it. These were fair questions in the case of a "converted infidel" paraded upon a public platform; and Dr. Torrey should be glad to answer them, for, if he were himself an honest man, he would be anxious to have the genuineness of the case thoroughly established.

Mr. John A. McCrorie, of Glasgow, wrote to him for information, and enclosed a copy of our paragraphs. And this is Dr. Torrey's reply:—

Greenock, December 15, 1903.

DEAR SIR,

Yours received. As to the extract from the Free Thinker, would say that Mr. Foote has set himself a trap and has caught himself in it. Mr. Henry Musgrave Reade is well-known in Manchester. He was Secretary at one time of one of the infidel societies of that city. I hold in my hand as I dictate this letter his card as a writer on and connected with "The Clarion." His address at that time was 95 Charlotte-street, Hightown, Manchester. Mr. Reade was not converted during my meetings but before I went. Quite a number of his family were converted during our meetings. This method of treating the case of Mr. Reade pursued by the Free Thinker is characteristic of them and I suppose goes down with the majority of their readers, who are not infidels because of intellectual convictions but because they want to be and any sort of assertion will quite satisfy them. There is not much use trying to convince that type of Free Thinker, who is not a Free Thinker but a most enslaved thinker.

Yours sincerely

R. A. TORREY.

Such is Dr. Torrey's reply to a request for *evidence*. He says that Mr. Reade was not converted during his
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meetings. For what reason, then, did he exhibit him on the St. James's Hall platform? He says that Mr. Reade is well-known in Manchester. That may be. But what was wanted was some proof that he was well-known, or known at all, as an "infidel." The most definite statement he can make is that Mr. Reade was "secretary at one time of one of the infidel societies of that city." Secretary at *some* time of *some* society! This is Dr. Torrey's notion of evidence. No wonder he thinks it is useless "trying to convince that type of Freethinker"—the Freethinker who wants facts and proof.

Dr. Torrey refers to the *Clarion* as though it were the organ of "infidel" societies. It never was, and it is not now. It is an organ of the Socialist movement. It has no official connection whatever with the Freethought party. Mr. Blatchford's recent attacks on Christianity are entirely his own. We do not even know that they are endorsed by any other member of the staff. Moreover, those attacks on Christianity have all been published in 1903. Before that the *Clarion* was a Socialist organ pure and simple. We do not know, or care, whether Mr. Reade wrote for it then. That has nothing to do with his being an "infidel."

But even if the *Clarion* had always been—what it is not now—an "infidel" paper—Mr. Reade's association with it would not bring him into contact with Bradlaugh. And for two very good reasons. First, Bradlaugh was not a Socialist, but an opponent of Socialism; secondly, the *Clarion* was not started until Bradlaugh was dead!

Dr. Torrey has not produced a single scrap of evidence in support of his statement that Mr. Reade had "stood" on the St. James's Hall platform "with Bradlaugh." If there were such evidence, it was apparently not in his possession. It looks likely that he just took somebody's word as being as true as gospel—which perhaps it is.

This soul-saver's complaint against the *Freethinker* rests upon two foundations; first, our asking for evidence; second, our ridicule of a story he told about Mr. Reade while that gentleman was an "infidel." The first foundation is an absurdity. We have yet to learn that blind belief in Dr. Torrey's second-hand statements is an intellectual virtue or a moral duty. The second foundation shall now be considered. And perhaps we had better begin by reproducing our "Acid Drop."

"Dr. Torrey introduced this Mr. Reade as something more than an ordinary "infidel." According to the Yankee evangelist's account of him, Mr. Reade not only stood on the platform with Bradlaugh, but stood once on a still more awful spot. He went "into a church-yard and said, 'If there is any God, strike me dead.'" This is what Mr. Reade told Dr. Torrey; this is what Dr. Torrey swallowed; and this is what Dr. Torrey told his audience—who swallowed it too. What we wish to say is just this. If Dr. Torrey really believes Mr. Reade's story, he is a bigger fool than we took him to be. If Mr. Reade believes it, he is on the way to making the acquaintance of the Commissioners in Lunacy. If the audience believed it, there is nothing particular to be said; for everybody knows the sort of audience that *would* be listening to Dr. Torrey."

That is what we wrote, and we let every word of it stand. Dr. Torrey was a fool or something worse to tell such a story in public at this time of day. It was obviously a travesty of the old watch-story which was falsely fathered upon Charles Bradlaugh, as

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well as upon several other leading Freethinkers—for it seems to have a numerous parentage. We may add that if this is the sort of thing which Dr. Torrey employs to “save souls,” he must be a very impudent charlatan to talk about the readers of the *Freethinker* as being devoid of “intellectual convictions.” Why, the *intellect* in such methods of soul-saving is hardly worthy of the brains of a domesticated rabbit. Surely, it might have occurred to anyone with even a modicum of intelligence, that if Mr. Reade was ever such a drivelling idiot as to walk into a churchyard and challenge the celestial thunderbolts, the less said about his conversion to Christianity (or anything else) the better.

Dr. Torrey comes out of this affair very badly. But that will not surprise those who have read our exposure of his infamous lies about Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll.

Mr. Reade, of course, is very small fry after those giants of Freethought. But let us do him justice all the same—although he does little justice to himself.

There is a Mr. Reade, he was once an “infidel,” and he is now a Christian. We first learnt this by a letter from a Manchester Freethinker, Mr. E. H. Jones. Here is an extract from his letter:—

“I have been well acquainted with Mr. Reade for thirty years, we being in the same employ. He was a member of the N. S. S. Pendleton Branch in 1883, I being a member of the same at the time. During my active service in the N. S. S. Manchester Branch, some twelve years ago, he joined for a time. Most of his time has been devoted to Socialistic work.

Mr. Reade himself has also written us, and his letter is printed in full—exhortations and all—in another part of this week’s *Freethinker*. We advise our readers to peruse that letter at once, and then to turn back to the rest of this article.

We will suppose that our readers have finished Mr. Reade’s letter, and are now prepared to listen to what we have to say about it.

First, we have to say that our scepticism was entirely due to Dr. Torrey’s absurd misrepresentation of Mr. Reade’s status as an “infidel.” And what, after all, did our scepticism amount to? It was merely a request for information—which, by the way, always seems “insulting” and “ignoble” to the common Christian mind. Dr. Torrey paraded Mr. Reade at one of his meetings in St. James’s Hall, Manchester; and, to all appearance, as one of his own converts. In a most histrionic way, he called upon Mr. Reade to “stand up.” Mr. Reade did so, and Dr. Torrey introduced him as “a man who has stood on this platform right here with Bradlaugh.” Now the word “stood” was what we stumbled at. It made Mr. Reade a side-by-side colleague of Bradlaugh’s; and, as we had no recollection of any such colleague, we made the following fair and polite comment: “We invite him, or the evangelist who converted him, to say when he stood on the St. James’s Hall platform with Bradlaugh, and to mention some known ‘infidel’ who saw him there.” And we beg to observe that *this* invitation has not been responded to. From what Mr. Reade says, we judge that his “standing up,” even in the same hall with Bradlaugh, was confined to the humbler task of selling periodicals to the audience.

Now if Mr. Reade had been represented in his true light, and if he had not been produced as, apparently, one of Dr. Torrey’s red-hot converts, we should probably have said nothing about the matter. For we are well aware that some “infidels” have gone back to Christianity—although they are insignificant in number compared with those who remain “infidels”—and although they are never (at least in our time) of any particular standing in the Freethought movement.

With regard to the churchyard incident, Mr. Reade calls it “unworthy bluff” on our part to throw doubt upon it. Well, we ventured to think that Mr. Reade, whoever he was, could hardly have been such a hopeless idiot as to go into a churchyard and invite God (in whose existence he had no

belief) to strike him dead by way of demonstration; and, even now, be it observed, he adduces no other evidence than his own bare unsupported word—and that after a lapse of many years. In the circumstances, therefore, we still venture to give him the benefit of the doubt. But if Mr. Reade, while an Atheist, did really go through that foolish performance in Eccles churchyard, it is perfectly clear that he was, intellectually, a person whose room was a good deal better than his company; and that his subsequent return to Christianity was not only quite natural but distinctly desirable.

Here we might let the matter drop. We have been able to prove that Dr. Torrey made an illegitimate use of Mr. Reade, and that Mr. Reade let him do it. We have also proved that Mr. Reade was not the important “infidel” that he was represented to be. But as Mr. Reade sends us a pamphlet of his we will say a word about that. He “challenges” us to “publish it *verbatim*.” We reply that we are not in want of copy; that, if we were, Mr. Reade’s offer is not a valuable one; and that we have no wish to take his publication out of the hands of “The Orphans’ Printing Press, Leominster.”

Mr. Reade represents himself as having been a variable personage. He became a Freethinker, seemingly, in 1882; but for twenty years afterwards he varied his ideals as the “humor took” him. “Now it was Positivism,” he says, “then Egoism, Anarchism, Spiritualism and Socialism.” Lastly, it appears to be Torreyism. His “conversion” took place in 1900; not in Manchester, but in America. Seeing some magnificent scenery, he asked himself whether this was “the result of fortuitous circumstances.” This peculiar question, which shows the philosophical quality of Mr. Reade’s atheism, he could not answer in the affirmative. And what followed? “I was powerless,” he says, “I felt that I was in the presence of God, and I capitulated without a struggle.” Just so. It was the same *philosopher* who challenged God to strike him dead in Eccles churchyard. There was the same *intellect* at work amongst the Lancashire tombstones and the beauties and grandeurs of Western America.

Mr. Reade regrets his “twenty years in the service of the devil.” This is paying himself another compliment. Is he quite sure that the devil ever recognised him as a regular? Whatever else they say of the devil, it is never pretended that he is destitute of intelligence.

We are not surprised to learn that Mr. Reade is “going out to India to preach and spread the Gospel of Christ.” But he may preach it without spreading it. He does not appear to have been the means of converting one “infidel” in Manchester, and he may find it just as hard to convert one *honest* Hindu. Still, we wish him happiness, although we cannot wish him success.

Our last word, however, must be for Dr. Torrey. And it is this. *Let him cease sailing so near the wind.* Otherwise he is sure to capsize. The one converted “infidel” he has *produced* is no convert of his at all. It did not need an American revivalist to convert him. He went over to America himself, and got converted there without human assistance. What the American revivalist has to do is to stop bragging until he is able to produce a single “infidel” of his own conversion. It might be an act of wisdom, too, if he stopped lying about *great* “infidels.” We say nothing about common decency—as we do not want to waste our time. We make our suggestion in the name of common prudence.

G. W. FOOTE.

Herbert Spencer: The Man and His Work.

I.

THE death of Herbert Spencer at the advanced age of eighty-four has removed a colossal figure from the world of European thought. Occurring as it did, after his life’s work had been brought to a successful conclusion, a consummation that many years ago

neither the man himself nor his well-wishers dared to hope for, and with no close family ties, his death calls for but few regrets. What it does evoke is sincere respect and gratitude for the genius that planned so daring a work, and for the industry and unselfishness that carried it out. It is this that will enable the name of Herbert Spencer to live in the minds of successive generations as one of the world's great benefactors; one whose labors cleared the road for all who were to succeed him; a colossal figure standing like some intellectual beacon, showing the road to a safe anchorage for storm-tossed sailors on the sea of thought.

No better rough-and-ready estimate of the value of Spencer's work could be gained than by a brief contrast of the condition of thought at the end of the eighteenth century, with that of a century later. In spite of the many advances of science during the latter portion of the eighteenth century, there had been no serious attempt to co-ordinate the various sciences. With most of them supernaturalism or occultism in some form or other still had a place. The belief in miracle—which is the practical negation of science—was still pretty general. The Bible was the repository to which the majority of the people went for information as to the early history of man and of the world; and natural history provided the theologian with a storehouse of facts wherewith to bewilder and silence the inquiring sceptic. Social phenomena offered numerous examples of God's pleasure or wrath; and geology, with its cataclysmic theories, also furnished evidences of divine power to all who were seeking for additional proofs to bolster up their faith.

The latter portion of the century was to witness a revolution of a kind without precedent in the history of human thought, which involved the complete annihilation of the belief in special creation and all that it implied, and the firm establishment of a completely opposite view of the universe.

Already, in the very dawn of the century, a cloud no bigger than a man's hand (so far as its influence at the time went) appeared in the shape of Lamarck's writings, which was afterwards to develop into proportions terrifying enough to the theologian, but full of promise to all who looked on the acquisition of knowledge as the indispensable instrument for the achievement of progress. Proper appreciation of Lamarck's work was not to come until a number of other discoveries and generalisations had contributed their quota towards a complete system of evolution. Not to mention a number of smaller works, Sir Charles Lyell, in his still fascinating *Principles of Geology*, established beyond all further questioning the fact that geologic laws were uniform and permanent, and destroyed for ever the cataclysms and catastrophies that had served as a lurking-place for theology. Joule and others established the principle of the Conservation of Energy, without which an effective co-ordination of the sciences would be impossible. Dalton, in 1805, propounded the atomic theory, and showed thereby that the speculations of the Greeks on this topic were far more fruitful than the centuries of religious dominance that had intervened. Embryology was established in 1828 by Von Baer; ten years later Schleider and Schwann established the cell theory; while a new area of research was opened by Von Mohl's discovery of protoplasm about the same period. The writings of Comte, about the same time, fitly accentuated these discoveries by applying the conception of natural law to sociology. A magnificent series of advances that were fitly followed by the appearance—almost simultaneously—of Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, a brace of works that between them banished supernaturalism from biology and sociology.

But greater than all these—greater because, in a sense, he contained the essence of all their generalisations—was the subject of the present sketch, Herbert Spencer. Alone of all the workers of the century he has worked out a scientific system of philosophy; a system of evolution that embraces in

its sweep all cosmic phenomena, from cosmic dust to crystal, and from protoplasm to man. In this respect Spencer is without a peer among his contemporaries. To find his equal in range and comprehensiveness one has to go back to Aristotle. His influence upon thought has been enormous; from one point of view, greater abroad than at home. And this influence is the more remarkable because so largely impersonal. He formed no band of chosen disciples; he made no effort to establish a school. He has always been anxious—rather too much so—to protect himself against misunderstanding and unfounded charges, and has often wasted valuable energy in replying to the criticisms of people who were quite unworthy the honour. Yet he has quite effaced himself from his works, and as a result thousands who use his phrases and re-echo his words, do so without the consciousness that they are repeating the words of one of England's most famous thinkers.

How many people, for instance, when they use the phrase "survival of the fittest" think they are quoting Darwin? Yet the expression is Spencer's. Darwin's phrase was "natural selection," which was more teleological, but both have been sadly misunderstood by careless writers and speakers. "Adaptation to environment" is another Spencerian phrase, and so with many others that have become common parlance, not merely with the student, but with the man in the street.

Of Spencer personally little is known, and although his autobiography, shortly to be published, will decide the question, there is probably not much to tell. From what looks like an authoritative sketch, published some years ago, early influences played a large part in moulding his mind towards its final bent. Two influences in the boy's life that made for good were those of his father, a teacher by profession, who held what were then very revolutionary ideas as to the teaching of children, and his uncle, a clergyman of the established Church, but a temperance reformer at a time when total abstinence was denounced by the clergy as Atheistical, and one of the few clerical supporters of the anti-corn-law movement. The gathering of the two brothers and their chosen friends for the discussion of all kinds of advanced subjects, and their encouragement to the boy to follow any subject and any discussion he cared for, was, too, a species of education that must have born good fruit. Nor was the home environment, in other directions, calculated to fix his religious opinions. His father was a regular attendant on Sunday mornings at a Quaker's meeting, his mother equally regular at a Methodist chapel; and as the boy went to both, one can imagine what the result must have been.

After a few years at engineering, spent in surveys and making drawings, marked also, it is worth noting, by the invention of a little instrument for testing the speed of locomotives, Spencer settled down to literary work, became sub-editor of the *Economist* for about five years, and was a frequent contributor to the *Westminster Review*—then in its golden age—during the fifties. To this organ, in 1852, he contributed an essay on "Progress: its Law and Cause," which contained practically the germ of everything that he subsequently wrote; the law of progress developing later into the law of evolution. In the *Westminster*, also, appeared the major part of his work on "Education."

His first book was published in 1851, and entitled *Social Statics; or the Conditions Essential to Human Happiness*. This title is more than usually significant in the light of his later deliverances on the nature and function of governments; for, in the opinion of the present writer, his cardinal fault is that social phenomena have been criticised too much from the standpoint of statics, and not enough from that of dynamics. *Social Statics* is also noticeable for another thing. When Spencer wrote the book, he was still under the influence of theistic ideas, and the reader finds phrases, such as "The Divine Idea" and "The Divine Will," plentifully sprinkled over its earlier pages. One chapter,

indeed, has the specific title "The Divine Idea, and the Conditions of its Realisation." A few years later the folly of such language became apparent to him, and in a note to chapter iv., dated April, 1875, there is the explicit statement that "were I now to rewrite this chapter, the theological implication of the argument would be avoided." Had a similar note by Darwin, as to the use of the word "Creator," accompanied later editions of *The Origin of Species*, much good might have been done.

It was proposed to issue the Synthetic Philosophy in part form to subscribers, but philosophy was at such a low ebb in England that no publisher would undertake the responsibility of its production. Finally, the author himself undertook the expense of publication, with not very promising results. Seven hundred and fifty copies of the one-volume edition of the *Principles of Psychology* were published in 1855, and even this small edition was not exhausted for over twelve years. As a matter of fact each of the publications involved a financial loss. At the end of fifteen years, the author found himself some £1,200 out of pocket. Notices were issued that the work would be dropped, and only the receipt of one or two small legacies enabled Spencer to continue his work. Nine more years passed away, and at the end of that time Spencer found he had been writing for twenty-four years and was, financially, in the position he began. Thus does the great British public recognise its real national heroes. Twenty-four years of struggle! One may well pause to pay a tribute of admiration to the man who had so much faith in his work and its value to the world, as to fight on year after year in the calm conviction that one day the world would recognise the value of his message. There is here a far more inspiring picture of single-minded devotion to an idea, and of self-sacrifice than any that can be furnished by the records of a tawdry religious fanaticism.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

An Impossible Policy.

IT seems to be the conviction of the overwhelming majority of Christians that Secularists, or Freethinkers, are deserving of nothing better than severest denunciation and social ostracism. It is taken for granted by such followers of the Lamb, that unbelievers are of necessity vile people, and should be carefully shunned. But there are a few sane and larger-hearted Christians to be found here and there, who in their best moments are prepared to admit that even Infidels may be, on the whole, fairly honest, virtuous, and conscientious. That is the farthest point to which their Christian charity can stretch. To venture a millionth part of an inch beyond that point would be an act of unpardonable disloyalty to heaven. Infidelity, Atheism, or Secularism is wholly inexcusable, because it is contrary to highest reason and irreconcilable with experience. To dear friends who have been compelled to relinquish Christianity, and betake themselves to a negative platform, they say:—"You who until recently were not only a believer in, but also a public advocate of, the Christian Religion, should, now you have been obliged to renounce it, be *absolutely silent*." Passive, silent unbelief they can endure; but an unbelief that is self-assertive and self-defending they cannot tolerate for a moment. An unbeliever who is willing to hide his unbelief under a bushel, they will receive into their society and treat as if he were a human being, but a preacher of scepticism must be excommunicated from their social circle. There are thousands of Secularists, alas, who do not hesitate to adopt this recommended policy of silence. If they are ambitious enough to aspire to parliamentary honors, they do not publish their agnosticism from the house-tops, but are prudently reticent on the subject. When bigots ask them somewhat awkward questions, they give evasive answers and hasten to the next point. But

is not silence, under such circumstances, cowardly and degrading? Should a man ever be ashamed of the faith that is in him, and refuse to avow it in public? A silent faith cannot even be sincere. He who is ashamed of the position he occupies, and does not defend it against all attacks, is not worthy of it, nor of himself as a member of the human family.

What policy does the Christian Religion urge upon its own professors? Is it a policy of silence? When people are converted to Christ, are they advised not to mention the fact to their neighbors, but to keep it a secret as far as possible? Suppose a dozen earnest disciples of Jesus were to enter a large heathen city, would it be their duty to conceal their discipleship from the pagan community? According to the teaching of the New Testament, it is the first obligation of a Christian to make a public confession of his Lord before the world. He is first and above all a witness for Christ; and he is often assured that unless he is that, he is not and cannot be a Christian. And as a matter of fact, whenever an infidel happens to turn Christian, is not the incident gloried in, with triumphant pride, by the whole Church, and is it not referred to at public assemblies as a signal instance of the irresistible power of the Cross? Does not the popular evangelist publicly give loud thanks to God for such a valuable case of conversion, and in his impassioned addresses, does he not make frequent and jubilant mention of it? Dr. Torrey, the well-known American evangelist, had the opportunity of glorying in such a case at Manchester recently, and it goes without saying that he made full use of his opportunity. It was a Mr. Reade whom Dr. Torrey introduced to a vast congregation as "a man who has stood on this platform right here with Bradlaugh." This Reade was a brand plucked from the burning, and now he stood the second time on the self-same platform a changed man. "See him, all ye people, the man who once stood on this platform, and on this very spot, with Bradlaugh, the Atheist, now stands on it with Dr. Torrey, the Christian Evangelist. The ex-Freethinker is now a living Christian. Hallelujah!" Now, will the Freethinkers of Manchester say to Mr. Reade, if they know him, or have ever heard of him, that they are quite willing to treat him as a friend still, if he will only give them his word of honor that he will never preach the Christian Gospel? Will they thus address him: "We are sorry to lose you; but if you cannot help yourself, be a Christian, only be a totally silent one." Freethinkers believe that whatever a man is in his heart, he ought to express it in speech and action to his neighbors. Let him show his colors without a blush.

On what grounds, then, do some Christians expect converts to Secularism to keep silence before the world? When a minister of religion gives up his faith and quits his pulpit in order to be an honest man, it is evident that he has undergone a radical mental change. It is not without cause that faith dies and becomes a repulsive carcase. Its death is an indication that its possessor has discovered that it never had any right to live at all; and the moment that discovery is made, faith dies a natural death. As soon as he who was but yesterday a preacher of the Gospel of Christ perceived that his religion was nothing but a bundle of superstitions, he said passionately to himself: "Thanks! I am at last a free man, and can contemplate the facts of life with an unbiassed mind. I have succeeded in shaking off the awful weight of supernaturalism which had lain, like a horrible nightmare, on my heart since earliest childhood." Do you imagine that a man who has made such a discovery and experienced such an emancipation can retire into solitude and preserve an everlasting silence, as if nothing of any importance to the world had occurred? That would be the vainest and silliest imagination ever cherished. A fire burns in the bones of such a man, and speak out he must, at any cost. To him now Christians are in

the galling bonds of superstition, and his pity goes out to them as he sees them hugging their very chains with mournful delight. He says: "Only a year ago I was myself in the same debasing bondage, and now I yearn unspeakably to be of some service in effecting their emancipation too." He is a man with a message, just as truly as were the Prophets of old, and woe is to him if he neglects to deliver it. He may lose friends and money, he may be boycotted by all his former supporters, he may be persecuted as a blasphemer and corrupter of youth, he may be pelted with fiery darts from the bow of hatred and malice, but no hostile treatment will ever induce him to withhold his message.

Let us carefully examine this message which Free-thought has to deliver to mankind. What is its essence? It contains, at least, two fundamental propositions, to which the spirit of the age gives heartiest assent. The first may be expressed thus: *That the supernatural is a pure invention made in connection with the vain attempt to explain the various phenomena of the natural.* To anyone who carefully pursues the comparative study of religions, the truth of this proposition is self-evident. The gods are invariably reflections of the people who believe in them. Some gods are distinguished for their beauty, others for their righteousness, others for their blood-thirstiness, and others still for their benevolence and love; but the distinguishing feature of a god can be proved to be, in each case, nothing but an objectified representation of the character of his worshippers. This is specially true of the god of Israel. The Old Testament gives us several portraits of Jehovah, and they are all different and contradictory. Sometimes he is depicted as cruel and revengeful, and as doing things in a fit of temper from which good men would shrink in horror. Sometimes he comes before us committing, ordering, or approving highly immoral actions. Someone boldly speaks of the god of the Old Testament as "the savage idol of a savage tribe." At other times he is represented as both loving and exercising mercy, as forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and yet as doing this without in the least clearing the guilty. Coming over to the New Testament, we shall find the same contradictions repeated, though not on so large a scale. Here we are assured that "God is love"; and yet he is described as sending to the everlasting flames of Gehenna all who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ as the all-sufficient sacrifice for the world's sin. The same observations are applicable to the gods of other religions, such as Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, and Mohammedanism. The truth is that every man paints his own picture of a god, and never fails to paint it in his own image and after his own likeness; and every man regards every picture of a god that differs from his own as false and pernicious.

The existence of all these conflicting portraits of divinity is an indication that divinity itself is a human invention, and possesses no objective reality. If there were a God, he would not contradict himself, nor allow his children to misrepresent him. Science has not succeeded in perceiving any traces of the active presence in nature of any supernatural being. The other day, the Rev. R. J. Campbell made the astounding assertion that "a most remarkable change in the attitude of scientific men towards religion has taken place within the last few years"; and the assertion is all the more surprising when we remember that only two weeks ago, at an interview reported in the *Christian Commonwealth*, Dr. A. Russell Wallace gave a similar assertion the direct lie. He stoutly maintained that in their attitude towards the belief in the existence of a god, Lord Kelvin, Sir Oliver Lodge, and himself stand practically alone among the leading scientific men of the day; and yet, in the face of this, Mr. Campbell has the effrontery to tell us that science is now on the side of religion. Will the minister of the City Temple give us his authority for such an extravagant statement? The only scientists mentioned by him in his remarkable sermon were two of the very three whom Dr. Wallace characterised as standing so sadly alone

in the scientific world of to-day; and the probability is that Dr. Wallace is much more likely to be correct in his estimate than Mr. Campbell.

The second proposition involved in the message of Secularism is *that man's highest duty consists in giving fair play to himself, and that all the individuals who succeed in doing that become, unless heredity and environment are fatally against them, victors in life's stern struggle.* Even religion itself virtually admits the truth of this proposition, for one of its commonest sayings is that "God helps those who help themselves"; which means, if it means anything, that those who need help the most do not get it from on high. If they are not helped by their fellows, they will never be helped at all. Listen to Walt Whitman, the eccentric poet of the New Democracy:—

What do you suppose I would intimate to you in a hundred ways,
But that man or woman is as good as God,
And that there is no God any more divine than yourself?

Well, when a man has found all this out for himself, when he becomes convinced that all religions are but interesting relics of the infancy of the race, would he be true to himself were he to remain silent? Is not a grim necessity laid upon him to denounce the awful superstition in which so many are so firmly wrapped, and to proclaim the truth that humanity is fully capable of working out its own salvation without the intervention of any supernatural beings or forces whatever? To be silent would be cowardice, and cowardice is only another name for death.

JOHN LLOYD.

Correspondence.

THE MANCHESTER "CONVERTED INFIDEL."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—Not now being a reader of the *Freethinker*, I have had my attention drawn to some remarks you have made about myself in that journal of December 13.

As the President of the National Secular Society, whose motto is, "We seek for Truth," it would have been more consistent with such a profession if you had sought for the truth of Dr. Torrey's statement as quoted from the *Christian Herald* before rushing into print.

As I am the person alluded to, *H. M. Reade*, you will perhaps allow me to explain a little.

1. I am not a convert of Dr. Torrey, and he does not claim me as such. I was converted by God in the year 1900 without the aid of any man. I enclose you a printed account of my conversion, written by myself, which I ask you to have the courage to publish in the *Freethinker* as an evidence that there is at least one individual who was a publicly confessed Atheist for twenty years, but is now a Christian by the grace of God. I challenge you to publish it *verbatim*.

2. I was a public infidel. I joined the N.S.S. about 1882, and have still my certificate of membership signed by Charles Bradlaugh. In 1883-4 I was the Secretary of the Pendleton Branch of the N.S.S. (a suburb of Manchester) and have letters from Mr. Bradlaugh to me in my official position, and it was in this position that I stood on the platform with Charles Bradlaugh. I have also lectured and spoken against Christianity in various surrounding towns of Lancashire and Cheshire. When the Pendleton Branch collapsed I joined the Manchester Secular Society of the N.S.S., and was a member of the Committee, also on one year was elected as auditor of the Society.

It is not supposed that you are acquainted with all the active members of the N.S.S., but if you had taken the trouble to enquire at the Manchester Branch they would have enlightened you; I would refer you to George Payne (President), A. Hemmingway (Secretary), J. H. Watts (bookseller) (at whose stall I have sold thousands of copies of the *Freethinker* at the big meetings), E. H. Jones, J. F. Ball, George Smart, Wm. Horrocks, and thirty others who will corroborate my statements.

The question of the truthfulness of my going into a churchyard and asking "if there be a God to strike me dead" is also denied by you with the same want of fairness. How can you possibly know whether this is true or not, without making any enquiries? It is simply bluff on your part and unworthy of a disciple of the Truth. *I unhesitatingly state that it is true*; the wisdom or folly of it is another matter. I was an atheist then, and some of my friends doubted whether there could be such a creature as

an atheist, and as we were passing through Eccles church-yard at the time I uttered this exclamation aloud in their presence. I told Dr. Torrey of this incidentally in a conversation, and he, trusting to my truthfulness, gave it publicity. You have therefore no right to doubt the truth without making enquiries first.

As to the genuineness of my conversion I simply refer you to my fellow-citizens in Manchester. I am still alive amongst them, although I am shortly going out to India to preach and spread the Gospel of Christ. I do not, however, wish to create any bitterness of feeling amongst my late Secularist friends; my 20 years amongst them has shewn me that many of them are sincere seekers after the truth, and I have no doubt that God, in His infinite love and mercy, will give them the true Light if they are willing to surrender their will to Him as I did.

On the other hand I trust that the Secularists will treat those who have honestly left their ranks and taken Christ as their Savior in the same charitable manner. No cause will ever ultimately triumph that resorts to such ignoble means.

HENRY MUSGRAVE READE.

[Mr. Reade's letter is dealt with in our article on "Dr. Torrey's Latest." We have only to say here that, even on his own showing, it is a gross abuse of language to say that he "stood on the platform with Charles Bradlaugh." He was never so important as that, or we should have heard of him before. We might add that he imitates Dr. Torrey in railing at us for "not making enquiries." We did make enquiries, publicly, through the *Freethinker*; and the result is the pricking of Dr. Torrey's bubble. For this Revivalist has absolutely nothing to do with Mr. Reade's "conversion."—EDITOR.]

Acid Drops.

It was pointed out in last week's *Freethinker* that Christmas is altogether a "heathen" festival, although now bearing a Christian designation. This fact has since been noted by the *Daily News*, which, however, changes "altogether" into "mainly." Our contemporary bewails a fresh fact, namely, that "there are not wanting signs on every hand [we thought there were only two hands] that Christmas is in great danger of reverting, as a festive anniversary, to the original paganism from which it has developed." The very Christmas cards are "rapidly becoming as devoid of all Christian significance as the obsolete valentines." One explanation of this is that "the trade in Christmas cards has largely fallen into the hands of Jews." But this is a farcical explanation. A handful of Jews could not change the Christmas customs of the English people. What the *Daily News* notices as a "sign" really marks a decline in the hold of Christianity upon this nation. Yes, the "only true faith" is perishing, by sure, if slow, degrees.

A case recently made public is a curious specimen of our boasted civilisation—after nearly two thousand years of Christianity. A poor trousers-finisher worked sixteen hours a day, and managed to earn a shilling. It was at the rate of three farthings an hour. Perhaps a pair of the trousers she stitched, stitched, stitched, at this rate, adorned the nether limbs and bulky middle of some "round fat oily man of God." What is it the old book says? "For ye are all his children." What a roaring farce!

Rockfeller, the pious Yankee millionaire, whose son teaches in a Sunday-school, has just given 1,850,000 dollars to Chicago University. This makes his total donations to the University amount to 13,600,000 dollars. This gentleman's money is chiefly made out of low-flash oils, which are responsible for hundreds of deaths every year.

Put the two together: the pious Yankee oil-merchant rolling in wealth, and the poor trousers-finisher stitching her fingers off for a shilling a day of sixteen hours—and you have a fair measure of Christian civilisation.

How amusing it is, from one point of view—and how tragic, from another—to read a certain Vatican report after pondering the above facts. The Pope received his Cardinals in the Throne Room on December 23, and gave them his Christmas greetings. Of course he made a speech. God's representatives are always at that game. And in the course of his remarks he referred to "the Lord who came to save everybody, rich and poor, although he preferred to hide his glory in a stable at Bethlehem." He also referred to "the manger at Bethlehem" which, he said, was "a school in which Christians received the lessons of a truly Christian life, and in which every class of society was given an example of goodness and patience, whence sprang concord and peace." There you are! That is the same old humbug

which has bamboozled and exploited a suffering world for all those centuries! Christian concord and peace: with Rockfeller at one end of lay society and the trousers-finisher at the other!

The Queen has sent a gift of £50 to the funds of the Church Army. This announcement has a paragraph all to itself in the daily papers. But where does General Booth's army come in? Both organisations are profoundly "loyal" in the sense that they help to plaster over social ulcers and keep the body politic and social on the good old lines.

Alfred F. Wood, a refreshment bar assistant, was charged at Bow-street with attempting to commit suicide; in other words, with not finishing the job—for if he had finished it he could not have been arrested. Inspector Haines's eagle eye detected his felonious intent and dogged his footsteps. When he tried to mount the parapet, muttering, "I must do it to-night," the possessor of the eagle eye collared him and prevented further mischief. At the police-station the would-be suicide produced a letter addressed to a young woman, bidding her good-bye for ever. It was the girl of his heart. She was a clerk in a big West-end establishment, and belonged to the Salvation Army. She had saved a little money, and he had put by £30, and they were going to marry and live together happily ever afterwards. But the shadow of the Salvation Army fell between them. The Salvation lasses persuaded her to break off the engagement in order to devote all her spare time to the work of the Lord, as understood by William Booth and his underlings. This broke poor Alfred Wood's heart (*pro tem.*) and drove him to desperation. "It was a lover and his lass, Heigho, heigho!"

Professor J. H. Moulton, of Didsbury College, gave the second of the series of lectures on "Is Christianity True?" in the Central Hall, Manchester. His theme was "How God prepared for Christianity." His object was evidently to ward off the attack that is based upon evolution as seen in the study of comparative religion, and we dare say his line of argument was ingenious enough—for the audience he was addressing. The old style of dealing with the curious likeness between Christianity and the "heathen" religions was very simple. It was alleged that the Devil was God's ape, and that in opposition to the true religion he started a dozen counterfeits. This was an excellent theory, as far as it went. But it did not go far enough. For it was presently discovered that the "counterfeits" were really older than the original—which was too odd for anything. Another theory had to be started, therefore, and it was this. The Devil aped God by anticipation. He got wind of God's designs and worked them out before him. But even this theory was eventually seen to be too derogatory to God and too flattering to the Devil. So we have now another theory in the field. God evolved the idea of himself in the human mind as he evolved everything else. This is what Professor Moulton sets forth. God gave his highest revelation to the Jews, because they were the fittest to receive it. But he planted witnesses of himself everywhere. When he wanted to "give the blessing of intellect, science, and literature" to the world, he gave it through the people of Athens. When he wanted to teach men the "blessings of law and government" he did it through the Romans. We suppose it should be added that when God wanted to teach men about oxygen he picked out Priestley, that when he wanted to teach the antiquity of the earth he picked out Lyell, that when he wanted to teach the true origin of species he picked out Darwin, that when he wanted to reveal the secret of wireless telegraphy he picked out Marconi, that when he wanted to give a fillip to international yacht-racing he picked out Lipton, and that when he wanted to develop the pill-trade he picked out Carter and Beecham.

But let us follow Professor Moulton's special argument about the Jews. They were the recipients of God's highest revelation in the ancient world. And that was God's special preparation for Christianity. Well, let us ask, what is the special feature of Christianity? According to Professor Moulton, it is the revelation of a future life. But that revelation was not made to the Jews, and it was made (if there was any revelation in the matter) to the Egyptians thousands of years before the Jews were ever heard of. It seems to us, therefore, that there is something wrong about Professor Moulton's argument. We fancy it is rather calculated for the "groundlings" than for the "judicious."

There was something very appropriate in Mr. Maskelyne's famous entertainment being carried on in the Egyptian Hall. According to the Bible, the magicians of Egypt were dappers at their business. They were able to turn walking-sticks into snakes, and water into blood; though they shrank

from turning dust into lice, and left the monopoly of that dirty trick to Moses and Aaron. Yes, the Egyptian Hall was a good place for Mr. Maskelyne. It appears, however, that increasing business has compelled him to find larger premises; and that he has taken a long lease of St. George's Hall, Langham-place, where he will give a most elaborate show, the like of which has never been seen in London, or probably elsewhere. Even the famous brothers, Moses and Aaron, might drop in there and learn a thing or two.

The air of impartiality that the average parson puts on when praising Jesus is quite amusing. He is placed in the pulpit for the purpose of praising Jesus; his salary is paid him for the work precisely as one would engage a lawyer to plead in a court; if he did *not* praise Jesus he would be called upon to resign or be dismissed; and yet he delivers his eulogies of Jesus with the air of one whose thought and speech are quite unfettered, and is forced to the position he holds by sheer weight of evidence.

Mr. Campbell, of the City Temple, is quite an adept at this kind of posturing. Preaching the other day on "Jesus and the Christ," he said that he could almost "number on his fingers the outstanding figures of all history, religious, political, literary, leaders and masters of thought; but amongst them Jesus Christ stands peerless and alone." On which we only remark that Mr. Campbell's knowledge of the world's leaders must be remarkably limited, or he must be blessed with an astonishing number of fingers. Mr. Campbell then goes on to say that he "never had any sympathy" with those who tried to "account for Him on purely human lines, and place Him in purely human categories"; at which we are *not* surprised. To expect otherwise would be to expect him to sympathise with those who are destroying his profession. The astonishing thing is that this kind of thing should be said as though it were the result of a power of thinking quite out of the ordinary.

Then Mr. Campbell went on to say that his reverence for Jesus is shared by everybody worth talking about. Even "the most uncompromising Secularist" would refrain from saying anything disrespectful of Jesus, because he would feel that Jesus "compels his reverence." We have no doubt that this method of hawking an imaginary Secularist about among religious audiences is very telling; but if Mr. Campbell were built on different lines, or really knew anything about "uncompromising" Secularism, he would realise what nonsense he is talking. "Disrespectful" is a somewhat vague word; but from the religious point of view the Secularist would have many unflattering things to say about the Gospel Jesus. In the first place, he would express a very strong doubt whether any such person ever really existed. And even if this were admitted, he would go on to point out that a patchwork character of inconsistencies and extravagancies such as the Gospel Jesus, is very far from commanding "veneration" of any thoroughgoing Secularist. But Christians say this kind of thing so often that, in the end, they really believe it.

One of the quotations that have done yeoman service in this connection is John Stuart Mill's famous eulogy of Jesus. This was used the other day by Mr. J. Lewis Paton, Master of the Manchester Grammar School. He gave the quotation in this form: "John Stuart Mill told us from his Chair of Moral Philosophy that if we wished to live a perfect life we must so act that every action would commend itself to Jesus of Nazareth." One would imagine that Mill taught this from a post which he held in one of the Universities. He, of course, did nothing of the kind. It occurs in the concluding pages of his Three Essays. And Mill did not say it as Mr. Paton gives it. He did not say that we could not live a perfect life unless we had the sanction of Jesus. Unjustifiable as Mill's eulogy was, it was not so stupid as that. And one can hardly help thinking that the alteration in the wording of Mill's "excessive panegyric," to quote John Morley, is not quite so accidental as it appears at first sight.

There was an advertisement in the *Church Times* the other day, offering a comfortable home in a good house to a girl of fifteen, willing to learn housework. The wages were to be "one shilling per week pocket money and clothes." Of course "clothes" might mean anything, and probably did not mean much. But the paucity of wages was atoned for by the offer of "Church privileges." What a delicious blending of religion and economy!

The newspapers report that Mr. John Burns, M.P., and Mr. Will Crooks, M.P., have been engaged—we beg pardon, secured—for the annual gathering of the National Free Church Council, which is to be held at Newcastle early in March. We do not believe that Mr. Crooks has much super-

fluous religion about him, and we are sure that Mr. Burns has not. Consequently we are at a loss to know what their object is in attending a religious assembly. Have they come to the conclusion that Nonconformity and the Liberal party are identical? If they have, they will sooner or later realise one of two things; either that they have made a grievous mistake, or that the Liberal party is doomed to utter failure. Perhaps they are to express sympathy with the Free Churches in the present Education struggle. But this is merely to throw themselves on the side of one religious faction against another. And such a policy is utterly unworthy of them. We earnestly hope, even for their own sakes, that they will reconsider the matter, and find a way out of this unfortunate engagement.

Passive Resisters crowded Highgate Police-court the other day. Adjourned summonses were heard against 115 of them, and distress warrants were issued for the amounts which remained unpaid. The defendants included the Rev. Silas Hocking and the Rev. Dr. Rowland. They appear to have swarmed around "a large new banner" bearing the following words:—

RESISTANCE GAVE US—

Magna Charta;
Habeas Corpus Act;
Abolition of Religious Tests;
A Constitutional Monarchy;
Liberty of the Press, etc.

AND RESISTANCE WILL GIVE US—

Freedom of Our Schools from Priestcraft and Tyranny.

One would think that all these "Resistances" were carried on by Nonconformists. But history and chronology are against them. Magna Charta preceded their very existence by centuries. They had nothing particular to do with the Habeas Corpus Act. They did help to achieve the Abolition of Religious Tests—but only for their *own* interests, in order that *they* might get into the Universities and elsewhere. Lots of them fought for Religious Tests when Bradlaugh tried to take his seat in the House of Commons. They helped, like other citizens, to establish a Constitutional Monarchy; no less, and no more. They helped a little to win Liberty of the Press, but not a tithe as much as the Freethinkers who went to prison for it year after year, and decade after decade, until the victory was won. Even now they are not trying to turn priestcraft out of the schools. They want to turn out Church priestcraft, but they want to keep Chapel priestcraft in.

Herbert Spencer has shown how commonly ill-considered actions produce the diametrically opposite effects from those they are intended to produce, and it looks as if the new craze for reporting sermons, instead of puffing the pulpit, will abolish it. We are now, among the producing classes, aghast at the incredible utterances of a Romanish "Canon"—who is as much a "Canon" in English as Mr. Booth is a "General"—upon the working man. But his sermon is nothing new; it is only that such talk is reported in the secular press that is new. That tissue of insults on productive labor is the common property of all Romanist priests. As long back as thirty years ago almost the same sermon was preached in London by a mendicant friar, who had only recently returned from a tour of the world, begging to build a priory here.

But he came in contact with a most unlooked-for quantity. The men received his abuse in silence—but the old women did not. One elderly terror constituted herself a deputation, and called on the prior and *ordered* him officially to stop his young priests speaking on social or political matters, "*for the women had resolved they would not permit it.*" She was efficient. The very next Sunday the prior himself preached at the High Mass, and retracted every word his subordinate had said.

It is to be hoped that this incident will open the eyes of self-respecting Romanists to the emasculation into which they have collectively fallen. The tone and style, and the matter also, used by priests—especially Jesuits—when addressing poor congregations, is domineering and insulting to a most extravagant degree, most so when giving missions. It is possible to hear a young man, looking hardly thirty, speak to some hundreds of elderly people in the style of the manageress of a railway hotel admonishing a doorstep-cleaner just fresh from the workhouse-school.

The Pope is going to show his appreciation of the way France is treating the religious orders by at length admitting Joan of Arc to the number of persons to be regarded as in heaven. Her beatification is to take place on January 6. Certainly, "If a man strike thee on the right cheek turn to him the left"; but when one sees it done by a priest one is alarmed, and asks, Why?

It is not easy to follow the politics of the Papacy, but the Popes have done a good deal of suppressing and breaking up religious orders themselves. France has always been their sword ready to attack Italy, Germany, or England at pleasure; and it is possible the priests conceive it would be wise to swallow the expulsion of the defiant "religious" rather than face disestablishment, and a final rupture, with the Power they have hitherto regarded as their man-at-arms.

The worst point about this beatification is its open pandering to the bloodthirsty side of the French character which is still thirsting for "revenge" on Germany. When a little later the pompous "canonisation" takes place it will not fail to be made a political demonstration against Germany throughout the whole of France. However, the spectacle of a burnt witch becoming a saint of the church that killed her for sorcery is unique; but it is a good religious start for the twentieth century.

Who next? Why not canonise Rienzi? Why not admit the divine mission of John of Leyden? They were inspired revolutionaries and were murdered by the Roman Church. Savonarola also ought not to be left out; surely he is as useful a candidate for canonisation as Joan of Arc, or Guy Fawkes, who it is said is also on the upward road. James II. and Mary Stuart of all people have been seriously considered for canonisation; but whether because Mary wore a wig while her head was cut off, and James lost his crown by opposing the Pope's advice, or for what reason, they appear to have dropped out of sight.

Christians are getting on. Their progress is very slow, but it is sure. Even the Dean of Westminster objects to the "damnation clause"—stop, stop! we mean "damnation clauses"—of the Athanasian Creed. He says that Christians do not feel quite as sure as they did fourteen hundred years ago that those who differ from them will be certainly damned. Fancy taking fourteen hundred years to reach so much uncertainty on such a point! Still, they are getting on—and there is consolation in that. When we see Christians progressing, however slowly, we feel that there is a good hope for all the rest of the world.

Rev. Charles Beeby, of Birmingham, who has been hounded out of the Church of England by the Bishop of Worcester, loses his residence and £300 a year, but says that he will not trouble his late Bishop any more, and will not seek another ministerial appointment. He wishes for peace, and we hope he will get it, with a decent income, in some other calling.

There was a strongly humanitarian passage in the *Hibbert Journal* article by Mr. Beeby which particularly upset Bishop Gore—who has himself upset many other Churchmen. The passage dealt with the miraculous, and ran as follows: "If God can work miracles and does not: if He merely gives a specimen of what He can do if He would, and all through the ages of suffering humanity He does it not, but does quite differently, such an imagination, so far from enlarging our idea of God and our conception of Him as an object of worship, makes him morally a Being whom it is impossible for moral man to worship."

Rev. the Hon. Leonard Tyrwhitt, vicar of Fenton, has started a crusade against immorality in the Potteries. It appears that of 29,232 births in Hanley, Burslem, Stoke, Fenton, and Longton, from 1897 to 1901, no less than 1,503 were illegitimate; the proportion of illegitimate births for those towns being 51 per 1,000, as against 40 per 1,000 for the whole of England and Wales. Mr. Tyrwhitt is reported as saying that "the Devil was stalking abroad in the factory life of the district." Does he mean that this personage is directly responsible for the production of those 1,503 bastard children? If so, he (the Devil) is evidently not a Malthusian.

Mr. Tyrwhitt has our sympathy, but we are not foolish enough to hope for his success. Crusades against immorality have never been very prosperous. Causes produce their inevitable effects. What is really wanted is a change of industrial conditions. Preaching would then be unnecessary. At present it is useless.

The next publication of the Psychological Research Society will be awaited with the deepest interest by the many who seek for rational proofs of the faith that is in them. The late Mr. Frederic Myers left a solemn promise that he would communicate with his widow after his death, if he could. As yet Mrs. Piper, the famous medium of Boston, has been unable to get any message, but Sir Oliver Lodge believes that certain specimens of automatic writing lately produced under the society's auspices are a communication from Mr.

Myers. If any new truth or idea has been reached we shall all rejoice, for the sting has not yet been taken out of Huxley's remark that the unconscionable drivellur purporting to be produced by discarnate spirits "furnishes an additional argument against suicide."—*Daily Chronicle*.

Cranks resort to shooting nowadays on the slightest provocation. The Jewish student who attempted to assassinate Dr. Max Nordau seems to have resented a difference of opinion. According to his theory, it deserves death to differ from him. Dr. Max Nordau has one view of the re-established Zion which is to come—and may never arrive. M. Cain Felix Louban has another view. Hence those bullets.

Pious Emperor William has recovered his voice, and the first announcement he makes is that the Prussians rescued the English army from destruction at Waterloo. Yet one of this Emperor William's subjects has just been sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment for speaking disrespectfully of him. What a German joke!

Christmas is the time when Christians indulge in unlimited gush about "Peace on earth, good will to men." Yet at Christmas, 1903, the world came near to seeing the outbreak of a war between Russia and Japan. Should this threatened war occur, it will be entirely owing to the unscrupulous greed of Russia. Yet we all know that Russia is a Christian country, that the Czar is a very pious gentleman, and that it was he who summoned the Hague Convention. Even the *Daily News* has lost faith in both Russia and the Czar. Let it also be noted that Japan—the heathen nation—is practically forced into self defensive action by a Christian Power; moreover, that Japan has shown the example of moderation and patience.

Mr. A. G. Hales, the *Daily News* war correspondent, sees at last that Holy Russia has only a selfish interest in the fate of the Christians in European Turkey. He admits that the Muscovite does not really care whether Christian villages are given up to the Bashi-Bazouks. What he now perceives clearly enough is "a great plan of robbery that Austria and Russia have mapped out even whilst the Christian world has been trusting them to protect a people that savages are butchering."

Holy Russia is so fond of practising the moral precepts that she recommends to the Sultan every now and then—when it suits her interest—that there is actually a danger of fresh outrages against the Jews at Kischineff. Lord Rothschild, the Chief Rabbi, and other leaders of the Jewish community in London, were so impressed by the danger of such an outbreak that they attended a meeting on Christmas Eve to consider the question. They decided that the situation was grave enough to warrant their approaching Lord Laundowne with a view to his placing a prompt representation before the Russian Government.

We have just come across a fine specimen of the mental garbage which Catholic speakers deal out to the faithful. There is a long report in the *Irish News* of a lecture by Mr. John M'Kean, M.P., at the Clones Catholic Club, with the Very Rev. Canon L. J. O'Neill in the chair. The member for South Monahan might have discoursed urbanely and impartially on the subject of "Reading," but he preferred to show himself a true son of the Great Lying Church. "Woe," he said, "to the purveyors and disseminators as to the writers of bad books. How did Zola die? Of asphyxiation. How did Voltaire die? Eating his own excrements under his bed." Now it is difficult to tell whether Mr. M'Kean intended to convey the idea that Zola committed suicide, or that his accidental death was really a divine judgment. In other words, it is difficult to tell whether Mr. M'Kean was playing the part of a suggestive liar or a blasphemous bigot. Zola certainly did die of asphyxiation, owing to an obstruction in the chimney of his bedroom, in consequence of which the smoke crept out and stifled him—and nearly stifled Madame Zola. But, if this was a judgment, what about Jesus Christ? He did not die a natural death, either. With regard to Voltaire, we have simply to say that there is not a shadow of truth in Mr. M'Kean's statements. He is not only a liar, but a very dirty liar; unless he trusted to the report of some other dirty liar, and retailed it because it was filthy enough to satisfy his own Christian idea of what was the proper thing to say about a great "infidel."

A PARADOX.—Whenever we hear that a man has gone abroad in order to be baptised in the River Jordan, we wonder how he ever had enough sense to accumulate the money for the trip.—*Epworth Herald*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

January 31, Manchester; February 7, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.
- W. BINDON.—It is not necessary that the various writers in the *Freethinker* should always agree on every point. Nor is it desirable. We believe it is not even possible. Still, if you read our "Acid Drop" and Mr. Cohen's article over again, you will probably see that there is no contradiction between them. What the article asserts is simply this, that the idea of a Supreme Being does not explain the mystery of the universe, and that existence *per se* is an insoluble problem—with which we cordially concur. What our paragraph asserted in addition was that it was metaphysical lunacy to ask "Why does anything exist at all?" after admitting that the question could never be answered—for that is what "insoluble" means. Does not the very word "why" involve an attempt to get behind the existence we know; that is, to explain it by another existence; which, in turn, would have to be explained by another existence still; and so on *ad infinitum*? And if this is what "why" really means, we repeat that it is metaphysical lunacy.
- E. E. KELLY.—Of course it was David who was the man after God's own heart. Probably the writer you refer to had in mind the text that God loved Jacob—which he could not have done if Jacob was not a man after his Godship's own heart.
- W. MILNE.—Had you sent it twenty-four hours earlier, the Glasgow paragraph would have appeared in our last issue as well as the present.
- SCOTT (Leeds).—Thanks for your letter. We don't think there is any serious division of opinion on the subject. You may rely upon it that we shall not allow the undertaking to be treated as a dead letter. For the rest, we shall steadily adhere to our old policy of avoiding entanglements and controversies with other Freethought journals.
- M. E. PEGG.—Very much pleased to hear of Mr. Lloyd's successful visit to Manchester. Some silly people talk of our "jealousy." Whenever did we refrain from introducing and supporting, as far as possible, a really capable and worthy advocate? The more capable and worthy they are the better. What we dread is the presence of weaklings and adventurers.
- W. STUCLIFFE.—We are obliged for the cuttings.
- F. S.—Many thanks for your useful cuttings.
- P. WARNER.—The journal you refer to has always repudiated Secularism.
- W. P. BALL.—We thank you for continuing to supply us with a weekly batch of cuttings.
- W. H. SMITH.—Pleased to hear that to you the *Freethinker* is "an institution."
- G. GIBSON.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks for the paper.
- THE COHEN PRESENTATION FUND.—W. H. Smith 2s. 6d., B. £1, W. Mumby £2 2s., J. Preston 2s. 6d., F. Hermann 10s. 6d., A. M. C. 2s. 6d., W. H. Spivey 2s. 6d., J. E. T. 10s., P. Rowland 10s., Three Smarts 3s., E. Potter 1s. Per H. Huhn: W. Martin 1s., M. Conway 1s., H. Huhn 1s.
- OWING to the holiday season, and the postal and other delays in consequence, several items stand over perforce till next week.
- A. TABBE.—The blunder was corrected the following week. We gave the Richard Jefferies motto to the printer all right, but he had a Lord Chatham piece to set up for another column, and he put "Lord Chatham" to both. We always take our mottoes from the originals.
- F. HERMANN.—We will write you on the subject. Your very early subscription to the New Year's Fund is held over, with some others, until next week, when the first list of acknowledgments will appear.
- C. E. GOUGH.—(1) It seems so difficult as to be almost impossible for Christians to be accurate concerning Freethinkers. John Stuart Mill never filled a "chair of moral philosophy," to begin with; and he never uttered the words ascribed to him by Mr. J. L. Paton in a Christian Evidence lecture at Manchester: that is to say, he never declared that "if we wished to live a perfect life we must so act that every action would commend itself to Jesus of Nazareth." (2) The Ingersoll-Beecher story you refer to is a mere invention. It was denied by both parties. But we suppose it will live while it serves the turn, although it is extremely silly; for, as Ingersoll pointed out, it implies that every Christian is a cripple.
- N. D.—Thanks for your encouraging letter. You will see that the *Pioneer* is not to be dropped at present; and you will, therefore, be able to continue circulating your twenty-five copies a month.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—Thanks. We have written Mr. Holland.
- F. SMITH.—Your very prompt subscription will be acknowledged next week. We are writing you on the other matters you refer to.
- R. DANIEL.—In our next. Thanks.
- ABRACADABRA.—We thank you for your new year's good wishes—which we cordially reciprocate. Your suggestion had already occurred to us. It is part of our project to advertise the *Freethinker* weekly in nearly all the papers you mention.
- MATHEMATICUS.—Your friend's verse is not without merit, but the imagery is rather confused. We think he will do much better in time with care and practice.

A. M. C.—See next week's list.

H. W.—It is not our work to answer questions that the *Christian Herald* puts to Mr. Blatchford—unless he asks us to do so. We dare say he is capable of defending himself.

W. H. SPIVEY.—You wish you could be at the Annual Dinner on January 12, and we wish we could see you there.

W. H. NASH.—Too late for the present number; in our next.

H. A. UNDERDOWN.—We have handed your order and remittance to Miss Vance. Pleased to have such a cheerful letter from a veteran.

FIRST BLOOD, C. SHEPHERD, and J. PRESTON.—Next week.

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

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

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

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

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

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.

The New Year's Gift to Freethought.

LAST week's *Freethinker* contained a long statement of my appeal to the readers of this paper for a New Year's Gift to Freethought. I do not wish to burden this week's number by repeating the whole of what I wrote. Readers who missed last week's number, owing to the holidays, or any other cause, are requested to obtain it, and to read the full text of my appeal.

Let it suffice to say now that I invite all the readers of this journal to send me, during the month of January—and the sooner, of course, the better—at least one shilling, and as many more shillings as they can afford.

If all respond as they should and could, we shall see a liberal Subscription before January closes.

I propose to pay over one half of the total Subscription to the National Secular Society's Executive; and I hope the amount will enable it to do some good and effective work during the rest of the present winter.

I propose to devote the other half of the total Subscription to promoting the circulation of the *Freethinker*, partly by advertising, and partly by other means, which will appear in due course.

Freethinkers have never quite realised their duty in regard to supporting their literary organs. This really ought to be the very *first* duty with them. They only know the value of their papers when they lose them. Not that there is any present danger of their losing the *Freethinker*; only they might recollect that there is a burden to be borne, if this journal is to be properly maintained, and resolve to take their share of it.

Paragraphs will be found in "Sugar Plums" relating to certain Freethought papers published in America and in the Colonies. Some are in grave difficulties, and others are appealing for early assistance. My appeal is, therefore, not phenomenal. The truth is, that efforts on behalf of Freethought cannot count on quite the same support as is readily forthcoming for orthodox efforts. The same motives cannot be appealed to. We cannot work upon the

hope of heaven and the fear of hell; nor upon the desire of social advantage and the instinct of "respectability." Those who give to Freethought have nothing to gain, and often something to lose. All the more honor, then, to those who do give. And may their number increase.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

London Freethinkers should make a strong rally at the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on January 12. The chair will be occupied by Mr. G. W. Foote; during the evening the Presentation will be made to Mr. C. Cohen; and amongst those who are to speak briefly to the few Toasts is Mr. John Lloyd, ex-Presbyterian minister—our latest valuable recruit to the Freethought platform. In addition to the good dinner there will be some good music, vocal and instrumental. The price of the ticket (4s.) is simply the Restaurant's charge for the repast. All the rest of the entertainment is thrown in "free, gratis, for nothing." It should be added that the tickets can be obtained from Miss Vance (secretary) at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C., or from any London Branch secretary.

Should any provincial Freethinkers be "in town" just then we hope they will attend this Annual Dinner, and introduce themselves, and receive what they are sure to get—a most cordial welcome.

We received a report of Mr. John Lloyd's visit to Manchester too late for last week's *Freethinker*, which went to press unusually early. It appears that he had a very hearty reception and won golden opinions. The large evening audience gave him quite an ovation at the close of his lecture, which was declared to have been a brilliant intellectual treat.

Mr. John Morley was sixty-five on December 24. The *Daily News* took the opportunity to speak of him as "a man guided wholly by the highest principle." "We hope," it said, "he may live long to maintain in political life that exalted spirit which he, of all living statesmen, knows best how to call forth." The object of this eulogy is a Freethinker.

The Glasgow N.S.S. Branch holds its Annual Conversazione in the Ramshorn Hall, 122, Ingram-street, next Thursday evening (Jan. 7). The function commences at 7.30. Tickets (4s. 6d. double) can be obtained from Messrs. J. F. Turnbull, Strathearn, Milne (41 Braeside-street), and Baxter (news-agent, Trongate). We hope there will be a large and successful gathering.

We have not received the *Liberator* (Melbourne) for a long while. Nor have we received any reply yet to our enquiry as to its fate. We earnestly hope it has not gone under at last; although such a calamity would not surprise us; for we know what a terrible struggle Mr. Symes has had in upholding his editorial flag all through those many years. Whenever our gallant old friend and colleague has to say, "Finis!" he will be able to add "All is lost save honor." Destiny cannot rob him of his brave honest heart.

Mr. Charles C. Moore, editor of the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, Kentucky, is one of the men who have been to prison for their opinions. We dare say it will be said that he expressed them distastefully; but whenever a man sent to prison for expressing his opinions distastefully unless the opinions themselves were distasteful? Which shows the humbug of the objection. Yes, Mr. Moore has been to prison for his opinions; we repeat, for his *opinions*; and we strongly hope he will be able to tide his paper over the present period of adversity. The last number to hand states that for some time the loss on the *Blade* has averaged twenty-five dollars a week (about five pounds); and Mr. Hughes, the publisher, announces that he is worn out and must retire from the enterprise—if only in order to do justice to his dependent family. Mr. Moore has no money to help him with; in fact, he says, "I have not a single dollar in the world." He supports himself by farming, and the farm (happily) belongs to his wife. He is sixty-six years of age, and in "phenomenally good health" considering. Mr. Moore says it is too late for his friends to make any promises;

nothing will keep the *Blade* going but their money. We sincerely hope for the best.

The *Boston Investigator*, the oldest Freethought paper in America, is also appealing for pecuniary support. Some of Editor Washburn's words on the subject are worth reproducing, as they furnish a broad hint for some Freethinkers on this side of the Atlantic:

"Is Freethought necessarily a starvation business? It is true that our lecturers were obliged to quit the platform because they could not make a living at lecturing, and it is equally true that the editors of our Freethought papers have done, and are doing, more work for less money than our Italian laborers get for digging trenches in our streets.

"We hold that there are Freethinkers enough in this country to have a well-paid lecturer in every city in the United States and in half of the towns. Why, then, do we have so few Freethought meetings?

"Does it make a man mean to get rid of his Christian superstition and get intellectual freedom? We are not willing to say that superstition and generosity make a better span than liberty and meanness, but we do not see, and cannot understand, why a free mind and a generous hand do not go together.

"Men who are preaching, and paying for preaching, the Christian superstition are putting shackles on the human brain. Men who are working, and paying those who work, to kill this superstition are trying to save the human brain from ecclesiastical slavery. Now we would like to know if the highest and most necessary work of the world is not worth paying for as much as a work which is doing injury to the race and undermining the noblest government on this earth? *If religious liberty is slain in this land political liberty will be buried in the same grave.*"

It has been decided to continue the *Pioneer* at least for the remainder of the present winter. This will give it a full opportunity of justifying its existence. Winter is the business season for periodicals, and the *Pioneer* has not had a complete winter yet. Having been first published in January, 1903, it has had one winter in two instalments; which is not the same thing as a continuous winter. The first 1904 number has a good list of contents, and we hope the friends of this little publication will do their best to "pass it along" amongst their friends and acquaintances, and thus let it have as good a chance as possible.

We invite the attention of Freethinkers in all parts of the United Kingdom—indeed, of all parts of the world which this journal reaches—to the *Secular Annual* for 1904. A full list of its contents will be found in our advertisement pages. In addition to the official items relating to Freethought organisations at home and abroad, there are special articles written for this number of the *Annual* by Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. John Lloyd, Mr. F. J. Gould, "Chilperic," "Abracadabra," and Miss Mary Lovell. We venture to say it is a very good sixpennyworth, and we hope it will have a satisfactory circulation. The *Annual* belongs to, and is issued by, the Executive of the National Secular Society; a fact which should stimulate any sluggish intending purchasers. The Society will have to bear any loss; on the other hand, the Society will receive any profit.

Respecting the whereabouts of Thomas Paine's bones, a correspondent writes, in reply to Mr. W. W. Bartlett's letter which appeared lately in the *Freethinker*: "It is to be regretted that at this period, ninety-five years after Paine's death, the veil of secrecy should be drawn over any incident bearing upon the relics of this great Englishman. Moncure Conway investigated many clues in connection with the preparation of Paine's *Life* (Putnam's, New York, 2 vols.), which I beg that your correspondent should read. A parson assured Truelove, of Holborn, that he possessed the skull; but, when confronted, the reverend gentleman declined to talk. No doubt Dr. Conway would be glad to hear, in confidence, of any further clue your correspondent may be permitted to supply."

"If the remains are ever found," continues the writer, "America should seem to be the fitting soil for their final interment. That would produce a remarkable coincidence in the treatment meted out respectively to the discoverer of America and the founder of its independence; for Columbus, dying in Spain, was made to take another voyage across the Atlantic, in order that he might be buried in his beloved Isle of St. Domingo (Hayti). Spain losing the colony, the remains were transferred to Cuba and preserved in the Cathedral of Havana. An element of poesy entered into the conclusion of Hispania's Empire of the West, in that the defeat of the *Christoval Colon* by Admiral Sampson's flotilla gave back to Spain all that was left of the navigator whose landfall on Watling Island made the Sampsons, the Deweys, and the McKinleys possible."

The Religious Belief of Abraham Lincoln.

BY THE LATE COLONEL INGERSOLL.

MY DEAR MR. SEIP: I have carefully read your article on the religious belief of Abraham Lincoln, and in accordance with your request I will not only give you my opinion of the evidence upon which you rely, as set out in your article, but my belief as to the religious opinions of Mr. Lincoln, and the facts on which my belief rests.

You speak of a controversy between myself and General Collis upon this subject. A few years ago I delivered a lecture on Mr. Lincoln, in this city, and in that lecture said that Lincoln, so far as his religious opinions were concerned, substantially agreed with Franklin, Jefferson, Paine, and Voltaire. Thereupon General Collis wrote me a note contradicting what I had said, and asserting that "Lincoln invoked the power of Almighty God, not the Deist God, but the God whom he worshiped under the forms of the Christian Church of which he was a member." To this I replied saying that Voltaire and Paine both believed in God, and that Lincoln was never a member of any Christian Church.

General Collis wrote another letter to which, I think, I made no reply, for the reason that the General had demonstrated that he knew nothing whatever on the subject. It was evident that he had never read the life of Lincoln, because if he had he would not have said that he was a member of a Church. It was also evident that he knew nothing about the religious opinions of Franklin, Voltaire, or Paine, or he would have known that they were believers in the existence of a Supreme Being. It did not seem to me that his letter was worthy of a reply.

Now, as to your article: I find in what you have written very little that is new. I do not remember ever to have seen anything about the statement of the daughter of the Rev. Mr. Gurley in regard to Lincoln's letters. The daughter, however, does not pretend to know the contents of the letters, and says that they were destroyed by fire; consequently these letters, so far as this question is concerned, are of no possible importance. The only thing in your article tending to show that Lincoln was a Christian is the following: "I think I can say with sincerity that I hope I am a Christian. I had lived until my Willie died without fully realising these things. That blow overwhelmed me. It showed me my weakness as I had never felt it before, and I think I can safely say that I know something of a change of heart, and I will further add that it has been my intention for some time, at a suitable opportunity, to make a public religious profession."

Now, if you had given the name of the person to whom this was said, and if that person had told you that Lincoln did utter these words, then the evidence would have been good; but you are forced to say that this was said to an eminent Christian lady. You do not give this lady's name. I take it for granted that her name is unknown, and that the name of the person to whom she told the story is also unknown, and that the name of the man who gave the story to the world is unknown. This falsehood, according to your own showing, is an orphan, a lonely lie without father or mother. Such testimony cannot be accepted. It is not even good hearsay.

In the next point you make, you also bring forward the remarks claimed to have been made by Mr. Lincoln when some colored people of Baltimore presented him with a Bible. You say that he said that the Bible was God's best gift to man, and but for the Bible we could not know right from wrong. It is impossible that Lincoln should have uttered these words. He certainly would not have said to some colored people that the book that instituted human slavery was God's best gift to man; neither could he have said that but for this book we could not know right from wrong. If he said these things he was temporarily insane. Mr. Lincoln was familiar with

the lives of Socrates, Epictetus, Zeno, Confucius, Zoroaster, and Buddha, not one of whom ever heard of the Bible. Certainly these men knew right from wrong. In my judgment they would compare favorably with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and the Jews that crucified Christ. These pretended remarks must be thrown away; they could have been uttered only by an ignorant and thoughtless zealot, not by a sensible, thoughtful man. Neither can we rely on any new evidence given by the Rev. Mr. Gurley. If Mr. Gurley at any time claimed that Lincoln was a Christian, such claim was born of an afterthought. Mr. Gurley preached a funeral sermon over the body of Lincoln at the White House, and in that sermon he did not claim that Mr. Lincoln was in any sense a Christian. He said nothing about Christ. So, the testimony of the Rev. Mr. Sunderland amounts to nothing. Lincoln did not tell him that he was a Christian or that he believed in Christ. Not one of the ministers that claim that Lincoln was a Christian, not one, testifies that Lincoln so said in his hearing. So, the lives that have been written of Lincoln by Holland and Arnold are of no possible authority. Holland knew nothing about Lincoln; he relied on gossip, and was exceedingly anxious to make Lincoln a Christian so that his life would sell. As a matter of fact, Mr. Arnold knew little of Lincoln, and knew no more of his religious opinions than he seems to have known about the opinions of Washington.

I find also in your article a claim that Lincoln said to somebody that under certain conditions, that is to say, if a Church had the Golden Rule for its creed, he would join that Church; but you do not give the name of the friend to whom Lincoln made this declaration. Still, if he made it, it does not tend to show that he was a Christian. A Church founded on the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you," would not in any sense be a Christian Church. It would be an ethical society. The testimony of Mr. Bateman has been changed by himself, he having admitted that it was colored, that it was not properly reported; so the night walking scene given by James E. Murdoch, does not even tend to show that Lincoln was a Christian. According to Mr. Murdoch he was praying to the God of Solomon, and he never mentioned the name of Christ. I think, however, Mr. Murdoch's story is too theatrical, and my own opinion is that it was a waking dream. I think Lincoln was a man of too much sense, too much tact, to have said anything to God about Solomon. Lincoln knew that what God did for Solomon ended in failure, and if he wanted God to do something for him (Lincoln) he would not have called attention to the other case. So Bishop Simpson, in his oration or funeral sermon, said nothing about Lincoln's having been a Christian.

Now, what is the testimony that you present that Lincoln was a Christian?

First, Several of your witnesses say that he believed in God.

Second, Some say that he believed in the efficacy of prayer.

Third, Some say that he was a believer in Providence.

Fourth, An unknown person says that he said to another unknown person that he was a Christian.

Fifth, You also claim that he said the Bible was the best gift of God to man, and that without it we could not have known right from wrong.

The anonymous testimony has to be thrown away, so nothing is left except the remarks claimed to have been made when the Bible was presented by the colored people, and these remarks destroy themselves. It is absolutely impossible that Lincoln could have uttered the words attributed to him on that occasion. I know of no one who heard the words, I know of no witness who says he heard them or that he knows anybody who did. These remarks were not even heard by an "eminent Christian lady," and we are driven to say that if Lincoln was a Christian he took great pains to keep it a secret.

I believe that I am familiar with the material facts

bearing upon the religious belief of Mr. Lincoln, and that I know what he thought of orthodox Christianity. I was somewhat acquainted with him and well acquainted with many of his associates and friends, and I am familiar with Mr. Lincoln's public utterances. Orthodox Christians have the habit of claiming all great men, all men who have held important positions, men of reputation, men of wealth. As soon as the funeral is over clergymen begin to relate imaginary conversations with the deceased, and in a very little while the great man is changed to a Christian—possibly to a saint.

All this happened in Mr. Lincoln's case. Many pious falsehoods were told, conversations were manufactured, and suddenly the Church claimed that the great President was an orthodox Christian. The truth is that Lincoln in his religious views agreed with Franklin, Jefferson, and Voltaire. He did not believe in the inspiration of the Bible or the divinity of Christ or the scheme of salvation and he utterly repudiated the dogma of eternal pain.

In making up my mind as to what Mr. Lincoln really believed, I do not take into consideration the evidence of unnamed persons or the contents of anonymous letters; I take the testimony of those who knew and loved him, of those to whom he opened his heart and to whom he spoke in the freedom of perfect confidence.

Mr. Herndon was his friend and partner for many years. I knew Mr. Herndon well. I know that Lincoln never had a better, warmer, truer friend. Herndon was an honest, thoughtful, able, studious man, respected by all who knew him. He was as natural and sincere as Lincoln himself. On several occasions Mr. Herndon told me what Lincoln believed and what he rejected in the realm of religion. He told me again and again that Mr. Lincoln did not believe in the inspiration of the Bible, the divinity of Christ, or in the existence of a personal God. There was no possible reason for Mr. Herndon to make a mistake or to color the facts.

Justice David Davis was a life-long friend and associate of Mr. Lincoln, and Judge Davis knew Lincoln's religious opinions and knew Lincoln as well as anybody did. Judge Davis told me that Lincoln was a Freethinker, that he denied the inspiration of the Bible, the divinity of Christ, and all miracles. Davis also told me that he had talked with Lincoln on these subjects hundreds of times.

I was well acquainted with Col. Ward H. Lamon and had many conversations with him about Mr. Lincoln's religious belief, before and after he wrote his life of Lincoln. He told me that he had told the exact truth in his life of Lincoln, that Lincoln never did believe in the Bible, or in the divinity of Christ, or in the dogma of eternal pain; that Lincoln was a Freethinker.

For many years I was well acquainted with the Hon. Jesse W. Fell, one of Lincoln's warmest friends. Mr. Fell often came to my house, and we had many talks about the religious belief of Mr. Lincoln. Mr. Fell told me that Lincoln did not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, and that he denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. Mr. Fell was very liberal in his own ideas, a great admirer of Theodore Parker, and a perfectly sincere and honorable man.

For several years I was well acquainted with William G. Green, who was a clerk with Lincoln at New Salem in the early days, and who admired and loved Lincoln with all his heart. Green told me that Lincoln was always an Infidel, and that he had heard him argue against the Bible hundreds of times. Mr. Green knew Lincoln, and knew him well, up to the time of Lincoln's death.

The Hon. James Tuttle of Illinois was a great friend of Lincoln, and he is, if living, a friend of mine, and I am a friend of his. He knew Lincoln well for many years, and he told me again and again that Lincoln was an Infidel. Mr. Tuttle is a Freethinker himself and has always enjoyed the respect of his neighbors. A man with purer motives does not live.

So I place great reliance on the testimony of Col.

John G. Nicolay. Six weeks after Mr. Lincoln's death Colonel Nicolay said that he did not in any way change his religious ideas, opinions, or belief from the time he left Springfield until the day of his death.

In addition to all said by the persons I have mentioned, Mrs. Lincoln said that her husband *was not a Christian*. There are many other witnesses upon this question whose testimony can be found in a book entitled *Abraham Lincoln, was he a Christian?* written by John E. Remsburg, and published in 1893. In that book will be found all the evidence on both sides. Mr. Remsburg states the case with great clearness, and demonstrates that Lincoln was not a Christian.

Now, what is a Christian?

First. He is a believer in the existence of God, the Creator and Governor of the Universe.

Second. He believes in the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments.

Third. He believes in the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, that the Holy Ghost was his father.

Fourth. He believes that this Christ was offered as a sacrifice for the sins of men, that he was crucified, dead and buried, that he arose from the dead and that he ascended into heaven.

Fifth. He believes in the "fall of man," in the scheme of redemption through the atonement.

Sixth. He believes in salvation by faith, that the few are to be eternally happy, and that the many are to be eternally damned.

Seventh. He believes in the Trinity, in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Now, is there the slightest evidence to show that Lincoln believed in the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments?

Has anybody said that he was heard to say that he so believed?

Does anybody testify that Lincoln believed in the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, that the Holy Ghost was the father or that Christ was or is God?

Has anybody testified that Lincoln believed that Christ was raised from the dead?

Did anyone ever hear him say that he believed in the ascension of Jesus Christ? Did anyone ever hear him assert that he believed in the forgiveness of sins, or in salvation by faith, or that belief was a virtue and investigation a crime?

Where, then, is the evidence that he was a Christian?

There is another reason for thinking that Lincoln never became a Christian.

All will admit that he was an honest man, that he discharged all obligations perceived and did what he believed to be his duty. If he had become a Christian it was his duty publicly to say so. He was President, he had the ear of the nation; every citizen, had he spoken, would have listened. It was his duty to make a clear, explicit statement of his conversion, and it was his duty to join some orthodox Church, and he should have given his reasons. He should have endeavored to reach the heart and brain of the Republic. It was unmanly for him to keep his "second birth" a secret and sneak into heaven leaving his old friends to travel the road to hell.

Great pains have been taken to show that Mr. Lincoln believed in and worshiped the one true God. This by many is held to have been his greatest virtue, the foundation of his character, and yet, the God he worshiped, the God to whom he prayed, allowed him to be assassinated.

Is it possible that God will not protect his friends?

Mankind is greater than a man, and never dies;—the experience of the past lives in the present. The light that shone at Nineveh, Egypt, Judea, Athens, Rome, shines no more from those points; it is everywhere. Can Truth de cease, and a good idea once made real ever perish? Mankind, moving solemnly on its appointed road, from age to age, passes by its imperfect teachers, guided by their light, blessed by their toil, and sprinkled by their blood.—*Theodore Parker.*

Obituary.

We profoundly regret to hear of the death of Mr. Edwin Bater, a veteran Freethinker, a member of the N. S. S. Executive, and a Director of the Secular Society, Limited. Mr. Bater was knocked down by a cab in front of Euston Station on Christmas Eve. He was taken to the Royal Free Hospital, where he was found to be dead; and the sad news had to be conveyed to his wife, who was expecting him home to supper after doing some Christmas shopping. Mr. Bater was seventy years of age, and his memory as a Freethinker went back to the early days of Charles Bradlaugh. He was a hard worker for Freethought, and he would have done anything for the N. S. S. President. His was a heart of gold. A better Freethinker, or a better man, never existed.

A Secular School.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I beg to thank you for inserting my previous letter re the proposed school where children may receive a sound practical education imparted solely on a secular and scientific basis.

It is proposed that the premises be near London, yet in the country, where the scholars will live and learn under the most natural conditions practicable.

The fees will be such as will just cover the cost of living, etc., in order that I may induce parents to give me an opportunity to prove what I intend doing for their children's welfare, physically and mentally.

I shall be pleased to personally interview any parents, and also to send a copy of the prospectus to those who apply to the office of the *Freethinker*.

W. A. VAUGHAN.

Social science affirms that woman's place in society marks the level of civilisation. From its twilight in Greece, through the Italian worship of the Virgin, the dreams of chivalry, the justice of the civil law, and the equality of French society, we trace her gradual recognition, while our common law, as Lord Brougham confessed, was, with relation to woman, the opprobrium of the age of Christianity. For forty years earnest men and women, working noiselessly, have washed away the opprobrium, the statute books of thirty states have been re-modeled, and woman stands to-day almost face to face with her last claim—the ballot. It has been a weary and thankless, though successful, struggle. But if there be any refuge from that ghastly curse, the vice of great cities, before which social science stands palsied and dumb, it is in this more equal recognition of women.—*Wendell Phillips, in 1881.*

Riddles of the Universe Answered While You Wait!

“ Oh solve me the riddle of life.....
What is the meaning of man?
Whence comes he? Whither goes he?
—Heine (*James Thomson's Translations*).

LIFE.

The dream of a drunken God
Asleep on a whirling star;
Extravagant fancies assaulting his rest,
Blurred, and confused, and at war.

MAN.

In this vision of restless sleep
For a space a figure man makes:
The fugitive thought of a fevered brain,—
What price when the dreamer awakes?

FRED. L. GREIG.

Life—give me life until the end.
That at the very top of being,
The battle-spirit shouting in my blood,
Out of the reddest hell of the fight
I may be snatched and flung
Into the everlasting lull,
The immortal, incommunicable dream.

—W. E. Henley.

Christ bears his own sins, not another's. How can his righteousness be “imputed” to me? Goodness out of me is not mine; helps me no more than another's food feeds, or his sleep refreshes me. Adam's sin,—it was Adam's affair, not mine.—*Theodore Parker.*

Gaieties.

HIS CONSCIENCE DID IT.

Not long since, a respectable colored preacher, who was noted for his ability to “cuss out” people from the pulpit, was hurling thunderbolts of invective against his congregation, because of a great wave of lying and stealing that was sweeping over the city. Among other things, he said: “No longer 'n las' night, someone come in an' stole de las' two chickens dat me an' mah ol' 'oman had. I b'lieves de thief is in dis house right now, and I hereby countersigns him to everlastin' punishment. De nigger dat stole dem chickens is a-gwint' burn fur it sho. you hyeah me! De 'cree has gone forth!” Next morning a colored man with two fine hens came up to the preacher's door. He said, “Parson, hyeah's yo' chickens.” “No, sah,” said the preacher, eyeing the chickens closely, “dese ain't mah chickens.” “I knows dey ain't perzackly yo' own,” explained the parishioner, “but dese is to take de place of yo' own. Yo' chickens was et up 'fo' de 'cree went fo'th. An' las' night, aftah I went to bed, my consunche hurt me so tell I had to get up and go ovah to Marse Bob's house an' git two mo' chickens. Parson, do tek dese chickens, an', fer de Lawd's sake, tek dat 'cree back, too.”

A preacher, it is said, was once speaking of heaven's joys, and said: “There'll be no sermons in heaven,” and the audience was quiet. “There'll be no prayer-meetings in heaven,” and the audience still kept silence. “There'll be no collections in heaven.” “Hallelujah!” broke in one lean, miserable-looking fellow.

“How is the work propressing in Dakota?” asked a Boston beetle of a good brother who lives in Dakota, at the Baptist anniversary, the other day. “Well, I'm getting along pretty well, but still it's rather discouraging,” replied the Dakota man, with an air of despondency. “Isn't there any religion out there? Can't you awaken it? Or won't they come to church?” “No, it isn't that. The first week I went there I had big congregations. One day there were one hundred and fifty down on their knees weeping and praying. A man came in and said there were two detectives coming down the road, and every blessed person got up and skipped.”

Conversion of Billy Smith.

TOLD BY HIMSELF ON THE BOWERY 'MID SALVATION HYMNS.

THE Ark of Salvation chose the humble stage of Miner's Theatre as its resting place yesterday. Its crew was sixty strong, and they delivered themselves of twenty-three songs set to the music of popular airs from “The Good Old Summer Time” to “Hiawatha.”

The three-score Salvationists are beignled by Commander Booth-Tucker on a nine-day crusade of the Bowery. The most notable among them were “Billy” Smith, ex-feather-weight pugilist, and his wife. Billy is slim, good-looking, and pugilistically developed. He told a story yesterday about a former friend who poured a lamp of burning oil over his wife and is now in prison for it.

“I'd ha' been like dat, meself,” confessed the feather-weight Salvationist, “if me wife hadn't got typhoid and promised de Lord dat if she ever got well she'd join de Salvation Army. One night her an' me passed the meeting place of Corps 16. ‘Come along, Billy,’ ses she. ‘Me in dere?’ says I. ‘Not fer mine. Not fer a t'ousand.’ Honest,” interpolated Billy, taking the audience into his confidence, “I t'ought dey was all a lot o' grafters.”

Officer Spitz here took advantage of a shout from the 900 Boweryites assembled to start up “Hiawatha” to this effect:—

I remember well the day
When I did stray
Far away.

“If de Lord tolt me t' go down among yous an' t'row out de biggest man dere, I'd do it,” concluded Billy, before sitting down.

Sister Osborn gave thanks that on Miner's stage “artificial things have given place to real things,” and Commander Booth-Tucker then began to tell how “Mayor Noah braved the scoffs of the weather bureau and the threats of the lunacy commission in building his ark.”

“And if you don't all get into the ark right now, you'll be drowned just like those scoffers were. Thirty-two millions of you are now swept into eternity every year,” he concluded.

Two women and thirteen men clinbel into the “mercy seat,” after varying amounts of urging.

—*Secular Thought.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, *Conversazione*.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, G. Spiller, "Herbert Spencer as Man and Thinker."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Harrold Johnson, "The Ethics of Awe."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Miss Vallance, "Market Place and Hearth."

WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Harringay): 6.15 to 9, Social Evening.

COUNTRY.

LEEDS (Covered Market, Vicar's Croft): 11, Ernest Pack, "Peculiar Sects"; Woodhouse Moor: 3, "Christian Infidels"; Town Hall Square: 7, "By their Fruits —."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 3, "Voltaire"; 7, "The Holy Bible and the Higher Criticism."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, G. Berrisford, "Christ and Christmas."

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