

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

Wilt thou have revealed to thee as in a picture the secret of the universe? Then gaze at a dark circle drawn on a blank sheet. And as in its orbit the end joins the beginning, so is the end one with the beginning throughout the universe. In the eternal cycle everything ceaselessly strives towards its commencement, and every beginning yearns to be where the end joins it. Therefore dream not that the universe has arisen out of nothing, nor that the worlds will collapse into nothingness. For whatever is born has been in existence from eternity, and not the tiniest speck of dust ever loses itself in the arms of death. Thou thyself art but a minute portion of the boundless Eternity, and art but for a brief spell bound up within Time and Space. Therefore quarrel no longer, ye fools, as to whether you are immortal spirits, for no power of death can break the imperishable chain of things; whatever is and lives moves in an eternal circle, and wherever it struggles towards annihilation it but fans the flames of new life. Immortal is the tiniest worm; immortal also is the mind of man, which each fresh storm of death drags into ever new roads to life. Thus, dead, thou livest in future generations, and this eternal use changes nought but Time and Space.—BUCHNER.

The Redeemer and the Redemption.

“Le Rédempteur est venu; mais la Rédemption, quand viendra-t-elle?”—LOUIS BLANC.

WALKING swiftly along a street in the very heart of London—our vast superb metropolis, with its splendors and squalors, its exaltations and abasements—my attention was suddenly aroused by the murmur of an approaching crowd, which for some inexplicable reason I instantly resolved, much against my general wont, to await. Ordinarily my dislike of crowds is intense; almost always they are composed of foolish, idle people, whom the merest trifle will attract and amuse: but now a sudden impulse mastered the strong habit, and imperiously bade me stay and observe. As the crowd neared, and while it passed, I perceived in its midst what may frequently be seen in London, a policeman, with stern implacable face, and rigid grasp, hurrying along a woman to a station-house hard by. She was horribly dirty and ragged, and with uncovered head, so that her features could be distinctly discerned. And such features they were! So marked by all manner of vice, so brutalised by incessant experience of evil, so utterly void of any trace of womanly softness, that one recognised her instantly as a social pariah, an outcast from her kind, doomed to perpetual war with the human family of which she must once have been a member, if only when she nestled, a baby, in cradle or at breast. Society had worsted her in the strife; she was

seized and secured. Her face was distorted by an agony of appealing fear; and her eyes were suffused with tears, that fell not, because of the hot anguish which dried them as they gathered. Speedily crowd, captive, and captor passed from sight; but that woman's face, with its brutality and pain, had furnished food for infinite thought, which, if fitly expressed, would make a sermon more eloquent and powerful than ever yet was preached from the pulpit of church or cathedral.

With whom rested the responsibility of that woman's sin? With her? No; with society itself; for, as Quetelet profoundly observes, “it is society that prepares crime, and the guilty are only the instruments by which it is executed.” Vice and insanity are similar in kind, and differ only in degree; the phenomena of both are alike consequences of definite conditions of animal tissues, which in turn are the result of definite pre-conditions of organisation and environment. The unfortunate offspring of vicious parents, whose evil propensities are doomed to the aggravation of a corrupt training, are no more responsible than the saintliest of their fellows for the fearful legacy bequeathed to them by their parents, and its subsequent increments of depravity. Instead of pharisaically congratulating ourselves on being holier than these sinners, and showing our superlative virtue by visiting them with what we foolishly deem condign punishment, and then pursuing our way wrapped in the mantle of complacent pride, we should sternly ask ourselves whether we are not, after all, guiltier than they, seeing that we have perversely striven against a light of knowledge and a grace of truth denied to them. O good and pure, but thoughtless soul, why art thou so angry with thy brother, and thy sister, for their trespasses? When fate assigns to thee serene purity of mind and nobleness of act, and to them inward turpitude and outward baseness, canst thou not reflect a moment on the disproportion of your destinies, and cast an eye of pity on those less fortunate than thou? And thou, base-souled, selfish hypocrite, whose pride is but the cloak of secret shame, and who perpetually criest, Am I my brother's keeper? hear thou the words of one who knew that thy sanctimonious egotism is the natural balance and sustainer of the positive wickedness of murder and theft and lust: “Prisons are built with stones of law, brothels with bricks of religion.”

Self-love, self-righteousness, self-salvation are at the root of all these human ills, and *they* are inten-

sified instead of mitigated by orthodox Christianity, whose idea is not the highest certain welfare of all here, but the equivocal dubious welfare of some hereafter. And against them all the prodigal charity of benevolence is futile, because it deals never with their causes but only with their effects. That religion which has had every available appliance of human improvement for fifteen centuries at its absolute command, has proved itself utterly incapable of effecting that improvement, because its method is radically false. The Redeemer has come, Christianity has exclaimed through ages of time; and yet we must ask to-day, But when will come the Redemption?

Balzac, in his wonderful "Peau de Chagrin," speaks of "that human malady which we call civilisation." And much of our vaunted civilisation is, indeed, a human malady; but mainly because the material progress of modern times has been by implication antagonistic to certain fundamentals of the popular faith. A nobler spiritual faith, in perfect accordance with material fact, is necessary to subdue the monstrous evils with which society is infested; a faith that shall gladly embrace every truth of science, which is man's conscience instead of his conceit, face to face with the laws of nature; that shall recognise that there is but one ultimate science, the science of humanity, which comprises and consummates all others; and proclaim that the supreme problem of the immediate future is how to lift the masses from their slough of ignorance and degradation.

G. W. FOOTE.

Herbert Spencer: The Man and His Work.

V.

IN logical order, the next section of Spencer's work to be outlined should be the *Principles of Sociology*, which should include the *Principles of Ethics*. But as in order of time the *Data of Ethics*, as a section of the *Principles of Ethics*, appeared first, there are certain reasons for taking this first.

There is a pathetic interest in the publication of the *Data of Ethics*. Always more or less weakly, he began to have, about 1878, grave doubts as to whether he would ever live to complete the work he had mapped out. Had he been a "saint" of the Christian church he would doubtless have foresworn earthly labors and prepared his soul for the next world. Being a Freethinker he thought more of this world than of any other, and more of his duty to his fellows than of his obligations to deity. Hence he explains in the preface to the *Data*, published in 1879, that as "My ultimate purpose, lying behind all proximate purposes, has been that of finding for the principles of right and wrong in conduct at large, a scientific basis," he was unwilling that so extensive a preparation should remain without some fulfilment of the final purpose, hence the appearance of the book some thirteen years before it would otherwise have seen light.

Mr. Spencer's treatment of ethics raises the important question of whether it ought to be treated in any other sense than a transitory science; but discussion of this point may be deferred until an outline is given of his statement of the subject.

The *Principles of Ethics* cover as wide a range of subjects as the title permits—much wider than many writers give it, and if it has no other effect upon a reader, the immense variety of examples quoted, from both civilised and uncivilised races, will certainly impress one with the difference between conduct that owes its morality to those conditions of

life that are general, and may therefore be called intrinsic, and conduct that is called moral, or the reverse, owing to certain local conventionalities. One can only refer to the wealth of these illustrations in passing; all that is essential to an understanding of evolutionary ethics can be gained from an outline of the *Data of Ethics*, which forms the first part of the *Principles of Ethics*.

In the preface to the *Data of Ethics* Spencer refers to the "great mischief" done by "the repellent aspect habitually given to moral rule by its expositors." The complaint is well grounded, Ethics has been surrounded by so much useless transcendentalism, so much vague talk of the sublimity and complexity of the subject, the moral sense has been labelled so frequently as a faculty that defied analysis and explanation, that people have come to treat it as something quite different in kind to any of the other sciences. Yet morality is as *natural* as anything else; its beginnings are amenable to the ordinary rules of investigation. Complex it certainly is, for the reason that it presupposes an acquaintance with biology, psychology, and sociology, for its proper understanding. And this basis is provided in the work under discussion.

There are at least three questions involved in every discussion on ethics. What do we mean by morality? What is the moral standard? How do we come by a moral sense? For the first question, it is obvious that, while morality deals with actions, all action does not come under the heading of morality. Nor is morality coextensive with conduct, which is defined as an adjustment of acts to ends. The only conduct on which morality passes judgment is that which is *consciously* adapted to ends. And this gives the further step of providing us with a definition of good and bad conduct. Conduct will be good (in the sense of being effective) that is well adapted to gain the end in view, and bad when it is ill adapted to achieve such an end. But here everything depends upon the end. Our definition would not exclude the legitimacy of such an expression as "a good murder" or "a good burglary," although it would be quite out of place to refer to either as moral. Here the end has to be determined by a study of the evolution of life, which points to two things—first, the preservation of the individual; second, the preservation of the species; both involving, as evolution proceeds, the development of all those feelings that permit of and accompany the associated state. From all this there emerges a conclusion that is best stated in Spencer's own words:—

"Evolution.....tending ever towards self-preservation, reaches its limit when individual life is the greatest, both in length and breadth.....[But] along with increasing power of maintaining individual lifethere goes increasing power of perpetuating the species by fostering progeny, and in this direction evolution reaches its limit when the needful number of young preserved to maturity, are then fit for a life that is complete in fulness and duration.....lastly, the establishment of an associated state both makes possible and requires a form of conduct such that life may be completed in each and in his offspring, not only without preventing completion of it in others, but with furtherance of it in others.....Moreover, just as we saw that evolution becomes the highest possible when the conduct simultaneously achieves the greatest totality of life in self, in offspring, and in fellow-men; so here we see that the conduct called good rises to the conduct conceived as best, when it fulfils all three classes of ends at the same time."

At this point Spencer connects with the older Utilitarianism, and gives that theory a broader scientific basis than it before possessed. Some writers have assumed that Spencer dissented from the Utilitarian position; but this is not so. On the contrary, he shows that all classes, whether they be pessimist or optimist, whether they take the will of God as a standard or an abstract "blessedness," none can avoid taking as their ultimate test of the morality of actions their tendency to increase pleasure and diminish pain. "No school can avoid taking for the ultimate moral aim a desirable feeling

called by whatever name—gratification, enjoyment, happiness. Pleasure somewhere, at some time, to some being or beings, is an inexpugnable element of this conception. It is as much a necessary form of moral intuition as space is a form of intellectual intuition."

Spencer's contribution to the theory of utilitarianism is an important one. It will be found, in substance, in the chapter on "The Biological View," although it is drawn from the *Principles of Psychology*. The older Utilitarians had proven to demonstration that all men aim at happiness, and also that in analysis the tendency of actions to promote happiness, immediate and remote, was all that was really meant when they spoke of morality. But there the matter had rested; and some even doubted whether the analysis could be carried further. What Spencer does is to connect the principle that all seek, and rightly seek, happiness, with the deeper principle of self-preservation. That all forms of animal life seek to live, is a truism. That they can only persist by performing such actions as bring them into a certain degree of harmony with their environment, is another. And, as all purposeful conduct is the expression of feeling, it follows that a feeling is gratified or outraged by the conduct performed. Now let us assume for a moment that any species of animals found gratification (I avoid the word "pleasure" for the time) in actions that were destructive of life. Only one result could follow—they would simply disappear. The continuance of a species demands, therefore, that between those actions that conserve life, and those feelings that yield gratification, there shall be a tolerably close correspondence. And one need only bear in mind the operation of Natural Selection to realise that this correspondence must become closer as evolution proceeds. To quote Spencer:—

"Those races of beings only can have survived in which, on the average, agreeable or desired feelings went along with activities conducive to the maintenance of life, while disagreeable and habitually-avoided feelings went along with activities directly or indirectly destructive of life; and there must ever have been, other things equal, the most numerous and long-continued survivals among races in which these adjustments of feelings to actions were the best, tending ever to bring about perfect adjustment."

The demonstration is, in this way, as complete as circumstances admit. Indeed, from one point of view it offers the surest of all proofs—that of our being unable to think of any other result once the nature of the argument is properly realised. And in this way the principle of Utilitarianism is placed upon a thoroughly scientific basis. It is no longer an empirical generalisation, but one that has its basis deep down in the laws of life.

In discussing "Ways of Judging Conduct," Spencer criticises, in a very drastic manner, the various theories that are opposed to the Utilitarian position, and all of them come badly out of the ordeal. I have only time to just notice this in passing, although the chapter would well repay discussion. I turn to the chapter on "The Psychological View," which raises the question of the claim of ethics to rank as an independent science. Spencer contends for what may be called the organic nature of morality. That is, that as our intuitions of right and wrong consist of the accumulated experiences of the race, which express themselves in a modified nervous system adapted to the needs of social life, so with the approach of the race to a more perfect standard, the sentiment of obligation disappears as a conscious force to be replaced by an instinct that unconsciously performs all the legitimate demands of its environment.

This appears to me to be a perfectly sound view of the subject. A conscious action frequently performed *does* become automatic or instinctive, and what is true of one action, or one class of actions, must be true of all. But if this is true, if moral actions, often performed, become organic, if natural selection by preserving the fittest and eliminating the organisms least fitted for the social state, is

always accentuating this, then it is evident that Ethics is at best a transient science, since it relates to a, theoretically at least, transient state of society. The end is not likely to come in a hurry, but if Mr. Spencer's theory be correct, and I believe it is, come it must, as man reaches and realises that moving equilibrium which is the evolutionary goal. The only remarkable thing is that so logical a thinker as Spencer should have failed to realise this; but should, on the contrary, write of Ethics as that portion of his work to which all the preceding portions were subsidiary!

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

A False Analogy.

THE latest Apology for Christianity, upon which modern Theologians seem to rely with serene satisfaction, commends itself to public acceptance only by its pleasing plausibility. The proposition that religion does not live in, or depend for its existence upon, books, sounds amazingly like a truism. The Druidical Religion was never reduced into writing, but was handed down from generation to generation by oral tradition. It lived alone in the heads and hearts of its devotees. This was true also of ancient Hinduism, Buddhism, and other old-world religions; and it must be admitted that it was equally true of early Christianity. The Christian Church had existed and prospered for many years before a line of the New Testament was written. During that period it depended for its life and activity upon oral traditions treasured up in the memories of its members. This is an undeniable fact, which Freethinkers have no wish to call in question. When our modern Apologists say that "the early Christians were without the New Testament," they simply express a self-evident truth, but are lamentably mistaken if they think they put forth an argument for the truth of the Christian Religion. They concede, as readily as we do, that a similar saying, as truthfully applied to ancient Druids, Hindus, and Buddhists would not be an evidence of the supernatural origin and character of the respective religions of those peoples. It is perfectly true that the early Christians did not possess the New Testament, and it is quite as true that if the New Testament were to be lost to-morrow, Christianity would not cease to be. In this sense Christianity does not stand or fall with the Bible. If there be a living Christ, as his disciples allege, his continued existence is not in any degree dependent upon the continued existence of the New Testament. Such was the quintessence of the argument as employed by the late Dr. Dale. Christ lives simultaneously in Heaven and the hearts of his people. He speaks to them in spiritual accents, and they enjoy the richest and sublimest fellowship with him.

Employed in that manner the argument is true as well as plausible, but as utilised in these days it has absolutely nothing in its favor save its plausibility; and of this commodity it has, alas! a sufficient amount to deceive the simple-minded. The Higher Criticism of to-day aims its blows, not merely at the orthodox doctrine as to the dates and authorship of the Four Gospels, but chiefly at the quality and truth of their contents; and if it has succeeded in proving that those contents are fundamentally untrue, or, at least, of a very doubtful character, does the Christian Religion remain intact? If the story told in the Four Gospels is only a repetition of an ancient fable common to several religions, does it not inevitably follow that the case for the supernatural origin and historical character of the religion founded on that story has completely broken down? Beyond question the fall of the Bible *does* involve the fall of Christianity. If the story were literally true, and if by some sad accident it were irretrievably lost, then there would be some

sense in affirming that Christianity would undoubtedly live on and prosper in spite of the loss; but if the Four Gospels are historically, not only untrustworthy, but positively untrue, such a contention is portentously absurd, and its very absurdity ought to effect its speedy dissolution.

Let me state the case from another point of view. On the conclusion of the Civil War, the proprietor of the *New York Herald* induced Henry Ward Beecher, who had rendered such noble service to the abolitionist cause, to contribute a novel to his newspaper, which the famous advocate of the slaves consented to do. The novel was entitled *Norwood*, and, as might have been expected, proved intensely interesting. It was a story of Village Life in New England when religion was still the main topic of conversation among the people. One of the chief characters was the author himself very thinly disguised, who in conversations with the village clergyman and others freely aired his startlingly heterodox views on religion. In those days the descendants of the Puritans practised Bibliolatry on an enormously large scale, which the character referred to scathingly denounced. "Religion does not live in a book," he often fervently cried. "The Bible merely describes and gives the history of religion, just as Botanical text books describe and tell the history of flowers. To see flowers you must visit gardens, and fields, and mountains, where they actually grow; and so, likewise, to discover what the Christian Religion really is, you must study it as exemplified in the lives of the people who believe in and practise it. As a protest against the blind worship of the Bible all that may have been more or less effective; but the analogy instituted between the Bible and Botanical text-books is entirely false. The cases are not at all parallel. Everybody knows that the flowers described in manuals of Botany are the flowers we may see and examine any day. But, suppose such books described flowers that are not to be seen to-day, flowers of eccentric shapes, monstrous sizes, and abnormal fragrance, said to have bloomed once only some two thousand years ago in Palestine, would not such flowers, of necessity, stand or fall with the documents? If the latter could be discredited, on firm critical grounds, who could believe any longer that the former ever bloomed on earth? Well, the Christ whose story is told in the Four Gospels occupies the same position in relation to all other men as those imaginary flowers would have done in relation to all other flowers, and I assert, without fear of intelligent contradiction, that the Christ so described must stand or fall with the books. A London preacher not long ago wrote thus to a well-known Agnostic: "You may smash the historic setting to smithereens; but you cannot touch Christianity." What ineffable nonsense. If the Four Gospels are, or can be, proved to be nothing but a four-fold compilation and adaptation of fables and legends that were common to several older religions, there is absolutely no proof that Christ ever lived at all; nay, more, there is the strongest proof that he never did. It is utterly immaterial whether or not a man called Jesus lived in Palestine about the time specified, because the Christian Religion was founded, not by or upon such a man, but by or upon the Christ portrayed in these documents. If a man called Jesus did live in those days, it is perfectly certain that he was not born of a virgin, that he did not work miracles, that his death was not accompanied by supernatural manifestations, and that he did not rise from his tomb. To this day, adopting Matthew Arnold's beautiful language—

Far hence he lies
In the lorn Syrian town,
And on his grave, with shining eyes,
The Syrian stars look down.

According to the Catechisms, and Confessions, and Creeds, and Declaratory Statements of all the organised Churches in Christendom, the founder of the Christian Religion was, not such a man, but the God-man, the incarnate Deity, the only-begotten Son

of God, whose portrait is painted in the New Testament; and if this Super-human, divine Person was only a myth, and of this we are as firmly convinced as we are of anything under the sun, then Christianity takes its place side by side with Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Mithraism, as fully a man-made religion as any of them.

I am aware that Apologists generally are not prepared to admit the historical untrustworthiness of the Gospels and the Acts. They still issue Lives of Christ founded on the New Testament, they still teach the young that the Gospel stories are credible, and they still preach as if the Bible were the pure Word of God. What they make emphatic is that *if* the Gospels were completely discredited, no vital or permanent injury would thereby be inflicted on Christianity. And yet some eminent Christian teachers do not hesitate to pronounce those documents essentially untrustworthy. I do not know what kind of Christian the Professor of New Testament Exegesis at Zürich may be; but he is courageous enough to declare that the number of absolutely credible passages in the Gospels is exceedingly small. How, in the face of such a declaration, he can be a Christian at all, is an insoluble mystery. His mental constitution must differ materially from that of the apostle Paul, who, according to the documents, staked all on the *actuality* of the resurrection of Christ, an event which never occurred, if we are to believe Professor Schmiedel. We are all familiar with the famous argument in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians—an argument modern Apologists think it expedient to politely ignore. If Christ rose from the dead, the apostle reasoned, the Gospel I preach is blessedly true, the forgiveness of sins through faith in his name which I announce is a precious reality, and the hope of immortality shall be gloriously fulfilled; but if he did not rise, then the whole fabric of the Christian Religion falls to the ground, and we might as well give ourselves to a life of unbridled pleasure. At the close of the argument there is a distinctly false note; but taking it as a whole it is thoroughly sound, and unanswerable. But Paul added, if the passage is genuine: "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep," while Professor Schmiedel as emphatically denies that he rose at all, except in the imagination of credulous disciples.

The conclusion to which I am irresistibly driven, is, that there are only two possible alternatives, namely, either to believe implicitly that the Bible is infallibly true, or boldly to go over to the camp of the Rationalists. Of course, the first alternative is open only to those who deliberately close the eyes of their mind, and bluntly deny the reality of all scientific knowledge. Dr. Wace, the Dean of Canterbury, has the courage to choose this alternative, to "resist the varied attacks made upon the inspiration and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures," and to "uphold the inspired veracity of the authors of the Scriptures, and the historical truth of the sacred narratives." Others, lacking that courage, have joined the sceptical school, and are not afraid to testify that, the documents being, in their most essential parts, wholly untrustworthy, Christ never was at all, and that the religion founded upon him is an empty dream, at least so far as all its supernatural elements are concerned.

JOHN LLOYD.

JESUS.

(Concluded from page 54.)

Many of Jesus's acts are criminal and immoral. It is a strange thing that he answered and granted the prayers of devils, which he did several times. It is more strange that he should drown two thousand swine at the request of devils. If the devils were bad, the swine were innocent, and he drowns them; and they were not his property; therefore he committed a dishonest act. His instruction to his

disciples to go and get an ass to carry himself to Jerusalem was nothing less than an incitement to steal; and his conduct in the Temple, driving out buyers and sellers, and overturning the tables of the money-changers and sellers of doves, cannot be defended, nor recommended as worthy of imitation. Cursing a fig-tree because it had no fruit out of season was a lunatic act that no sane man could approve or defend.

As a man, Jesus was ignorant and superstitious. There were in Greece and Rome and Palestine men greatly ahead of him in intelligence and knowledge. He believed in devils, and thought they entered into men, and caused lunacy and illness. He believed in a material hell of fire and brimstone—a belief that intelligent Christians have now discarded. As others in his time, he did not know that the earth was a globe; and he thought the heart was the organ of intelligence, and not the brain.

As a teacher he was very imperfect. His teaching was often confused, ambiguous, and contradictory. The Sermon on the Mount was never preached on a mount, or anywhere else, as one discourse. No sane man would take a crowd to the top of a mountain to preach a sermon to them. The sermon is a compilation from many sources. There is nothing new in it. Even the Golden Rule had been taught by other teachers centuries before Jesus was born. The Prophet of Nazareth never taught any new truth in morality, science, or theology. His precepts and practice were often contradictory. According to his own statement, he spoke in parables to confuse his hearers. Here are his words: "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see and not perceive: and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them." A more immoral way of teaching it would be impossible to conceive. Some of his precepts are not only impracticable, but immoral and unjust; and his avowal of the purpose of his teaching is simply horrible. Here are his words: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." A more infernal purpose was never conceived or avowed; and the result has been everywhere as disastrous as the purpose, and continues so to be. And Christians call him the Prince of Peace.

Sufficient has been cited to prove that Jesus had not the perfect character claimed for him, and that he is not a model ensample to follow. But not a tithe of his errors, imperfections, and false teaching have been noted, all of which can be verified by chapter and verse. Never was a man more over-rated. It is really astonishing how any intelligent man who has read the Gospels can make such assertions about him, as there is not a page of the four Gospels that will bear critical analysis without serious damage. It is difficult to criticise a myth-god in whom so many millions believe without appearing to depreciate the intelligence or the honesty of the believers. But the interest of truth must be placed before the feelings of men. The most charitable way to explain the belief in the perfection of Jesus is to assume that it is accepted on the authority of the Churches, without reading and examining the Gospels personally. It is difficult, if not impossible, to believe that any intelligent and impartial student, after examining and comparing the four Gospels, could say that Jesus was perfect, and a worthy ensample to all mankind. The imperfections and deficiencies of his life and teaching are so numerous and glaring that it is a standing marvel to hear the Churches owning and worshiping him as a God.

Of course, all the reasoning in this article is based on the assumption that Jesus is an historical person, and that the four Gospels are a true biography of his life. An argument with a believer in him could not

be carried on, on any other basis. When the Churches claim that he was a perfect character and a divine ensample for us in all things, and that the four Gospels are a true account of his life and teaching, we are forced to point out the errors, faults, imperfections, false teaching, indiscretions, and contradictions, as they appear in the narratives.

Now, I often wonder how it is possible to read the four Gospels and continue to believe in a perfect Jesus. But it is possible, as I know from personal experience. I read the Gospels many a time over without seeing anything but a God-man who was the Savior of the world. Therefore I am reluctant to accuse Christians in general of incapacity, dishonesty, or hypocrisy. That there are a great number of dishonest hypocrites in the Churches is certain; but the bulk are ignorant of the facts, and are incapable to discover the truth, being hypnotised to a blind belief by their early training. The Jesus that many sincere Christians believe in is a God and a perfect man; but it is an imaginary one, the creation of their own minds, and existing only in their own brain, and not to be found anywhere in the four Gospels.

The only key to explain the difficulties of the Gospels is the myth theory. There may have been a teacher of the name of Jesus, which was a common name amongst the Jews. The supposition may be probable that such a man did exist, and that it served as a foundation or a nucleus, around whose name the legends grew. But there is no evidence outside the legends that he ever lived. On the other hand, all the events ascribed to Jesus—from his birth to his death—bear an exact resemblance to other myths of the world. The myths, having once taken root, would naturally grow. Different writers, at different times, would relate the legends in a different way and order, at the same time adding to them their own thoughts and ideas. Thus, amongst the different writers the character changes, and a different Jesus is portrayed by each. Looked at in this light, there is no difficulty in accounting for the differences, disagreements, contradictions, and all other difficulties met with in the different Gospels.

To those who blame us for exposing these errors, we can truly say that it is the duty of every man who discovers an error to expose it. We expose Christian errors because they are not true, and not because we hate or despise Christians. Errors of every description occupy room in the human mind that ought to be filled with something better. Errors are barriers in the way of progress, and must be removed so that truth, justice, and brotherhood may grow. It is time that Christians and all others should discard the legends of the past, to unite and occupy their time and energies, to abolish the huge poverty all around us causing most of the crime, immorality, misery, and degradation, and thereby help to lift the masses to a condition in which a full and a happy life may be possible for all.

R. J. DERFEL.

Acid Drops.

The Blarney Stone used to be in Ireland, but we think it must be in England now. It seems to have been appropriated by the modern defenders of the Bible as the Word of God. These gentlemen get up and talk the most astounding nonsense with a solemn face. Their intellectual thimble-rigging is really first-class. The old defenders of the Bible simply bullied the people into accepting it. The new defenders of the Bible tell them that it swarms with mental and moral blunders, and bamboozle them into regarding this fact as the crowning proof its inspiration.

Down at Manchester the clergy have been answering "Nunquam"—not directly, but indirectly—by means of a series of Sunday afternoon addresses under the general head of "Is Christianity True?" One of these addresses, under the particular title of "Is the Bible the Word of God?" has just been delivered by the Ven. Archdeacon Wilson. We have not a verbatim report of it—we wish we had; but we

have the fairly long and evidently careful summary in the *Manchester Guardian* to guide us.

Of course Archdeacon Wilson answered the question he started with in the affirmative. What else was to be expected? The reasons he advanced, however, to justify his answer were such as no man in his senses could hope to carry weight with any other man in his senses—unless the other man happened to agree beforehand. He began with a bit of mental legerdemain about the difference between "God's words" and the "word of God." The former phrase meant words that God actually spoke; and we must not think of the Bible in that way. Well, what did the latter phrase mean? There the trouble began. Archdeacon Wilson had to show that God did not actually speak the words of the Bible, and yet that in some subtle mysterious way God did speak them. But where was the proof of this? Archdeacon Wilson *felt* it. He did not use that particular word; he was too prudent, some would say too cunning, to do so; yet it expresses the sum and substance of all he had to say. "I believe," he observed, "that God influences man through the Bible. I therefore call the Bible the Word of God."

Now it is perfectly clear that this argument—if it can be called an argument—is absolutely personal. It is one of those arguments that cannot possibly have any force except to the person who uses it. He *feels* this, he is *sure* of that. Very true. But the other man wants to know *why* he feels it, and *why* he is sure of it. And it is of no use for the first man to keep on saying that he *does* feel it, and that he *is* sure of it. Repeating a thing a million times does not add to its value. Although there are people who seem to think that if they go on repeating it long enough, it may begin as a falsehood and end as a truth.

It does not occur to Archdeacon Wilson to ask *why* he *feels* the Bible to be "the word of God." If it did, he might find a very simple explanation. The Mohammedan feels the Kuran to be the word of God. All other possessors of "revelations" feel *their* scriptures to be the word of God. Why? Because they were taught and trained to do so. It became the habit of their lives. And habit is not only, as the poet says, second nature, but sometimes takes the place of the first nature. Not to put too fine a point upon it, Archdeacon Wilson was taught and trained to read the Bible as the word of God. He saw everybody around him reading the Bible as the word of God. And in the course of time these powerful, these almost omnipotent influences of education, were seconded by other strong influences. He became a Christian minister. He undertook to preach that the Bible is the word of God. And the moment he denied it he would lose his position, his salary, and nine-tenths of his friends. Is it any wonder, then, that he still reads the Bible as the word of God?

Archdeacon Wilson is no doubt an honest man; that is, he is not consciously dishonest. But why on earth does he make so much of "that great word 'I believe' "? "I believe" is the motto of all the fools in the world. They are always believing, and never thinking. And they will tell you what they believe as though it were a matter of the very highest importance. And one fool believes this, and another fool believes that, and a third fool believes something else; until sensible men get sick of the very word *believe*, and wish it could be wiped out of the dictionary.

We don't want to discuss politics in these columns, but we cannot refrain from citing an instance of this "I believe" imbecility in a political connection. At a certain seaside place there is a pavilion on the pier which is let to a German, and sublet to a Swiss, and in which a foreign band discourses sweet music. To this pavilion there came an American lady to sing a "fiscal song" to the effect that England needed Protection. The German, the Swiss, the American, and the other foreigners co-operated in assuring John Bull that foreigners were his ruin. But all that is by the way. Our point is that the American lady made Mr. Joseph Chamberlain (who wasn't present) say, "I pledge my word that England needs Protection." She uttered the words as though they were oracular. But did anything sillier ever proceed from human lips. "I pledge my word." Do you? Just try, and see if anybody will lend you sixpence on it. No man's word is worth a straw in such a relationship. And whoever wants to *pledge* his word in this way is a ridiculous charlatan. Yet the game succeeds with a lot of people. And why? Simply because of their religious training. They have been brought up to venerate "that great word, 'I believe.' "

It was in the same way that Mrs. Besant played off those Mahatma letters at the Hall of Science. She also pledged

her word—and thought it good enough for anything, whereas it turned out to be good for nothing. "Did you ever know me tell you a lie?" she asked the audience. They could not say that they did; very well, then, the moon was made of green cheese; or, to put it a little more precisely, though not less absurdly, the wonderful Mahatma letters, that defied the laws of space and time, were still flying about, notwithstanding the death of Madame Blavatsky. Thus the lady pledged her word, and sailed off afterwards with a great air, feeling that she had annihilated all carpers and critics—especially that vulgar, brutal editor of the *Freethinker*, who would't believe anybody, not even when the speaker wore petticoats. That vulgar, brutal editor went to the length of saying that Mrs. Besant had simply been playing the confidence trick. And he was most cynically justified by the event. For not very long afterwards it was proved that those very Mahatma letters that Mrs. Besant played off "on her honor" at the Hall of Science were *forges*; and the Theosophist who forged them was expelled from the Society—chiefly on the ground that he had been found out. The lady, however, did not go down to the Hall of Science and tell the audience that she had been "sold" and that she had unwittingly "sold" *them*. That was the nasty end of the confidence trick, and she did not like to get hold of it there.

Every man or woman who offers his or her word as a substitute for evidence is playing the confidence trick. And the world has been so full of fools that no trick has succeeded better. It has been played by all the religions in the world. These systems teach the children to say "that grand word 'I believe.' " And what follows the "I believe" is neither more nor less than what the priests, parsons, preachers, or other mystery-men of the locality choose to tell them.

In the whole of his address Archdeacon Wilson employed but one rational argument. Those who object to the imperfections of the Bible, he said, might also object to the imperfections of creation. Yes, and they very soon do. Objecting to the Bible sets them thinking, and when once they begin that process all they have to do is to keep on in order to become Atheists.

On the whole, it was pleasant to see Archdeacon Wilson in a flash of common sense before resuming his seat. "How," he asked, "shall we convince and convert our opponents?" And his first answer to this question was, "Never by arguments to prove that they are wrong." If you argue with them you may begin to see that they are right. What an awful prospect! Yes, the safest way is not to argue with them at all. The man who argues is lost. Stick to good, sound, saving faith—and it will pull you through.

Liverpool is in some respects one of the worst cities in England. For drunkenness, prostitution, and crime it has a most unenviable reputation. But also, and perhaps naturally, it has a first-rate character for religion. Protestant and Catholic fanaticism run so high there that they often cause bitter conflicts, and the "pious" days are the worst for the police in the whole calendar. The men in blue have a terrible job, every now and then, to keep the different Christian sects from loving each other too murderously.

With crowded drink shops, and thoroughfares swarming with thieves, and streets of brothels, Liverpool nevertheless prides itself on its separate bishopric, and has long been saving up money for a magnificent new cathedral, which is now in course of realisation. It is to stand on St. James's Mount—a space 1,020 feet long and 248 feet wide—bought of the Corporation for £11,300. The building will exceed the area of any other English cathedral, and will stand out as by far the most conspicuous object in Liverpool seen from the Mersey. Altogether it is to be a vast, splendid, and imposing edifice. And of course it will cost a heap of money. But what man in his senses believes it will have the slightest beneficial effect, that can be tested, on the morality of the great city it will look down upon so proudly?

Among the victims of the Chicago fire was a Mr. William Cooper, a prominent member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. As the rules of the Church forbid any of its members attending theatres, there is much distress over the fact of Mr. Cooper's delinquency being brought so prominently before the public. Presumably the members will regard his death as a special visitation of Providence, as well as a divine endorsement of the rules of the Church. Religious bigotry is capable of any stupidity.

There is at least one Welsh paper with a sense of humor. The *Herald Cymraeg* announces that, as numbers of its subscribers are behind in their payments, it offers the *Herald* free for five years to every preacher "who will next Sunday preach not on the sins of the Jews, but on the text, 'Owe no man anything.'"

This reminds one of the parson who was taking another's place, and who was solemnly warned by the regular incumbent not to preach against private ownership in land, as the squire would be present: nor against drink, as a prominent brewer had promised the church a new organ; nor to talk about capital and labor, because a large mill-owner was one of their best supporters. "Well," asked the intending preacher, "what am I to talk about?" "Oh," was the reply, "just lecture on the conversion of the Jews—that's a very safe subject."

What anxiety there is on the part of elders about the religious beliefs of children. Sometimes a battle rages over the future religion of some poor gutter-snipe. A lady named O'Brien was before Mr. Curtis Bennett, at the Marylebone police-court, defending her boy, a lusty youth, eight years of age, charged with begging in the public streets. She complained bitterly that the juvenile Christian—who did not give to everyone that asketh, but asked of everyone that giveth; which is the opposite side of the same picture—had been baptised by her orders as belonging to the Church of England, and had afterwards been baptised at a Roman Catholic school without her orders as belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. That was mixed enough, but the mother wanted him to be fixed up properly again as a Protestant, and the magistrate wondered whether he would know what he was when he grew up. Meanwhile the object of all this solicitude was crying because he had to go back to the Boys' Home. That was all he cared about.

The Rev. G. F. Pentecost is an American preacher who is to sermonise for some weeks at Westminster Chapel. He has been interviewed by a representative of the *Christian Commonwealth*, and has had, apparently, much pleasure in giving his opinions upon things in general. Having just returned from Japan, he gave it as his opinion that Christianity is making wonderful strides in that country. This is a statement that preachers are fond of making; the only wonderful thing about it being that none but preachers are able to see it. All independent authorities are practically agreed that the Japanese, in accepting Western civilisation, were shrewd enough to reject the dominant religion, and that among the educated classes the name of Herbert Spencer is far more powerful than that of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Pentecost is also of opinion that Russia is a menace to the civilised world; England and America should join in confining Russia to Siberia, and the only solution of the Eastern Question is Christianity. And this is as funny as it is stupid. In the first place, Russia is a Christian country; far more Christian than England or America. So that Mr. Pentecost is really pointing out that it is a *Christian* power that menaces the civilised world. And, in the next place, a Japanese might well ask whether Christianity has cured the ills of the Western World that it is so confidently recommended as a cure for the East. How easily these preachers forget that the Powers that are watching each other like so many wild cats, that cannot trust each other to act fairly and honestly in their international relations, and that are largely to blame, by their interference and greed, for the troubles in the far East, are Christian Powers already. And the example of the Christian forces in China during the recent outbreak was hardly such as to induce the yellow man to fall desperately in love with the religion of his white visitors. One can hardly expect a parson to be influenced by anything so common as facts, but Mr. Pentecost can find, if he looks for them, several works written by Chinese and Japanese during the last few years that contain a very drastic indictment of both Western religion and a deal of Western civilisation.

According to the Rev. W. H. Fox, of Bury, the greatest fool on earth is the man who says there is no God. We do not agree with Mr. Fox. A much greater one is the man who says there is.

Mr. Fox also says that the philosophy of Evolution is one that Herbert Spencer would have been ashamed of in his later days. We do not know what is meant by "later days"; what we do know is that Spencer's opinions remained unshaken to the last, and, if anything, the anti-religious note was stronger in his later years than at any previous time. Anyway, the remark reflects small credit upon either Mr. Fox's intelligence or honesty. Probably we are witnessing

the beginning of the customary religious fable. And in the end we shall learn that Spencer died calling upon Jesus, and expressing profound regret for having written the Synthetic Philosophy.

At the Chester Diocesan Conference the Rev. W. L. Paige Cox moved a resolution that it was desirable to bring the Prayer Book up to date. With regard to the Athanasian Creed, for instance, while it was of great value for the defence of the faith, it expressed the truth in an unfortunate manner through its "damnatory clauses." He suggested that it should be removed from its present place and put at the end of the Prayer Book with the Thirty-Nine Articles. Now this is really ingenious. If this process of reforming the Prayer Book continues, we shall have in the first part all that is true and ought to be true, and in the second part all that is true and ought not to be true. Or we might put it differently by saying that the revised Prayer Book on these lines would be something like the edition of the classics prepared for young Don Juan by his careful tutors, who cut out all the naughty passages from the text and put them altogether in an appendix. "Which saved in fact," as Byron says, "the trouble of an index."

Mr. Blatchford had better beware. The *Daily News* devotes a special paragraph to the announcement that his attacks on Christianity are to be subjected to a series of replies by the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale. Now we *shan't* be long.

The *Daily News* devotes another paragraph, and a longer one, to what the Rev. T. Stephens, of Camberwell Green Church, believes. What the reverend gentleman *knows* might be of some use to other people, but what the reverend gentleman *believes* can hardly be of the least importance to anyone but himself. Mr. Stephens's beliefs are enumerated from firstly to sixthly, but they all amount to this, that Christianity has a magnificent future in England. Well, it has anything but a magnificent present—and prophecy is the riskiest business in the world; a truth which Mr. Stephens has forgotten, and which the *Daily News* does not seem to have remembered.

Father Day, the Jesuit preacher, may be very eloquent, but he does not appear to have a good memory. In his recent sermon on "Modern Unbelief" he contended that the fear of hell was not a bad thing in its way; it was a "beginning" in the right road, although it was made "through fear." The supreme motive of holiness was the law of charity as expressed by Christ, but "the subordinate appeal which Christianity admittedly did make to men's fears and desires in regard to the future life was neither wrong, selfish, nor ineffectual." Having argued in this way, the preacher went on to argue in the very opposite way in attacking the ethics of Unbelief. His argument then was that "the motive of utility was nothing more than an appeal to pure selfishness." This is absurd upon the face of it, for the motive of utility is only an appeal to selfishness if you extend selfishness so as to include the interest of all whom an action concerns or affects, instead of merely that of the individual actor. But waiving that objection for the present, we beg to point out that it is extremely odd to say that a man's view of his personal interest in the *future* life is *not* selfishness, while his view of his personal interest in *this* life *is* selfishness. This is really what Father Day argues, and it seems to us the greatest absurdity.

The daily organ of the Nonconformist Conscience headed a long review of the Rev. Stopford A. Brooke's new volume of sermons with "A Poet Preacher: Sermons that Grip." Perhaps there are sermons that grip. But there are many more that gripe.

The *Kerry Sentinel* prints the full text of Archbishop Walsh's letter to Mr. John Redmond, enclosing a cheque for £10 (fancy Jesus Christ with a cheque-book!), but almost despairing of the efficacy of parliamentary action in Ireland, all because the priests have not yet got the control of a Catholic University set up at the nation's expense. Dr. Walsh feels this as "the most unkindest cut of all." He is nearly heart-broken. Or perhaps his letter is a sort of "tip" to Mr. Balfour as to what he will have to do to retain the support of the Irish party. Landlords and tenants have had their turn, and where do the priests look in? When is *their* turn coming? How long, O Lord, how long?

Christians generally believe that they had the honour of producing all the martyrs in the world. But every religion, every system, every heresy, and almost every fad, has had its martyrs. Even as late as the nineteenth century, Behaism, or the religion of the Bab, whose leader was

Abbas Effendi, suffered the most dreadful persecution. Mr. M. H. Phelps, whose book on this subject has been published recently by Putnam's Sons, shows how this persecution arose when the Bab missionaries spread themselves all over Persia, and excited the jealousy of the orthodox religious leaders. "An era of bloody and relentless persecution followed," Mr. Phelps says, "which has not perhaps been paralleled in history. Singly and by hundreds the Babis were hunted down and slaughtered. One's heart thrills with emotion, one's conception of the noble possibilities of human nature expands, as one reads of the splendid and unflinching heroism of the Babis in the cause of their faith." This faith was not a gross, vulgar superstition for the ignorant, the passionate and the selfish; but a highly refined Theism which, on the ethical side, involved a continuous advance towards complete personal purification.

"Providence" has been active again in America. An Alabama tornado has devastated the town of Mowdsville and killed dozens of people. Great mischief was wrought in other places. But complaint would be blasphemy, for "His tender mercies are over all His works."

Bishop Fallows has written a prayer for the mourners who lost friends and relatives in the Chicago fire. It begins: "O God, our Heavenly Father, we pray for an unshaken faith in thy goodness." This is hitting the nail on the head—though probably by accident. For it is just the goodness of God that was most burnt up in that awful holocaust.

There seems to be one *real* man of God left in England, and his name is Horton. The Executive Council of the Congregational Total Abstinence Association, in solemn conclave at Chelmsford, passed a resolution of thanks to the Rev. Dr. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, and wound up with the "earnest hope and prayer that he may continue to be *inspired of God* for still more exalted service." The italics are our own.

Blackpool was an appropriate place for the Bishop of Manchester to fulminate against Sunday concerts. He said that Blackpool clergymen had complained bitterly to him of the influence of the Sunday concerts on their congregations. Well, they have our sympathy—poor fellows! But other trades are affected by the natural progress of society, and how can the clerical trade expect to be exempt from the common lot? Why don't the clergy wake up and draw the people to their shops somehow? It is all very well for the Bishop of Manchester, with his dead certain jolly good income, to warn them against "the temptation of competing with the Sunday amusement caterers." But they are in the thick of the trouble. And is it wonderful that they occasionally attempt to attract by profane devices? Would it be astonishing if they went in for smoking pews?

A good story was told in last week's *Athenæum*. During the recent performance of the "Requiem" by Berlioz at Paris the "Dies Iræ" was rendered with great effect, the music being of the tempestuous and striking character appropriate to the Last Judgment. There was a loud demand for an encore, but the conductor took no notice of it. As the cries continued, however, he turned round to the audience and said, "You can't have the Last Judgment twice."

Passive Resisters at Tunstall, being ordered to pay their rates under penalty of distraint, held a meeting in the Market-square, and sang "Dare to be a Daniel." They had evidently a high opinion of their own courage. The only lion they had faced was the magistrate, who told them to pay up like their fellow citizens. The hymn says, "Dare to be a Daniel—dare to stand alone," And these Passive Resisters were quite a warm crowd.

One of these Tunstall Passive Resisters, the Rev. Frank Rhodes, read a manifesto for himself and his brother martyrs, which the magistrate listened to with exemplary patience; in fact, he was by far the greatest sufferer. Mr. Rhodes declared that the Education Act forced upon them—that is, upon Dissenters—an "intolerable civil and religious injustice." It did not occur to him, probably, that Dissenters had co-operated with Churchmen for thirty years in inflicting this very same injustice on Freethinkers—who are now, to some extent, getting their own back.

Nothing could be more amusing than the childlike innocence with which the Passive Resistance people fail to see the challenge of "unbelievers." They will not take notice of it even when it is presented in a different form by their fellow Christians. Mr. Balfour, for instance,

pointed out that the Nonconformists, while protesting against religion which suited Churchmen being taught in the public schools, and refusing to pay for it, were quite ready to maintain religion which suited themselves in the public schools, and to make all non-Christians pay for it. But the Nonconformists overlooked that part of Mr. Balfour's letter, and it did not attract the attention of Dr. Clifford, who penned a lengthy reply. Now the Archbishop of Canterbury begs the Nonconformists to face this point—but we guess he will beg in vain; for, while the *Daily News* answers him in a leading article, it takes precious good care to say nothing about *this*. The Archbishop, addressing the Canterbury Diocesan Education Society, on Saturday, January 23, spoke as follows:—

"Those who were feeling most keenly and strongly the duty of overt opposition to what had recently been enacted by the legislature of the country were, of course, keen advocates of the support of religious teaching of some kind or other in the large Board schools of their great cities. Never let them do them an injustice by saying that they were not keen about the religious instruction of the great Board school system. But that religious teaching in their Board school system must be regarded as not merely undesirable but absolutely erroneous by every unbeliever, secularist, and agnostic in the country, by every Jew who objects to Christian teaching as contrasted to that of his own faith, and to a large extent by every Roman Catholic in the land. He purposely did not bring in the Anglican, although in very many ways, in the case of some particular School Boards, he might bring them in as well, but he strengthened the case by leaving them out. Did it mean that every one of these men—agnostic, Jew, Roman Catholic—was either weak-hearted in what he held because he was cowardly enough to contribute to what was wrong, or else he had been doing a wrong thing, an absolutely wrong thing, by paying that rate, and ought never to be asked to pay it again? That seemed to him to demand an answer, and he was anxious to see what actual explanation could be given in answer to it."

This is fairly and squarely put: not now by "infidels," but by the first Christian in England—the Archbishop of Canterbury. What will Dr. Clifford say? The *Daily News* says nothing. Will the hero of the Passive Resistance movement have the courage to say more? We shall see.

The author of the *Ingoldsby Legends*, in his most lackneyed poem, says of the crowd when they caught sight of the peccant jackdaw, that "heedless of grammar, they all cried that's him." The poet wanted "him" for the rhyme, but he anticipated criticism by confessing it was not grammatical. Well now, we should like to know what excuse Professor A. S. Peake can offer. This learned gentleman undertook to give one of the Christian Evidence lectures in the Central Hall, Manchester, and selected for his subject the question, "Did Jesus Rise Again?" Here's English for you—and from a Professor and a Master of Arts! We have always understood that Jesus rose but once. How, then, did he "rise *again*"? Perhaps the pious Professor will explain.

Mr. Alexander, who performs Sankey to Dr. Torrey's Moody, plays on the emotions of poor-brained people with pathetic songs—some of them plantation tunes from the Southern States. One of his most effective pieces is "Old-time Religion," which is hardly a sublime masterpiece, from a rational point of view. This is a bit of the first verse:—

It was good for our mothers,
And it's good enough for me.

What poetry! And what cheap sentiment! Mr. Alexander ought to carry a sucking-bottle.

Rosalind was a woman under her doublet and hose. But a change seems to have taken place lately—at least in the Christian world, though we hope it won't go too far, or we shall all get terribly mixed. We see it reported that Mrs. Benson, speaking at a recent Church House meeting in favor of women being given the franchise for the National Church Council, said that "They had virile religion among women and effeminate religion among men." The lady's statement was applauded, so we suppose there is something in it. But, we repeat, we hope it won't spread.

ANSWERED.—The Squire's Pretty Daughter (examining the village school): "Now, children, can you tell me what a miracle is?" The children looked at one another, but remained silent. "Can no one answer this question?" the new curate asked, who was standing behind the squire's daughter. A little girl was suddenly struck with a brilliant idea. She held up her hand excitedly. "Well, Nellie?" the squire's daughter asked, smiling approval. "Please, miss," the small child replied breathlessly, "mother says 'twill be a miracle if you don't marry the new curate."—*Tit-Bits*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, January 31, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester: 3.0, "The Gospel According to Dr. Torrey"; 6.30, "Is Christianity Really True?"

February 7, Glasgow; 14, Queen's Hall, London; 21, Queen's Hall, London; 28, Coventry; March 13, Liverpool; 27, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—January 31, Glasgow; February 7 and 14, Birmingham; 21, Newcastle; 28, Liverpool; March 6, Queen's Hall, London.

F. S.—Thanks for the cuttings, which, as you will see, have proved very useful.

J. THACKRAY.—Pleased to hear from one who has read every number of the *Freethinker* week by week except the very first. Your suggestion as to selling the *Freethinker* in the streets shall be considered. Unfortunately the few small attempts that have been made in this line have not been very successful.

F. BONTE.—We reciprocate the new year's good wishes in your letter. You do not make it quite clear how you wish the enclosure acknowledged. Will you kindly advise us?

W. H. (Rochdale).—Perhaps the debate on Theism between Mr. Foote and the Rev. W. T. Lee would help you. Mr. Foote has no separate book or pamphlet dealing with "the evidence for the existence of God," although some essays of his on the subject will be included in the volume of collections he is preparing for the press.

J. JONES.—*Secular Annual* sent as requested, and subscription to the New Year's Gift to Freethought acknowledged in this week's list. We shall always be glad to hear from you, and hope that the bold and brave "farewell" with which you end your letter may, in spite of your advanced age, be not the end of our correspondence.

J. C. GOODFELLOW.—Pleased to hear from one who has read the *Freethinker* from the first number. This journal, unfortunately, has not myriads of readers, but it has some devoted ones. We agree with you on the other matter. Malcontents have a shot at the President because he is the most conspicuous target, and there is more fun in hitting him—if it can only be managed!

A. NOTLEY.—We answered your letter by post within half an hour of its reaching us, and hope you were able to get over the difficulty. The unconsecrated side of cemeteries is always available for the burial of Freethinkers according to their own wishes.

F. GARRAWAY.—Yes, the Annual Dinner was a distinct success. We refer you to our statement elsewhere on the other matter.

BRISTOLIAN.—It is not our custom to answer controversial questions in this column. (1) You will find the sterility of hybrids dealt with in Darwin's *Origin of Species*. (2) This question should be addressed to a clergyman. To our mind there is an absolute contradiction between man's "free will" and God's omnipotence and omniscience. (3) Your third question, "Does not omnipotence contain the power of self-limitation?" is to us unintelligible. The separate words are intelligible, but not the concatenation.

S. BURGON.—You "only wish it were more." We are afraid that, in spite of the Board of Trade returns, there is a fairly "hard up" condition in the case of a good many people.

G. D.—Will try to find room for the verses.

J. P. BROWNE.—Hope to see your fine honest face again when we visit Glasgow.

C. D. STEPHENS.—Perhaps you are right that "the rank and file have not sufficiently grasped the idea that no one should refrain from contributing on account of the smallness of the amount." We note your suggestion as to the advertisement of the *Freethinker* which we are inserting in the papers you mention. Thanks for your good wishes. Always pleased to hear from you.

A. GRIMSHAW, 63 Horshaw-street, Warrington, would be glad to hear from W. H. Bell who wrote us last week about forming an N. S. S. Branch there. This correspondent says that the *Freethinker* can easily be obtained at J. Weaver's, newsagent, Winwick-street. Mr. Weaver is an old Freethinker himself, who helped to bring Bradlaugh to Warrington many years ago.

B. B.—Yes, every florin helps, and even every shilling, though a great many readers forget it.

H. C. SHACKLETON.—It is very good of you to suggest it, but twelve months' complete rest and change for us is quite out of the question, and it is no good asking the Freethought party to subscribe towards a sheer impossibility. Something a good deal short of that may come along presently. Don't be annoyed. We value your good wishes. Kindly let us know if the reverend gentleman apologises for that blunder.

W. PALMER.—Your suggestion shall be considered.

W. H. SPIVEY.—Always glad to receive an encouraging letter from a veteran like yourself. As you say, we have had worries enough, as well as hard work; and many of them from unteachable persons, mere bundles of prurient self-will. We will see if anything can be done at Huddersfield.

MRS. STEVENS, sending 10s. as a New Year's Gift to Freethought, hopes that "many others will do likewise." We hope so too.

J. PARTRIDGE.—The J. H. R. in your list must be our old friend Ridgway. Give the veteran our warmest good wishes for the new year.

FREDERICK RYAN.—Delighted to hear from you again. It is always a pleasure to see your handwriting.

J. A. PARRY.—Mr. Cohen has his own work to do in the world. You could hardly expect him to spend his time in running round after Mr. W. T. Lee, and answering that gentleman's lectures in ten minutes. Nor, by the way, should you expect Mr. Lee to regard Ingersoll as "a great thinker." There are some things that "go without saying."

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.

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The New Year's Gift to Freethought.

FOURTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

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SPECIAL.

I HAVE a few words to say about that unfortunate subject, myself. The weather was so brutal during most of last week, and particularly so towards the end, when the great fog settled down upon London, that my throat and chest remained raw enough to deter me from risking the second lecture at Camberwell. Happily I found an excellent substitute in Mr. John Lloyd, who delighted the large audience that had assembled to hear me, and thus minimised the disappointment.

I am not exactly ill, but am quite able to move about, and to do my literary work; only my whole speaking apparatus is more sensitive than I like, and I fear I am not yet thoroughly acclimatised at my new residence, where the weather has shared in the general wretchedness. I am gradually subduing the insomnia, however, and that is a great blessing. "God bless the man that found out sleep," said Sancho Panza. Yes, the fat-headed squire was a wiser man than his chivalric master. Sometimes, indeed, when I have been thinking in the silence of the night, I have asked myself what is the tenderest text in the "Old Book," and I have answered it is this: "He giveth his beloved sleep."

And now for another matter. The New Year's Gift to Freethought is not as successful as it should be. But there is some time left, even after the publication of this number of the *Freethinker*, for the laggards, who are invited to "buck up" and be "in at the death." For the rest, I do not care to repeat my general appeal. I have said enough for those who can give and want to give. Those who can give and will not give must be left to their own inclinations.

One method of advertising the *Freethinker* is suggested by an application I have received from the N. S. S. Birmingham Branch. They ask me to print for them a large supply of my recent article on "God at Chicago" as a tract, which they wish to distribute at the meetings of the Torrey-Alexander mission in Bingley Hall, and perhaps elsewhere. This I have arranged to do immediately. They understand that I shall charge them two-thirds of the absolute cost of production, the other third falling upon the part of the New Year's Gift to Free-

thought which is being devoted to advertising this journal.

While I am printing for the Birmingham Branch I may as well print a larger number of this Tract for general distribution, as several correspondents have asked me to do. I should also like to reprint my exposure of Dr. Torrey's infamous falsehoods about Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll for similar distribution. Myriads of copies might be given away wherever this American Revivalist goes. This would be a live form of propaganda, and would probably be a good advertisement for the *Freethinker*. What do the "saints" say about it? I shall be glad to hear from some of them who would like to contribute towards the cost of this effort. And, of course, if I move at all I must move quickly.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (Jan. 31) in the Secular Hall, Manchester. His afternoon subject is "The Gospel According to Dr. Torrey." This American revivalist—Moody's successor—has been doing "great things" at Manchester lately, and Mr. Foote will show what a poor, thin, narrow-minded gospel this Yankee soul-saver preaches, and how it ought to be disgusting even to the better sort of Christians. The evening lecture will be on the question, "Is Christianity Really True?" and will be largely in reply to the Church lectures on "Is Christianity True?" which are being delivered on Sunday afternoons in the Central Hall, Oldham-street, Manchester, as a sort of indirect reply to Mr. Robert Blatchford's *Clarion* articles. These lectures are being delivered by very distinguished Churchmen, including Archdeacon Wilson, Canon Hicks, Professor A. S. Peake, and Dr. Adeney; and Mr. Foote's counter reply ought to draw Christians as well as Freethinkers to the Manchester Secular Hall this evening.

Camberwell Secular Hall is beginning to look up again under the new missionary effort of the Secular Society, Limited. One might almost use the old Bible simile, and say that the desert looks like blooming with roses. Miss Vance has seen to the advertising, and had it done efficiently. The consequence is that people are learning that something is going on at the Secular Hall. The first meeting was a good one, but last Sunday's was a decided improvement; not only were all the seats occupied, but a good many people were standing. There was some disappointment, of course, at not hearing Mr. Foote as advertised; but the audience had an excellent substitute in Mr. John Lloyd, who delivered a highly appreciated lecture on "My Story." Mr. Lloyd is gaining more freedom on the Secular platform—the result of experience, and is therefore becoming more effective, the humorous side of his advocacy coming more into play. Mr. Bailey, of the Christian Evidence Society, offered some opposition, and was thoroughly well answered.

Unfortunately—very unfortunately—there is now a break of two Sundays in this Camberwell missionary effort. The Secular Society, Limited, tried to prevent this, but unsuccessfully. It is hoped, however, that there will only be a break of one Sunday during the rest of the winter season, namely, the first in each month, on which the N. S. S. Branch is in the habit of holding a social gathering.

London Freethinkers will remember the new Queen's Hall lectures on Sundays, February 14, 21, 28, and March 6. The lecturers will be Messrs. Foote, Cohen, and Lloyd. This time the admission will be free to all seats, with the exception of a few in front reserved for elderly persons, ladies, etc., priced at one shilling each. Friends who would like to circulate little waistcoat pocket advertisements of these meetings are invited to obtain them from the Secretary at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

A new year's letter has reached us from our gallant old friend, and veteran Freethinker, Captain Otto Thomson, of Stockholm. After sending us his good wishes for ourselves and our colleagues, he says that his convictions, instead of weakening, become stronger and more settled as he grows older. His own reflections are his first support, but after them come his "three Bibles"—the London *Freethinker*, the *Boston Investigator*, and the New York *Truthseeker*. Freethought in Sweden more than holds its own, in spite of the most furious opposition; and its principles are slowly, but surely, permeating the mind of the people. This is what Captain Thomson says, and we are glad to hear it. As far as he himself is concerned, we wish him health and happiness,

and the pleasure of seeing Freethought grow in Sweden for many a year to come.

Mr. J. W. de Caux had an able second letter in last week's *Yarmouth Mercury* on "The Story of the Resurrection." He had been asked to deal with Paul's testimony, and he points out its utter worthlessness. Speaking as a magistrate, Mr. de Caux says that such evidence would not hold water for five minutes in a court of justice. As to the "moral and spiritual point of view" of which he was reminded, he declares that they are "utterly beside the question. The question is a purely technical one. Did Jesus Christ rise *bodily* from the dead? or did he not?" Quite right, Mr. de Caux, quite right; but you will not get a Christian with any gumption to discuss a plain, bald, honest question like that.

The *Leicester Guardian* of January 16, which reached us too late for a note in our last issue, contains a front-page portrait of Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, President of the Leicester Secular Society, with an interesting little monograph below it written by an appreciative but not undiscriminating pen. We reproduce most of this independent account of Mr. Gimson in another column of this week's *Freethinker* in order to show our readers throughout the country, and beyond it, in what esteem a Secularist leader can be held by his fellow townsmen.

Those who think that *all* the arguments are in favor of State Education would do well to read *The Protest*, a little monthly paper, the organ of the Society for the Liberation of Education from State Control, published at 1 Connaught-gardens, Forest-hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne. The price is only one penny. The secretary and, we suppose, the editor is Mr. Albert Tarn, Bachelor of Science (London). He superintends a propaganda of the ideas on this subject held by the late Mr. Herbert Spencer. Incidentally, of course, he is opposed—perhaps we ought to say particularly opposed—to State religious education; and we note that he congratulates Mr. Ralph Young, secretary of the Northumberland Miners' Union, on "the stand he made in the Northumberland Education Committee against the teaching of religion in rate-supported schools." "It was," he adds, "like those humbugs who have been posing of late as martyrs of liberty to support the Duke of Northumberland in the matter."

"A Ratepayer" has a good letter in the *Haltwhistle Echo* on the action of the County Education Committee, which, under the chairmanship and on the motion of the Duke of Northumberland, has established Christianity in all the "provided" schools in Northumberland. This letter is both able and timely. We should like to see Freethinkers working in this way through the channel of the local press more frequently.

A little more than a year ago the opening of the great Congressional Library at Washington on Sunday—from 2 to 10 p.m.—was commenced. In his annual report just submitted to Congress the librarian, Mr. Herbert Putnam, is "enthusiastic over the success of the Sunday opening," and says that the results, "though fully within the expectations of the officials of the library, are beyond what they had ventured to predict." The average number of visitors to the library for each Sunday from September 14, 1902, to June 30 last, was 3,258. The average number of readers in the main reading room for each Sunday was upwards of a fifth more than the average for other days, and the average number of books supplied on Sundays was a tenth more than the average for other days.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Mr. Foote's article on "Gladstone and Ingersoll" is reproduced in the *Boston Investigator*. It thus becomes, as we wished it could be, accessible to a large number of American readers. A portion of this article was reproduced some weeks ago in the New York *Truthseeker*; but we would rather that American readers had the entire article before them; for the latter part of it is really an important development of the former part, and Gladstone's bigoted attitude at the time of Mr. Foote's imprisonment shows the likelihood of his later bigoted attitude towards Ingersoll.

The new number of the *Pioneer* goes to press immediately after this number of the *Freethinker*, and we venture to commend it to the attention of our friends as a cheap and effective propagandist auxiliary to this journal. We think it will be found that the February number of this little monthly contains a good deal of interesting and useful matter. Copies for free distribution can still be obtained at cheap rates from our publishing office: six copies for threepence, twelve copies for fivepence, or twenty-four copies for ninepence—in each case post free.

The Gospel for To-Day.

WHAT we all need—men, women, and children—is a Gospel for To-Day, a present-time help, guidance, and comfort *now*, and not myths and superstitions as to a future life beyond, with its bliss of heaven or pains of hell. All we require is to know how best and wisely to secure the joys of *this* life, and how to avoid or overcome its pains and ills. We shall not concern ourselves, then, with the fancies of white robes, golden harps, immortal food, or whether we shall sit at the right-hand of any despotic, almighty tyrant as he welcomes his blessed or execrates his cursed for “the deeds done in the body,” but to learn so to live now on this planet, that all its pleasures and felicities may be made available, and all its evils minimised or dissipated. To see now the result of good actions, and to witness now the punishment of wrong while we are on earth. This would be true salvation, and that of the highest kind; not that of a Jewish sufferer on a cross of wood—if there ever was such a sufferer, or such a cross—but the redemption, the elevation of our human existence as we know and experience it to-day.

Heaven is the vision of fulfilled desire,
And Hell the shadow of a soul on fire

sang Omar Khayyam, and the wise old Astronomer Royal of Persia uttered a truth of greater value to us than all the cant about the “many mansions,” or the going away into everlasting misery and fire. The “many mansions” will be a long time to let ere we shall occupy them, and the stokers of the “everlasting fire” will have struck for higher wages ere any human soul shall be cast into “the lake that burneth,” etc.

When we have rid ourselves of these ancient, and often horrible, ideas, these false, revolting doctrines, these unjust notions of the reward of a certain number and the doom of others, and turn to improve life's present ideals and opportunities, we shall know what it is to live. When the epiphany of enlightened intelligence shines around us, we shall see something better than a wobbly Star in the East, something better than “that manger rude and bare,” some wiser guides than the Magi. Our star will be Hope, our manger every happy human house, our wise men the illustrious teachers and thinkers of all ages and climes.

Recently in Milan they have been carting about the relics of the Three Kings from Cologne. The writer once saw their gorgeous shrine in Cologne Cathedral, and was also “privileged” to handle the reputed walking-stick or staff of St. Peter kept there. Shrine and staff were equally veracious to me. The skulls of Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar *may* have reposed in the rich casket of gold and gems, and St. Peter *may* have used that walking-stick, but to me they were not genuine. Equally with the blessed thigh-bone of St. Peter, afterwards shown me in Rome. Of course S. P. must have had a thigh-bone—certes—but I could not regard this one as his.

If we receive the witness of earth's greatest and best men, we shall not have to refer to Moses and the Prophets, or to the New Testament hierarchy, because we shall have better teachers—more rational, more instructive and satisfactory, imparting something adapted to, and of use, to-day. “O the comfort this blessed Gospel has given me!” said a fervid believer; but we could have told him of a far more blessed Gospel in the revelation of rational truth. It is manifested in the hearts and lives of those who are set free from the old creeds, shibboleths, and religions, and are directed by the continual light of reason, love, and truth. These have put away the “childish things” of Biblical and Evangelical religion, and truly “know in whom they have believed—*i.e.*, in intelligent Reason.

Even the “devout,” the “pious” lament that the ages of faith have faded. So they have—utterly.

Here and there are those who are, and will be, moved by hysterical appeals and declamation, or are still subdued under clerical rule, or still frightened by the bogey of Sin, or the dragon-mask of Fear. But it is useless now to beat the tom-toms of superstition to scare away the advancing armies of Intelligence. That old Chinese trick has to be abandoned in this age. Shouts, screams, warnings, invectives, and denunciations have lost all their terrifying power. As the old judge said to the prolix, tedious lawyer: “Produce your argument! State your case!” So we say, Produce the facts, the truth, the reality, and not Biblical hearsay nor ecclesiastical dogma, legend or tradition.

When they open out upon us with their presumably awful “Thus saith the Lord!” in Old or New Testament or church jargon, let us recall what Lowell said of John P. :—

Now John P.
Robinson, he
Said “They didn't know *everything*
Down in Judee!

GERALD GREY.

Correspondence.

ANOTHER LETTER FROM A CHINAMAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—I have just cut out the enclosed from the *Mirror*. Being a Chinaman I do not pretend to be a Bible scholar; still, I think there is something in the Bible which reads about as follows:—“Cast out first the beam in thine own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.” It evidently appears very absurd to the Rev. A. Elwin that about 550,000,000 Chinese should spend £30,000,000 sterling annually to propitiate the unseen and ghostly powers of the air. How very curious it never occurred to the reverend gentleman to see how this large sum compares with what is spent in other countries for the same purpose. The population of the United States of America is about 75,000,000, and it is admitted that the Americans spend £40,000,000 sterling annually in propitiating the unseen dragons of the air, and I think it will be found that in the British Isles a still larger sum is spent for the same purpose. Roughly speaking, it costs the average Chinaman slightly over a shilling a year to keep his soul saved, while the American pays 10s. and the Englishman £2 10s.

It evidently looks very absurd to the Rev. A. Elwin that paper should be employed as an instrument in propitiating ghostly influences, but still the Chinamen are not alone in the use of paper; millions upon millions of Bibles, which in reality are only paper instruments for propitiating Gods and Devils are used in England and in the United States. Quite true, they do not burn the paper as the Chinaman is said to do, notwithstanding that it would be a manifest advantage to do so.

The title given to the Rev. A. Elwin's remarks is “Expensive Ancestors.” I think the ancestors of the English and Americans found it very expensive at one time to keep their departed ancestors out of Purgatory, or the place that is supposed to be still hotter. It is said that at one time half the gold of Europe flowed to Rome, and the greater part of this was employed to get ancestors out of the Christian Purgatory. Only a few years ago an engaged couple, both devout Roman Catholics, were employed in the pantomime of a great London theatre. Unfortunately the young man was attacked by a lingering disease from which there was no hope of recovery; he was forced to give up his situation, and unable to earn any money, but he was loyally supported by his sweetheart who continued to dance at the theatre. However, in the end, the poor fellow died, and then the young woman was congratulated by her friends on being able to save money and pay her debts. It had cost her £3 a week to support her lover while he was alive, but upon going to the priest she learned to her dismay that her lover was not quite good enough to be landed directly in heaven; he was suffering in Purgatory. It appears that Purgatory is a kind of slippery shelf with a decided inclination in the direction of Hell.

The priest told her that her lover was in a precarious predicament, and in great danger of slipping off into Hell altogether. Being a good and faithful sweetheart, she naturally wished to extricate her lover from the dangers and sufferings of Purgatory; but in order to do so it was necessary to pay the priest, who assured her that he was able to perform certain incantations and make a certain kind of a noise with his mouth that would save him. She again found, much to her dismay, that £5 a week was required in

order to keep him in about the same spot, which was all the poor girl could earn above her board bill. If a less sum was paid weekly, her beloved was in great danger of sliding down the slippery shelf of Purgatory in the direction of Hell, while £5 a week was not quite enough to extricate him altogether and land him in heaven; so at last the young lady found that her sweetheart was a greater burden to her dead than alive. Now, I ask in all reason, is there a civilised or intelligent man in the whole world who actually believes that the welfare of one's problematical soul depends in any degree on someone who is still alive making a particular kind of a noise with their mouth? I say "No"; and every sensible man in the world knows the whole thing is a fraud and a humbug from beginning to end. It is not only a fraud and a cheat, but a mean and contemptible outrage, for cunning and dishonest devil-dodgers to thus defraud and cheat the poor and ignorant.

In England, it is truthfully said, "Justice is blind." The common people who witness the peculiar workings of so-called justice say the "law is a hass." The poor gipsy woman with the young babe at her breast is thrown into prison for making a servant-maid very happy for a whole day by telling her she is to be married to a prince, and receiving a sixpence for it, while the professional devil-dodger receives thousands by pretending to extricate alleged souls from a Purgatory that never existed; and his poor dupes, unlike the servant-maid, do not get even a single day's happiness out of it, but quite the reverse. And still, the English law being "a hass," these contemptible swindlers go scot free. I do not deny for a single moment that we have some very absurd and bothersome superstitions in China; still our people do not spend a tenth part of the time or money in propitiating imaginary gods and devils that is spent in England, and I defy anyone to find in China a swindling game or fraud that can at all compare in wickedness with the Purgatory swindle of Europe. Although the laws of China are not all that could be desired, still Justice is not altogether blind, and the law is not wholly and completely "a hass." I do not believe that any class of men, if they were Chinese subjects and amenable to Chinese law, would be permitted to prey on our ignorant and superstitious people in the manner in which I have described, and which is certainly very common in Western Europe.

AH SIN.

Ingersoll and the United States Comstock Law.

WHY THE MAJORITY OF AMERICAN LIBERALS WISHED ITS
REPEAL.

Liberal University, Kansas City, Mo.,
December 31, 303 P.M., 1903.

To the Editor of the "Freethinker," London, England.

DEAR SIR,—In your issue of December 20 last you make a just and decisive end to the "Trashy Tales of Dr. Torrey" and others, to the effect that Colonel Ingersoll never was (to use his own words) other than "opposed to the dissemination, through the mails or by any other means, of obscene literature, whether 'inspired' or uninspired, and held in measureless contempt its authors and disseminators." But your proper vindication of Ingersoll may lead some, unacquainted with the un-English position of our State and Federal Laws and Governments, to suppose that the majority of American Liberals differed with Ingersoll about obscenity and its suppression. That this was not so is shown by the fact that the "repealers," including myself, supported these resolutions of Ingersoll at the Cincinnati Congress in 1897, as quoted by you, and that the repealers themselves had always expressed similar sentiments.

Indeed, it is sufficient to mention the names of Hon. Elizur Wright, Courtlandt Palmer, James Parton, Moncure D. Conway, O. B. Frothingham, and of hundreds, and even thousands, of others, our best Liberals and citizens—able, honest, and honored—to see that there was no issue with Colonel Ingersoll about obscenity itself. The issue was whether its suppression should remain, as it always had been, the business of the State and home Governments, or be practically transferred to the jurisdiction of the National Government by the Comstock U.S. "Postal Laws," first passed under religious sectarian influences in 1873, for the avowed purpose of enabling those religious sects to dominate over the morals, literature, and Freethought of the country. After four years of trial of these laws their evil purposes became so manifest that the Liberals generally determined to show their opposition. At the request of Mr. D. M. Bennett, of the *Truthseeker*, and many of the Liberals above referred to, a petition to Congress was drawn up by me for the "repeal or modification" of those laws, and very largely signed. When it was about to be presented to the U.S. Senate, it was signed by Colonel Ingersoll, he then and always stating that he did it as a "modifier," to avoid its

evil and sectarian purposes and effects, and not as a Repealer.

The Repealers were, however, a majority, especially within the American Liberal League, their active organisation, presided over by Francis Ellingwood Abbot, then editor of the *Boston Index*, who has recently brought his own sad life to a close. His very active and influential minority in the League and out prevented the Repealers from having the effect of a united front, and after the election of Elizur Wright, and afterwards the present writer, as Presidents, a compromise was proposed and effected, practically by Colonel Ingersoll at the said Cincinnati Congress, and by his said resolutions there passed. So the case of "Ingersoll against obscenity" is really much stronger than you state. He led the Liberals of his country in the most eloquent and decisive declaration against obscenity ever made; and he prevented the continuance of the agitation for the repeal of those laws, for the repeal of which the Reverend Clergy violate their Commandments in order to "bear false witness" against him, and by which it seems they even imposed upon the moribund and not unwilling Mr. Gladstone. Let him be their last victim!

But, as a matter of justice, notice that "the Repealers," of whom I was one, acquiesced in this wish of Colonel Ingersoll, not because they had changed their conviction against obscenity, or their view about giving the United States an indefinite, unlimited, and unconstitutional criminal jurisdiction by means of the Post Office, but because any issue as to that law had then become impractical and harmful within the League on that subject. As far as I know, we Repealers all still believe with Hamilton in the "Federalist" that the "Post Office is simply a matter of public convenience"; and although the United States Supreme Court, "In re Jackson," held that the whole postal business was committed to Congress by the Constitution, yet that Daniel Webster was right in 1836 when he said against Calhoun that any law which made "the distribution of postal matter dependent upon its meaning was expressly unconstitutional." Whether it be as to slavery, morals, anarchy, socialism, religion, politics, or any view whatsoever, the decline of American liberty will have begun when the majority, "for ulterior and unpostal objects," deprived the minority of their right to the common use of the Post Office—the condition of freedom and civilisation as the Supreme Court itself has said. And so I am now, as then,—Yours for "Liberty and Purity, One and Inseparable,"

F. B. WAKEMAN.

THE CLERGY AND VIVISECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Will you kindly allow me space in your paper to enter my protest against the apathy of the clergy and ministers of all denominations respecting the subject of Vivisection? If they would honestly and fearlessly study the matter they would feel compelled to denounce the abominable and cowardly practice from the pulpit. It is because, in many cases, people are wilfully blind about the matter, and do not take the trouble to acquaint themselves with the awful and appalling facts that are taking place behind the scenes, and will continue to do so unless a determined effort is made to suppress the brutal and fiendish acts of the vivisector. The one really practical method to accomplish this end is to get a bill through Parliament, rendering the practice of vivisection illegal. Petition sheets to this effect may be obtained from the Secretary of the National Canine Defence League, 151 Strand, London, and the sooner we set to work and get them filled up the better.

E. Y. WILSON JONES.

Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, President of the Leicester Secular Society.

(From the "Leicester Guardian.")

THE name of Gimson has stood in Leicester, through several generations, for advanced and independent thought, and whatever our readers may think upon religious matters, they will not be disposed to do anything but admire men who are honest in their beliefs and courageous in maintaining them.

Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, like his father, the late Mr. Josiah Gimson, has that type of mind which cannot grasp what many regard as "the religious verities." To him they are not verities, and he believes that they are not essential to the living of a good life. That being his condition of mind he has, like his father before him, braved the opinions of those by whom orthodoxy and respectability are regarded

as synonyms, and with whom Secularists, Rationalists, &c., are species of the genus blackguard.

It was Mr. Josiah Gimson who fathered the Secular Society in the old days, when the Secular Hall in Humberstone-gate was built. It is Mr. Sydney A. Gimson who to-day takes an almost parental interest in the welfare of the society and the prosperity of the hall. He is the society's President, and has held that position, with the exception of one year, since 1888. But he is no mere figure head: he takes a great interest in the work, helps it liberally from his pocket, has a large share in deciding its policy, and is equal to a little gentle reprimand when he considers the society is not acting up to its ideals.

Yet withal Mr. Gimson is no dictator. He is looked up to by the society with the greatest respect, both on account of what his father did for it and what he himself has done, and this intense respect might have led to the establishment of a sort of despotism. That it has not is to the credit of Mr. Sydney Gimson's modesty, good feeling, and good sense. He has never sought to exercise any more power than that which his personal influence gave him, and that fact has doubtless made his influence all the greater. Certain it is that in these days no bitter things are said of the local Secular Society, and this has largely been brought about by the society itself. Under Mr. Sydney Gimson's presidency, it has established for itself, even amongst Christian people, the reputation of a society that is constructive rather than destructive, more anxious to build up happier conditions for humanity than to cast down those pillars upon which large sections of the human race believe their happiness rests.

One of the main lines of Mr. Gimson's policy for the Secular Society has been the development of its educational influence. He has always encouraged the Sunday lecture movement and the Sunday School movement; indeed, at one time he taught in the school at the Secular Hall.

Mr. Gimson's policy as President has always been to make the lecture platform of the Secular Hall an absolutely free platform. Thus not only have all types of Secularists lectured from it—the violently destructive and constructive ethical teachers—but Christians have been invited, and in some cases have accepted the invitation, to lay their views before the members. Similarly, both Socialists and Individualists have been encouraged to set forth their views on political economy before Leicester audiences.

The President of the Secular Society himself always claims to be an Individualist, and some years ago was instrumental in bringing down to the town the Hon. Auberon Herbert, to lecture on the subject. We take it that Mr. Gimson believes in men living their own lives as well as they are able, interfering as little as possible with the way other people live their lives. He believes also in simplicity of life, and out on the Charnwood Forest he has had a cottage erected in the simplest fashion. It is built on the rock of the district and of the rock of the district. It has thick walls and a thatched roof, while the furniture and the fittings are of the plainest and simplest sort. There is no surrounding garden, but one walks out of the front door right on to Nature's own turf and into Nature's own scenery. It is here that he spends the leisure of his summer days.

As most people know, Mr. Sydney Gimson is an engineer by profession. He is one of the Directors of Messrs. Gimson & Co., Ltd., and he has been for several years secretary of the local association of employers in the engineering trade. He thus has not much spare time. Still he is greatly interested in the work of the Charity Organisation Society, the Police Aided Association, and other charitable bodies. He is an earnest worker on behalf of purely secular education in the State Schools, and is interested in most progressive movements. He also finds time to do a good deal of reading, and has a splendid library. He was a co-opted member of the Free Libraries Committee for some years.

A SMALL but devout congregation was at worship. When it had become a free exhibition, in which any brother could enact a part, a queer-looking person got up and began a pious and learned exhortation. He spake for some two hours, and was listened to with profound attention, his discourse punctuated with holy groans and pious "Amens" from an edified circle of the saintly. Tears fell as the gentle rains from heaven. Several souls were then and there snatched as brands from the eternal burning, and started on their way to heaven rejoicing. At the end of the second hour, and as the inspired stranger approached "eighty-seventhly," someone became curious to know who the teacher was, when lo! it turned out that he was an escaped lunatic from the asylum. The curses of the elect were not loud, but deep. They fumed with exceeding wrath, and slopped over with pious indignation at the swindle put upon them. The inspired, however, escaped, and was afterwards captured in a cornfield. The funeral was unostentatious.—*Dod Grile,*

Obituary.

I HAVE to record the death of still another of our veteran Freethinkers in the person of Joseph Dean, who at the age of seventy-five passed away somewhat suddenly on Wednesday last. Our old friend—who was mildness personified and incapable of making an enemy—and Mrs. Dean were amongst the first to be enrolled members of the Branch of the N. S. S., and so continued until misfortune and bad times overtook them a few years ago. Mr. Dean had been bedridden for the past ten years through painful infirmity, yet through all his suffering his cheerfulness never deserted him, and his memory and intellect were as keen and fresh as ever right up to his decease. He was an inveterate reader, yet nothing did he like better than to read his *Freethinker* and have a chat or argue with friends or opponents. "Many a time and oft" has he been visited by various members of religious bodies who all failed to make him waver in his steadfast adherence to the secular principles which had guided him to the end; and to the credit of his Christian visitors be it said, that they have repeatedly acknowledged his truthful, honest, and manly character. During Mr. Bradlaugh's many struggles, no man helped more loyally according to his means and ability, and in a similar manner did he ever support our present President of the N. S. S., of whom he had a great admiration. He leaves his aged widow and a grown-up family, who have the consolation that he died as he lived—a true Secularist. The undersigned and other Freethinkers attended his funeral on Monday at the Huddersfield Cemetery, which—could certain arrangements have been made—would have been of a Secular character.—W. H. SPIVEX.

ON Sunday last it was our sorrowful duty to attend the funeral of Mrs. Davies, of Bell Barn-road, Birmingham. Well known among the oldest Freethinkers here, she will be remembered for her earnest support of our work in the old days. Up to the last she held to those principles of Secularism she long had the courage to openly avow. She was buried at the Lodge Hill Cemetery, the Secular Burial Service being read by Mr. E. Andrews.—J. PARTRIDGE.

The Tramp and the Priest.

Archbishop Bourne was enthroned the other day in the R. C. Cathedral, Westminster.

Jehovah junior sojourned in Judee,
As Jesus son of Joe the joiner Jew,
From nought B.C. till A.D. thirty three,
Then skyward skipped, full dressed—fools feel it's true!

His clothes were, doubtless, vile and foul like those
Of other homeless tramps who loaf for bread;
No house nor home had he—not even Joe's—
He said—at least, 'tis said 'twas said he said.

To heav'n, it seems, he took his dirty dress—
A habitat of fauna vagrants know—
For, filthiness is next to godliness,
As purely godly lives and precepts show.

If Christ the tramp had witnessed Bourne the priest
Enthroned midst gems, and gold, and silk, and lace,
He, certes, would have cursed him, at the least,
And swished a whip across the humbug's face.

The church contains—wherein the farce took place;
Wherein the quilted quack absurdly tries
To bribe the omni-absent God with lace—
The biggest (k)nave in all this land of lies.

The money'd rogues who run the churches claim
To be the friends of Christ the rich man's foe;
They preach their lies without a tinge of shame,
And ev'n profess to know "where liars go."

The Jew who had "not where to lay his head,"
Thorough hating work and forethought more than dirt,
Is praised by folk who praise a feather-bed,
A bath, a nail-brush, and a shiny shirt!

If these upholstered prelates met J. C.,
The poor but profitable Jew, they'd shrink;
And then the shabby, dirty tramp would see
These sainted, starched, and scented swindlers slink!

G. L. MACKENZIE,

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.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Brickley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "O Grave Where is thy Victory."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. M. Robertson, "Free Will."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Miss McMillan, "Heredity and Education."

WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Haringey): 7.15, Gustave Spiller, "Mankind in the Making."

COUNTRY.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, C. Cohen, "Herbert Spencer: The Man and His Work"; 6.30, "Atheism, and the Religion of the Future."

LEEDS (Covered Market, Vicar's Croft): 11, George Weir, "The Bible God"; Woodhouse Moor: 3. H. R. Youngman, "The Sermon on the Mount"; Town Hall Square: 7.30, A. Woolham, "Secularism and Socialism."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, H. Percy Ward, "Holy Wedlock"; 7, "Charles Bradlaugh Memorial." Lecture, Monday, 8 p.m., "The Mysteries of Radium."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 3, G. W. Foote, "The Gospel According to Dr. Torrey"; 6.30, "Is Christianity Really True?" Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, February 4, at 8, A. W. Hildreth, "Rationalism Triumphant."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday Evening; Musical and Other Recitals, etc. Collection for Hall expenses.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES (Market Place): Ernest Pack, 11, "Is the Bible True?"; 3, "Bible Beauties"; 7, "Magical Moses."

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