

# THE Freethinker

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*Man in his wildest state is a social being: a certain degree of civilisation and refinement ever produces the want of sympathies still more intimate and complete; and the gratification of the senses is no longer all that is sought in sexual connection. It soon becomes a very small part of that profound and complicated sentiment which we call love, and which is rather the universal thirst for a communion, not merely of the senses, but of our whole nature, intellectual, imaginative, and sensitive; and which, when individualised, becomes an imperious necessity, only to be satisfied by the complete or partial, actual or supposed, fulfilment of its claims. This want grows more powerful in proportion to the development which our nature receives from civilisation; for man never ceases to be a social being.—SHELLEY.*

## Capital Letters.

WORDS, said Hobbes, are the counters of wise men, and the money of fools. The saying is profoundly true, as anyone may discover who takes the trouble to examine and reflect. Just as a bit of bunting will gather men together, inspire them with a common sentiment, and make them face death rather than budge an inch, so a word or a phrase will often act as a mighty spell, though the people who employ it have never given its meaning five minutes' real thought in the whole course of their lives. A bigoted Protestant, say an Orangeman, who has been trained to detest the Roman Catholic Church without having imbibed the least knowledge of its history, flies into a rabid passion at the word "Pope." On the other hand, a strict Catholic, who has been taught to regard every form of dissent as a damnable heresy, no sooner hears the word "Protestant" than he conjures up the idea of a monster. To mention "Tory" at a Liberal meeting, or "Liberal" at a Tory meeting, is to excite the strongest feelings of derision or abhorrence; while to mention "Sceptic" or "Freethinker," or "Infidel," among orthodox Christians, is to make them feel positively unclean. During the French Revolution, it is said, there were fanatical Republicans who cried "Fraternity or Death;" that is, not death to themselves, but death to other people. "Be my brother or die!" they shouted to their opponents, while pointing weapons at their breasts. Clearly, in this case, Fraternity was not an intelligible idea, but a shibboleth, a party cry, a cant phrase, meaning as little as Abracadabra.

There are also many words that pass current without any definite signification being attached to them by the multitude, but when once they are adopted by a party, though their meaning becomes no more defined, they are taken as badges, and become rallying cries in political and social struggle. Take a very striking illustration. Free Trade, whether right or wrong, is perfectly intelligible. The phrase is neither dubious nor obscure. The simplest mind comprehends it at once. Free Trade is unlimited trade with every part of the globe. But the opponents of Free Trade, in a country like England, where naked Protection has no chance, raise the flag of Fair Trade; and under

cover of that word *Fair*, which is so highly respectable and even venerable, they manage to cheat thousands of simple-minded persons, who never get behind such words, but are imposed upon by their plausible faces. With the most perfect sincerity and composure, they ask you how you can oppose Fair Trade? What can be fairer than *Fair Trade*? And so on. Their poor minds are hopelessly befogged, and their condition is pitiable; but it is only an extreme instance of what is, after all, exceedingly common.

People can be cheated, however, not only by words, but by spelling; and there is no more effective device in this line than the skilful use of capital letters. When every substantive was printed with a capital there was no opportunity for this trick, but now that capitals are generally dropped, except for proper names, the cunning rhetorician can eke out his argument or his metaphor by a species of literary atavism. Probably no writer knew the secret of this method better than Carlyle, who was one of the greatest masters of rhetoric that ever lived; or, as some might prefer to say, one of the greatest artists in words. When Carlyle was writing straightforward history, as in the *Frederick*, he used few more capitals than an ordinary author; but when he assumed the preacher or the poet, as in his wayside disquisitions or in the perpetual transcendentalism of *Sartor Resartus*, his pages showed a perfect eruption of capitals. Eternities, Verities, and so on, sprang up head and shoulders above modester words of equal merit; and naturally they struck the attention of the ordinary reader, who is too apt to judge by first appearances, and takes these capital-lettered substantives at their own estimate—if we may be allowed to charge them with the author's doings. The object, of course, is to give these special words, not simply a distinction, but a personality. They are nothing but abstractions, but when they are printed like proper names they look like real existences; nay, like living beings that may be loved and hated for themselves. When Carlyle says "the Eternities cry" this, that, or the other, he imposes on the ordinary reader by means of the capital. Eternities suggest God; in fact, it seems a sonorous euphemism for the ineffable name. Yet if God were substituted for Eternities, the reader would shrink back. "How do you know," he might exclaim, "that God says so? Is it in the Bible, or is it a private revelation to yourself?" The fact is, Carlyle, like the tremendous and unscrupulous artist he was, expressed nothing but his own opinion; but this trick of spelling enabled him to father it, as it were, upon the universe.

Professor Huxley, many years ago, uttered a strenuous protest against this jugglery. Speaking of the metaphysical idea of compulsion, he said, "Matter I know and force I know, but what is this Necessity but a mental figment of my own creation?" And later on he said, with his peculiar blending of humor and scientific precision, that words like Necessity are printed with capital letters to make them imposing, just as you put a bearskin hat upon a grenadier to make him look more formidable than he is by nature. Metaphysical discussion would not cease if such words were printed like ordinary nouns, yet it would probably lose much interest to common readers, who might begin to see

the truth of Berkeley's remark, that metaphysicians first raise a dust and then complain that they cannot see.

Deity is another word usually printed with a capital, though quite wrongly. God is in a sense a personal name, for the word is supposed to denote a personal being. Mr. John Morley, therefore, was a little *outré* in printing it with a small g when he edited the *Fortnightly Review*; and the *Spectator* was only dishing him with his own sauce when it retorted by printing Mr. Morley's name with a small m.

Christian journals frequently print Atheist or Freethinker without a capital, while uniformly bestowing one on Christian, Protestant or Catholic. This practice seems to justify their readers' opinion that Atheists and Freethinkers are an inferior species. We have even seen Unitarian printed in such journals with a small u.

During the Jubilee craze we all witnessed a new development of spelling. Loyalty had grown so hectic as to appropriate for the Queen a usage formerly devoted to God. Every personal pronoun relating to her in the Jubilee service at Westminster Abbey was printed in capitals, so that she and the Almighty claimed an equal dignity. It is actually reported in the newspapers, without contradiction, that in the Prayer-Book used at Windsor the royal pronouns all take capitals, while the divine pronouns are reduced to the ignominy of small type. Surely it is impossible to conceive a loftier (we beg the word's pardon) flattery of royalty, or a more blasphemous snub to the heavenly majesty. Who will dare to pretend, after this, that the religion of the upper circles is anything but a branch of statecraft, or that their Christianity is anything more than "an organised hypocrisy"?

G. W. FOOTE.

### The Religious Instinct.

TALK to an Englishman, no matter how stupid, on politics, and he will say something sensible. Talk to one on religion, and, no matter how sensible, he will say something stupid. Such was Heine's summary of one of our national characteristics, and it was not far off the truth. For one really wonders whether there is any other word in the dictionary around which so much nonsense clusters as the single word "religion." We see one man solemnly arguing that the existence of God is a self-evident truth, oblivious that, if this were so, argument for or against would be out of place. Another asserts religion to be a "cardinal faculty" of human nature, without realising that the existence of non-religious people gives the lie to his statement. And yet another describes religion as an "instinct," although it has not a single characteristic of one. In truth religion is the happy hunting ground of the word-spinner and the charlatan. It requires little study to talk about it; still less to believe it. Even in politics one meets with a higher average of mental ability than one meets with in religion.

Nor is this mental sterility a mark of uneducated preachers of religion alone. Education seems only to aggravate it. For ability does not come with education; the latter only making the expression of the former more effective. Here, for instance, is an address by a Mr. Inge, Fellow and tutor of an Oxford College, on "The Religious Consciousness"; and, but for one or two indications of reading, it might as well have been preached by an ordinary Methodist "local." There is the same foolish assertion that religion needs no justification, in spite of the fact that the address aims at giving a justification, and the same assumption that, *because* religion is here, therefore it must be essential to our wellbeing.

Mr. Inge opens his address with the usual note—mystery. Religion, he says, "cannot be acquitted or condemned by the categories of the understanding,"

because its inspiration and its energy are drawn "from a deeper and more mysterious source." They are all alike. From the medicine-man of a savage tribe to a bishop of the Established Church the one cry is "Mystery." Why is this? It is not so with other things. No scientist makes such a parade of mystery. His aim is to show that *all* problems will finally yield to the human intellect. Well, the reason of the difference is that, while the scientific or social teacher trusts to human reason, the religious teacher fears it. He knows—or perhaps one ought to say he *feels*, as one scents the presence of an unseen danger—that an unfettered reason is the one enemy against which religion can offer no adequate defence. Hence the attempt to brand reason as a subordinate quality. Hence, too, the desire to impress people with the belief that in dealing with religion we are dealing with an impenetrable mystery.

Now, the plain truth is that religion is no more of a mystery than is morals, or physics, or mathematics. There are, of course, questions in connection with religion that need answering; but there is certainly no need to shout "Mystery!" over them. Moreover, the most important questions concerning religion have already been answered for all who are not deliberately blind to the replies. In its main outlines there is no longer room for doubt as to the origin of fundamental religious ideas. Anthropology has at least settled this much. The questions that are unanswered, or at least not answered to the complete satisfaction of all investigators, are those connected with the development of religious beliefs, and the relations between their various stages. The peculiar thing is the strange blindness of religious teachers to all that anthropology has taught us during the past fifty years of the real nature of religion. For all that one hears from the pulpits, anthropology might never have existed as a science. Religion is still treated as though it were something that sprang into existence full formed, and Christianity still spoken of as though it had no organic connection with savage worship and primitive magic. The plain truth is that this blindness is assumed. Such subjects are not dealt with because it is felt they are unsafe. Once upon a time Biblical criticism was treated in the same way. Now, as something *must* be said from the pulpit, it is felt that, after all, people had better discuss texts than origins.

Mr. Inge's description of religion is characteristic of the pulpit. He tells us in one place that religion is a "faculty," and in another that it is "a kind of instinct," with the implication that religion is something quite independent of all other faculties and to be judged by itself. As the use of this expression "religious instinct" is very common in the pulpit, it is worth while to see what it is worth.

Instincts may arise in one of two ways. Either they are due to a purely unconscious adaptation of an organism to its environment, or they arise from actions once consciously performed, but which by frequent repetition have become automatic. In either case it is possible to show a direct relation between the instinct and the environment. But in the case of religion the establishment of such a relation is plainly impossible. The organism is here, and there is also something called religion; but as the object of religious belief is an assumed existence, "God," and as this is an utterly unknown quantity, proof of a relation is obviously out of the question.

Further, it is in the nature of an instinct that it expresses itself automatically, and in response to the normal stimuli of the environment. But this is exactly what religion does not do—at least, in a modern civilised environment. There is no doubt to anyone who looks at the subject fairly that if each person were allowed to grow to maturity without religious instruction, receiving at the same time wholesome instruction in modern knowledge, not one would feel any need of religious beliefs. Under such conditions we should all treat Christianity as the average Christian now treats the religious beliefs of savage races. There is nothing in a modern civilised

environment to create an appetite for religion, apart from the special agencies maintained for that purpose. Under civilised conditions religion represents a species of atavism induced by the influence of agencies whose special purpose is to surround the human being with forces that belong to a lower stage of civilisation, and so shield him from the influence of present-day culture forces.

Of this the clergy are perfectly aware. Their cry that unless the child gets religion in its youth it will grow up an unbeliever is an admission that without artificial culture religion would soon cease to exist. They know that the appetite for religion is as artificial as any that obtains. Hence the desire of all the clergy to erect round each individual a barrier of prejudices and beliefs that will prevent the operation of secularising forces. What they are really doing is striving to create an atmosphere of barbarism to ward off civilisation. The whole secret of the struggle between religion and science lies here. It is an attempt to surround the people of to-day with forms and ceremonies and beliefs that properly belong to an uncivilised age. It is the struggle of the uncivilised past against the more civilised present. Yet it is this taste for religion, that is only kept barely alive by the frenzied energies of a huge army of priests seeking to control life from the cradle to the grave, that Mr. Inge speaks of as "a kind of instinct." An essential quality of an instinct is that it requires constant watchfulness, conscious control, to prevent its operation. But this "religious instinct" would soon cease to exist were it not artificially cultivated.

Nor does it follow that even if we grant religion to be an instinct that it must be useful *now*. All that the existence of an instinct proves is that it was once *useful*. Natural selection guarantees this much. But with a constantly changing environment it lies in the nature of the case that such instincts must be constantly on trial, must be continually tried by the nature of the surroundings. "One man's meat is another man's poison" is a saying that applies with equal strength to generations. No one disputes this statement applied to sociology, yet it is usually ignored in matters of religion.

So much on the nature of instinct. Now it may be pointed out that there is really no such thing as a "religious instinct." Man's belief in gods and a future life is no more the expression of an instinct than is his belief that twice two equal four. He has no more a religious instinct than an arithmetical one. Religion is not the expression of an independent faculty or set of feelings, but the expression of normal feelings in terms of a lower stage of culture. Thus, the desire to live, an inevitable result of the operation of Natural Selection, is interpreted by religion as a desire for a life beyond the grave. In the same way the forces of nature that nowadays are regarded as non-conscious, in an earlier stage are the expressions of God's activity, and in an even earlier stage taken as the Gods themselves. The future life itself is also nothing but a picture of human society under its most attractive aspects. It is thus we find all races describing heaven as filled with the things they like most on earth. And not only are all gods the image of man writ large, but the conception held of the god's method of governing the world and the nature of his operations are always a reflection of the prevailing social state and intellectual conditions.

But there is in this no proof of religion as the expression of an instinct. What religion always has done, and does still, is to exploit the social feelings of man. It gives these a religious cloak, and because, as was inevitable in early civilisations, supernatural beliefs permeated all social customs, it is assumed that therefore the two are inseparable.

Mr. Inge has one good point, and one only, in his address. He raises a mild protest against the sudden conversions of revivalist meetings as showing real conviction, or as offering anything of which religious people should be proud. But more might have been said than is said of their absurd character.

In place of the mild deprecation of conversions as "a self-induced ecstasy following on the excitement of revival services," it might well have been pointed out that in many cases positive injury is done to hysterical boys and girls by the excitement undergone, and the shock to even moral development, as is shown by the many relapses, an extreme puritanical conduct being succeeded by conduct as extreme in the other direction. And it is really time that the more thoughtful of the community called attention to the evil done by the trade in children carried on by travelling transatlantic and other evangelistic mountebanks.

Mr. Inge, however, seems blind to this aspect of the case. His reason for noting it seems to be that use has been made of the phenomena of conversion by American psychologists, and the results have been, on the whole, not flattering to religion. He believes that "We can learn much more from the normal than from the pathological manifestations of the religious life." But this overlooks the really important point of these investigations. Their value lies in showing how much of the pathological enters into what the religionist is in the habit of regarding as normal. This "Conversion Insanity" as one specialist called it, is pathological to the doctor, to the sociologist, but is it to the believer? Moreover, in the light of these and other investigations the major portion of the phenomena that have helped to build up religion must be classed as pathological. Consider the influence on religion of the phenomena of epilepsy, apoplexy, insanity, all of which led people to believe in possession and inspiration and divination, and all of which must be classed as pathological, and it will be realised how much religion owes its perpetuation far more to these things than aught else. There was, of course, a *natural* and normal basis from which religion started, but once started the abnormal played no small part in its growth.

Religion moreover tends to become pathological in both the individual and in society. Individually and socially the mental conditions that gave religion birth no longer obtain. Every event that has been classed as religious, it is now shown admits of a non-religious explanation. The whole trend of modern civilised life is away from religion. And not the least hopeful sign to the Freethinker is that when the Christian finds himself confronted by the raw material of religion he denounces it as morbid and repulsive.

C. COHEN.

### Inspiration.

RELIGION has filled so large and predominating a part in human life as to have left an indelible mark upon everything. Perhaps it is on language that it has most ineffaceably stamped itself. So many words in common use owe their origin to the belief in a God, and in the possibility of entering into fellowship with him. *Afflatus*, *genius*, *inspiration*, *enthusiasm* are terms that carry us back to the childhood of the race, and to people who were neither Jews nor Christians, but Pagans. The primary meaning of *genius* and *enthusiasm* has by now been irrecoverably lost, while *afflatus* is dropping out of use altogether. *Inspiration* is still doing service in its original signification. To inspire is to infuse by breathing, or as if by breathing, and to be inspired signifies to be possessed by the breath or spirit of another. Among the ancient Greeks the poets were believed to be under the spell of the gods, being, at times, wholly passive, neither thinking nor uttering their own thoughts, but the thoughts breathed into them from above. "Artistic powers and poetic talents, gifts of prediction, the warmth of love, and the battle frenzy were all ascribed to the power of the god possessing the man inspired." Plato treated inspiration as a species of mania, or insanity. When under its influence a man was not himself, but was

converted into a channel along which the river of divine ideas irresistibly flowed.

Thus we see that the Christian doctrine of Inspiration was borrowed from the Pagan world. It is admitted by Dr. Lindsay, a distinguished Scotch divine, that the "words were taken over into Christian theological writing, and used to describe what Jewish and Christian divines have called inspiration." The object of the present article is to show that, while the word inspiration is still used in its primary sense, there is undeniably a steadily growing tendency, even within the Christian Church itself, to secularise it. "In Christian theology," Dr. Lindsay assures us, "inspiration always has to do with the belief that God has 'wholly committed to writing' his revelation"; and he tells us further that, in consequence of that, "inspiration, whatever it may be, has for its result that God's revelation has so been committed to writing that men have it permanently, fully, and in an infallibly trustworthy way" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xiii., p. 154). Professor Lindsay is doubtless quite accurate in his account of the teaching of the Church as a whole. The Orthodoxy of to-day is essentially the same as that of the Middle Ages; and there was no fundamental difference between the schoolmen and the early Fathers. The Rev. W. Fuller Gooch, secretary of the Bible League, says: "The Holy Scriptures are holy and divine because born and inbreathed of the Spirit. But for this, they would be mere relics of a bygone age, echoes of an obsolete past, voices of the night, powerless to awaken or to illumine the souls of men. But whether a Moses or a Daniel, a Solomon or a Jonah, a John or a Peter, are used to write, that which is written is the voice of God. Of the whole Temple of Revelation, and of every portion of the sacred edifice, it may well be said, 'A greater than Solomon is here'" (*Criticism Criticised*, p. 145). The Rev. Preb. H. W. Webb-Peploe, M.A., says: "We stand committed to an agreement with all the great and learned men of past times, who one by one have said—The Word of God is the Bible, and the Bible is the Word of God, and we cannot afford to part with one word of it; nor can we doubt the infallible inspiration of the whole, but we accept it as being directly given by God himself" (*Criticism Criticised*, p. 160). Professor H. Langhorne Orchard argues that the writers of the Bible were so endowed with the Holy Spirit that they were able to foresee many of the great discoveries of modern science. "These divine fore-datings of man's discoveries of scientific facts," he says, "have not been handed down to us by tradition, at the mercy of man's manipulation, but have been placed in this Word of God amid its gracious spiritual teachings and testimony to the Christ of God. They are brought in so simply and naturally that the careless or unobservant reader may pass over them. Surely their consideration leads to the conclusion, to the certainty, that the Book which contains them can have no author other than God" (*Criticism Criticised*, p. 142).

Many other quotations, to the same effect, might be made from the teaching of eminent divines of to-day; but those already given will suffice to prove that the doctrine of plenary or verbal inspiration is by no means dead, as several progressive theologians allege. This fact must not be overlooked by Secularists. It is not with a corpse we are dealing when we attack and expose the belief in the infallibility of the Bible, but with the living creed of thousands of our fellow-beings. Whenever Free-thinkers denounce the doctrine because of its absurdity, opponents from the progressive school of theology usually say, "But you are beating a slain dog." The Rev. Fred C. Spurr, in his attempt to answer Mr. Robert Blatchford in the *Christian Commonwealth*, is an illustration in point. In *God and my Neighbor* Mr. Blatchford says: "If the Bible is a divine revelation, if it contains the actual word of God, and nothing but the word of God, then it is folly to doubt any statement it contains." And this is Mr. Spurr's reply: "First of all, you start with a false assumption, and then you proceed to

reason upon it. You have absolutely no warrant for your assumption. The Bible makes no such claim for itself, nor does any educated Christian proclaim such doubt as a folly." Is not the Rev. Preb. H. W. Webb-Peploe, M.A., an educated Christian? And yet in a sermon preached before the Bible League Conference at Oxford this is what the Prebendary says: "Is it likely that God would permit a revelation to be given to the creature whom he condescends to uplift to such a position of unity with himself, in which there should be all kinds of mistakes and failures? Let us form our conclusion that the Book, if it be of God, must be perfect originally, and that all that lies with man as a critic is this—to discover the original, if he can." The Prebendary cherishes the conviction that he has "in this blessed Book, not merely some words of God that may be found, and are to be discovered, by human wisdom and human selection, but the Word of God from cover to cover." And there are thousands in Great Britain who would say a vigorous Amen to such words. Mr. Blatchford had a much greater right to make his assumption than Mr. Spurr had to characterise it so contemptuously as false.

My point, however, is that although the orthodox doctrine of Inspiration has not been materially altered from Philo's day to this, yet the present tendency of the Church is to depart from it. It was repeatedly though regretfully admitted at the Bible League Conference that the Higher Critics now constitute the dominant school, not only in Germany, but also in Great Britain. It is a certainty that an overwhelming majority of scholars are active supporters of the Higher Criticism of the Bible. It is their firm conviction that inspiration, whatever it may have been, did not confer any form or degree of infallibility upon the sacred writers. They recognise only one kind of inspiration, although it may have various degrees. They freely admit that there have been inspired men in all ages and countries, and that no religion has ever been utterly false. At the King's Weigh House Church the other Sunday morning, Dr. John Hunter asked vehemently: "When Socrates said, 'I pray thee, O God, make me beautiful within,' what was the difference from David's prayer, 'Renew within me a right spirit'?" Well, the Higher Critics are evidently travelling in the right direction. The admission that there is only one kind of inspiration in the whole world is of supreme importance. It places Christianity in the same category as all other religions. Christianity may be the highest and best of them all; but it belongs to the same species. Isaiah and Plato, Paul and Seneca, John and Epictetus were very closely related, after all. At least, they all had the same kind of inspiration.

As soon as the Higher Critics take one more step forward they will have arrived at the truth. Then the word "inspiration" will have lost its primary meaning and become one of the synonyms of genius, or insight. Then a man will be called inspired while presenting himself to his fellows at his highest and best. Even in the churches there is a distinct movement in this direction. Fifty years ago a powerful and popular preacher was said to be full of the Holy Ghost; but to-day the popularity of a preacher is ascribed to his possession of wonderful oratorical gifts or of irresistible personal magnetism. The secret of his success is now found in his own personality, not in the fact that God visits and speaks to him. There was something sublime in the idea that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit converted ignorant, stupid, commonplace men into mighty giants, whose marvellous appeals caused unbelief to melt away like snow in June; but the Pentecosts of to-day are brought to pass through the instrumentality of committees, whose preparations and arrangements are most elaborate and complete, and who employ men naturally qualified to produce the desired results. Surely, if the world were rushing headlong to everlasting perdition, and if its salvation depended on its getting the offer of it from men specially commis-

sioned to make it, a God of infinite and omnipotent love would inspire more than two, or four, or six foreigners to fulfil such a glorious mission. The truth is that in modern revivals the place reserved for God is extremely small. The supernatural element is almost totally eliminated from them. This is doubtless what Dr. McLaren weeps over and calls the secularisation of the churches. Everything is done by machinery of the most approved fashion. The only thing that remains to be accomplished is the formal exclusion of God and his Spirit from the whole business; and, judging by the signs of the times, this devoutly-to-be-wished consummation is not very distant.

Thus Nature is slowly coming to her own, and mankind is waking from its dreams. While old-school Christians bemoan the secularisation of the churches, Secularists rejoice over it and are exceeding glad. Simultaneously with the secularisation of the churches proceeds the secularisation of language. Hence, the conclusion to which we gladly come is that the star of Secularism is inspiring in the ascendant. This fact is the main source of our inspiration.

JOHN LLOYD.

### Modern Popes.

OUR plucky little contemporary, *L'Asino*, has been engaged week after week, for some months past, in carrying out an *expose*, carefully evidenced, of the lives of the Popes, and this right in the wealthiest and most corrupt religious centre of all time, under the shade of the Vatican itself.

The paper was excommunicated, and gloried in it. Signor Podrecca's journal reviewed the Papal monsters of past times, and the Papal press of to-day howled.

At last Pius the Ninth of blessed memory came under the lash, and there was a recital of his wholesale political murders and tortures of an inquisitorial nature from the year 1853, supported by incontrovertible evidence.

This provoked storms of Italian adjective from a hundred religious newspapers; but they could not controvert the facts given. *L'Asino* reproduced the vignette portraits (just the heads) of thirteen women, illicit loves of Pius, and the king's censor condemned and sequestered a considerable part of that issue. The accusation was, as usual, one of indecency. In the upshot the Hon. Varradini denounced the censorship in Parliament, producing the paper before the assembly. A majority of the members was strong in condemnation of the censor's action. Even the clerical party could not deny the innocuousness of that particular issue.

Pope Leo, too, has been justly blamed for his part in the Perugian massacres of the 20th June, 1859, for which he alone was responsible. Leo (at that time Cardinal Joachin Pecci) was chief in authority when the Papal troops with the Austrian cutthroats entered the city; he could have stopped the massacre, but shut himself up in his palace while the drunken soldiery maltreated and murdered the almost defenceless women and children and old men, for the virile population of the place was away fighting in the hills for the liberty and unity of Italy. He recited the burial service over the drunken bullies who fell, including the "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" according to the old formula. As Camerlengo, after the decease of Pope Pius IX., he sent an insulting reply to Humbert I., King of Italy, who had asked to be permitted to attend the obsequies at the Sistina Chapel. There would be a tribune reserved, he wrote, for the accommodation of foreign princes travelling in Rome.

He was a child of the Jesuits, and worked always for the disruption of his country.

It is not generally known that it was Pecci who reinstated the Society of Jesus immediately following his ordination as Leo XIII.

The Society of Jesus was the mediæval prototype of the Salvation Army. It was formed in 1540 by Ignatius of Guipuzcoa, called Saint Ignazio di Loyola, a fanatical soldier in the Spanish Army. This worthy was executed by the Inquisition on a charge of the corruption of youth, and afterwards made a saint by Pope Paul. The Jesuits were disbanded by Pope Clement XIV. because, as he said, their shameless infamy brought scandal on the Church. Clement died in awful agony soon after—poisoned.

Leo is dead. When he died no one knew how his pecuniary affairs stood exactly. Even *Il Messaggero* and *La Tribuna* have admitted that he had a mania for accumulating. He trusted none of those who surrounded him. There were no regular account books, though money poured continually into his hands. All sorts of tales were told of hoards found in secret places, and disappearing treasure, but of course no one will ever know the facts under the circumstances. As *L'Asino* said, "there are no registers, scandals are hushed up, the money goes, and the fools of all the world continue to send rivers of gold to the gigantic money-box to the glory of the Lord," and I cannot help thinking that the benevolent smile of Leo was the typical expression of a miser as he took their wealth and gave his blessing.

The present representative of the humble fisherman was educated at a Jesuit college, and found himself in the Chair of Peter through a fluke of Jesuitical diplomacy.

They say in Rome that he is a man of humble bearing, of extreme simplicity in living; yet the comic journals make merry over the fact that he is continually being photographed, reproduced in sculptures, oil paintings, and so on. He uses the privilege of his position in reducing the quantity and quality of music to be played in Italian churches. He gives advice to fair worshipers, too, with regard to matters of toilette. This may be true humility—for a Pope; but what shall we say of his ridiculous "*motu proprio*"—his comic and painful conviction, as chief of a wealthy caucus, that the starving section of humanity, ever increasing in Rome, should not attempt to better its condition because it cannot?

Pius X. had better beware, for did not the blood of San Genaro liquefy for the third time during the year just past, out of due season, and does not such an event foretell the demise of some high dignitary of the Church? It may be a gentle hint given by his subtler brother Jesuits to the effect that he may refrain from overtaxing his genius for humility.

G. GUARDIABOSCO.

But God exists, or not, indeed,  
Quite irrespective of our creed;  
We live, or live not, after death,  
Alike whatever be our faith;  
And not a single truth, in brief,  
Is modified by our belief.  
And if God *does* subsist and act,  
Though some men cannot learn the fact,  
Who but Himself has made mankind,  
Alike the seers and the blind?  
It may be that for some good cause  
He loves to rest deep-veiled in laws;  
And better likes us who don't ask  
Or seek to get behind the mask,  
Than those our fellow-insect fry  
Who creep and hop and itch and pry,  
The Godhead's lice, the swarming fleas,  
In Jove's great bed of slumbrous ease.  
—James Thomson ("B.V."), "Vane's Story."

### Obituary.

SOUTH SHIELDS.—Mr. Andrew Stobbs, an old member of the local Branch, was buried last Sunday afternoon at St. Simon's Churchyard, Simonside. There was a large gathering of friends, including representatives of the West Park Bowling Club, Sons of Temperance, and other bodies, and Mr. S. M. Peacock, Vice-President, N.S.S., impressively read the Burial Service of Austin Holyoake.—E. C.

**Resurgam.**

Dawns dread and red the fateful morn—  
Lo, Resurrection's day is born!  
The striding sea no longer strides,  
No longer knows the trick of tides;  
The land is breathless, winds relent,  
All nature waits the dread event.

From wassail rising rather late,  
Awarding Jove arrives in state;  
O'er yawning graves looks many a league,  
Then yawns himself from sheer fatigue.

Lifting its finger to the sky,  
A marble shaft arrests his eye—  
This epitaph, in pompous pride,  
Engraven on its polished side:  
"Perfection of Creation's plan,  
Here resteth Universal Man,  
Why virtues, segregated wide,  
Collated, classed, and codified,  
Reduced to practice, taught, explained,  
And strict morality maintained.

Anticipating death, his pelf  
He lavished on this monolith;  
Because he leaves nor kin nor kith  
He rears this tribute to himself,  
That virtue's fame may never cease.  
*Hic jacet—let him rest in peace!*"

With sober eye Jove scanned the shaft,  
Then turned away and lightly laughed  
"Poor Man! since I have careless been  
In keeping books to note thy sin,  
And thou hast left upon the earth  
This faithful record of thy worth,  
Thy final prayer shall now be heard;  
Of life I'll not renew thy lease,  
But take thee at thy carven word,  
And let thee rest in solemn peace!"

—*Dod Grile (Ambrose Bierce).*

**REBARBARISATION AND ECCLESIASTICISM.**

And now, along with that re-barbarisation accompanying the movement towards Imperialism, we see, curiously enough, a change of taste carrying us back to those types of art which were general in the days of coercive rule. First of all it is shown in that part of the social organisation which everywhere and always adheres most strongly to the old—the ecclesiastical. The internal walls of cathedrals, which during modern days were plain, have been in some cases re-covered with tawdry colored patterns; and now the ecclesiastics, having got the upper hand, are lining the dome of St. Paul's in the ancient style with mosaic pictures. Everywhere Protestant simplicity is being replaced by Catholic elaboration in the altar and its reredos, full of sculptured detail; and the vestments of the ecclesiastics themselves have gone back to the old type—robes made weighty with glittering ornaments: all suggestive of medieval and Oriental pomp.—*Herbert Spencer "Facts, and Comments."*

**Society Gossip.**

"Pope Pius X. has struck out from the list of his predecessors five names which have a legendary rather than a historic existence."—*Daily Paper.*

THE Duke of Ditchwater has pruned his family tree, lopping off six of his ancestors whose claims to existence he has always regarded as purely apocryphal.

Baron Dutch-crushed has just overhauled his fine gallery of family portraits, fitted up at enormous expense only ten years ago, and turned to the wall the faces of all his forefathers beyond three generations back. The Baron and Baroness are entertaining the friends of their youth at the castle next week.

The "smart set" have gone one better than the followers of the latest society craze. Not only have they cancelled from their genealogies the names of all mythical predecessors; they have even effaced the names of their fathers—being, they say, more or less uncertain as to their immediate progenitors.

"Too proud to care from whence I came" is the favorite motto this season at fashionable "motto-teas." F. L. G.

Just as we go to press we hear that Pius X. has risen from the study of the Early Fathers with grave doubts as to to J. C.'s. He even calls in question the historic existence of the Holy Ghost; and with quaint humor desires that he be known to fame as Pope *Impius*.

**Acid Drops.**

A very varied lot of goods are seized at the residences of Passive Resisters. In the Stockport list there are even Bibles. We suppose the parties distrained on had second copies for daily use. One kind gentleman gave up his wife's sewing machine—no doubt as a thing he could spare without personal suffering.

A Passive Resister named Kirkland, at Sandbach, Cheshire, addressed the Bench in a remarkable manner. "Our appeal, gentlemen," he said, "is to that law of God which is higher than the law of the land, and to that Court of Justice in which you, as well as we, shall be defendants." The Chairman quietly replied, "You can take your appeals to that Court."

A Passive Resister at Stretford, the Rev. F. A. Rees, appeared before the Manchester Stipendiary, and acted as though he had bought the place. He put a lot of questions to the Stipendiary, who had to say that he was not there to answer conundrums. Being in a fine vein of Christian humility, the reverend gentleman proceeded to argue that the King was on the side of the Passive Resisters, having said of them: "These are men who are resisting what they believe to be unholy laws. They will fight, and they will win." This was such an extraordinary statement that the editor of the *Manchester Evening News* asked Baron Knollys by telegram whether it was true. His Majesty's secretary replied as follows:—"It is most improper to bring in the King's name in a matter of this description, and the defendant ought to have known that there was not a shadow of foundation for his statement." So much for the extra special news of this holy Passive Resister.

A Portsmouth Passive Resister maintains in the local press that "in the elementary day schools only the unadulterated Word of God should be read, without any religious teaching whatever." This looks sound enough, but is only half the battle. What this Passive Resister has now to do is to inform the English public where the unadulterated Word of God is to be found. We should like to come across it ourselves.

Parliament may breathe freely. Dr. Clifford is *not* going to stand for a seat in the House of Commons. He thinks he will be more useful outside. Many members of parliament will no doubt be practically of the same opinion. Religious fanatics, with mechanical harmoniums, would be regarded by most M.P.'s as a decided embarrassment.

Attention is being drawn to the "conditions under which thousands of clergymen do their work." More than half the Church parsons, it is said, are living on incomes not one of which exceeds £3 10s. a week, and 1,341 of them would gladly exchange their revenues for a weekly two pounds. A vicar, twenty years in holy orders, has a stipend of £80 a year; a vicar with six children, £108; a vicar with eleven children, £135; and so forth, and so forth. Very shocking, no doubt! But what about the other half of the parsons? Why don't they share a bit with their poorer brethren? Why should the laymen be always called upon to shell out for the clergy? And, in particular, why should laymen be expected to take pity on a parson who suffers from the consequences of exaggerated philo-progenitiveness? Why the deuce *will* clergymen crowd their dwellings with eleven children? Is it because they have so little to do out of doors?

There is another way of looking at this poor-parson business. They are preachers of the blessings of poverty. Their divine Master promised the poor the first places in heaven. Why, then, should the clergy complain of getting only a paltry two pounds a week? That income would be affluence to multitudes of hardworking people. Is it right to leave all the blessings of poverty to the laboring classes? Surely the parsons ought to take a large share of them to start with—if only as a guarantee of good faith.

The Bishop of Manchester, preaching on medical charities at Christ's Church, Salford, let it be clearly seen that he was strongly opposed to the municipalisation of hospitals. He was ill-advised, however, to let his professional interest in the matter be so apparent. According to the report in the local *Evening News*, he said that "the church would suffer a great loss if deprived of the opportunity of supporting the hospitals, for though they might save a little money they would lose in another way." This is certainly true, and we are glad that Bishop Knox was indiscreet enough to say it. The Church does gain by supporting the hospitals. It begs

the money, acts as almoner, and gets a cheap reputation for benevolence. Yes, we can quite understand why the Church wants to keep up the present "charity" system, instead of the system based upon common sense, common justice, and common humanity.

The *Advocate of India* prints an extract from a native paper, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, concerning an assault case in which Bishop Whitley figured. As a missionary, he was thought by some villagers to be bent on depriving them of their caste, the loss of which they dread more than death itself. So they "went" for him, and he "went" for them afterwards in the law courts. Whereupon the native paper comments sarcastically: "Did not Jesus Christ preach that, when one cheek is struck, the other should be turned? How could the Bishop, in the face of this precept of his great Master, think of prosecuting the misguided men criminally? That man alone is fit to preach Christianity who is able to follow the precepts of his Master." True. But how many preachers would there be on those conditions?

We have received a circular letter from a certain daily paper informing us that "the Prince and Princess of Wales will visit the new offices" of the said paper on a certain afternoon, and have "graciously consented on that occasion to set the entire new machinery in motion by means of an electrical lever." Have they? Prodigious! What condescension! And what flunkeyism!

Mr. Edmund Gosse—the gentleman we have more than once criticised in relation to his philistine apologies for the "youthful heresies" of Shelley—has been appointed Librarian to the House of Lords, with a salary, we believe, of £1,000 a year. The *Daily News* seems charmed that the post has fallen to the lot of "so eminent a literary man," and goes out of its way to mention that Matthew Arnold once aspired to the Librarianship of the House of Commons. But who on earth outside the *Daily News* office regards Mr. Gosse as an eminent literary man, or would think of mentioning him in the same breath with Matthew Arnold?

England is a Christian country, but what horrible things happen in it, in spite of the "new lease of faith" and the "decay of infidelity." Four men—two costers, a porter, and a tailor—have just been sentenced at the Old Bailey to eighteen years' penal servitude between them for burning a girl with a red-hot poker in an indescribable way. They had not even a quarrel with the girl. A drunken orgie was going on, and one of the men committed the offence with the connivance of the others. It was apparently a bit of "sport." Of course it will be forgotten in a week in Christian England. But if it had occurred in a "heathen" country it would have figured in missionary literature for half a century.

Mr. John Morley was quizzed by the *Daily News* lately on account of his confused Biblical imagery. "He likened the Speaker," it said, "to Belshazzar and, somewhat curiously, proceeded to compare the royal Thames with the River Styx, which was not, if we remember rightly, one of the waters of Babylon." We did not read Mr. Morley's speech; indeed we very seldom read speeches in Parliament—they are such ridiculous insincere productions. But we take it that the *Daily News* was glad to have a fling at Mr. Morley in connection with the Bible because he is so well-known as a Freethinker. We venture to say, however, that belief in the Bible, in the religious sense of the word, and accurate knowledge of its contents, do not always go together. The one man who has used Bible references with most telling effect in the House of Commons is said to be Mr. Henry Labouchere.

At the recent half-yearly meeting of the Great Northern Railway, with Lord Allerton in the chair, the Rev. Prebendary Webb Peploe presented a memorial signed by 1,170 shareholders, representing £184,400 of capital, against Sunday traffic and labor. That amount is, of course, a fleabite to the whole capital of the Great Northern. It is easy to understand, therefore, why Lord Allerton gave a diplomatic reply, which might mean anything or nothing. He said that they were doing all they could to reduce Sunday traffic on their line, but [oh that "but"! ] it was a matter solely for Parliament.

The Torrey-Alexander Mission at Bingley Hall, Birmingham, claims to have made over 5,000 converts. If any considerable portion of these were drunkards or desperate characters, the Birmingham publicans should experience a reduction of business, and the Birmingham police and magistrates should have an easier time in the immediate future. But if we asked them whether they expected it, they would probably smile. The only absolute certainty

about this Mission is the cost, which is reported to amount to £2,500. Such is salvation "without money and without price" when conducted on a big business scale.

Dr. Torrey, the Yankee revivalist, was apparently nettled by his failure to stop the Birmingham Secularists from circulating Mr. Foote's tract, *God at Chicago*. Anyhow, he devoted his final address to business men to the subject of "The Consequences and Cure of Infidelity." He did not take the opportunity, as he might have done, to say how sorry he was for having slandered great Freethinkers like Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. What he had said he had said—lies and all. He preferred to tell fresh falsehoods about "infidelity"—which he understands as well as a butcher understands the biology and psychology of sheep and cattle. According to the report in the *Daily Post*, Dr. Torrey "mentioned sin, anarchy, wretchedness, despair, a hopeless grave, and a hopeless eternity" as the consequences of "infidelity." If that is all he knows about the consequences, we need not trouble about his cure. It is sure to be quackery. "Infidels" are at least as good as Christians; they are not wretched, but look happier than the majority of Christians, including the dour Dr. Torrey; and as for the "hopeless eternity," they are quite ready to take their chance with any pulpit mountebank who lies for a living—and does it in the poorest common-place English.

According to the *Christian Herald*, there is a peculiar and active body of "Torrey's Converts" at Liverpool. They are all employed at Hudson's Soap Works. Prior to Dr. Torrey's visit to Liverpool they were all engaged in a business closely related to cleanliness. Now they are engaged in the adjacent business of godliness. They have meetings every day during the breakfast and dinner hours; they also visit mission halls in Liverpool and Bootle, where they "prove a big attraction and draw crowded audiences." Evidently it is thought a very great thing to convert people in the soap trade. We should like to know the secret of their obduracy in the matter of religion. Is it because of the old association between faith and filth?

Reference was made recently in our columns to the *Daily News* announcement that Mr. Robert Blatchford was going to be answered by the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale. "Now," we said, "we *shan't* be long." To this Mr. Woffendale's "attention has been called," and he has "much pleasure" in sending us the last four numbers of his little monthly, the *London Evangelist*, from which it appears that the *D. N.* announcement, like some other things in that paper, was a good deal behind date. "They contain," Mr. Woffendale says in writing to us—although, by the way, his letter was actually in print in one of the papers that accompanied it—"four of my replies to the honest but erring, brilliant but bigoted anti-Christian attacks of Mr. Robert Blatchford in the *Clarion*. Should you pen any adverse criticisms upon the replies to that gentleman, your hostile criticism shall have respectful attention, and most assuredly, I will do my best to return you a satisfactory rejoinder." Mr. Woffendale adds: "Utterly opposed, as you know I am, to your Atheistic principles and propaganda, I sincerely wish you a speedy recovery from your throat indisposition, and hope that your life may be prolonged for many years to come."

Of course it goes without saying that Mr. Woffendale, as a Christian minister, is not at all in love with our Atheistic propaganda. We should know that without knowing *him*. But we should hardly have known that he entertained any good wishes on our behalf if he had not said so. Still, we do not doubt his word; and we are glad to see, even for his own sake, that he has been reading with fresh efficacy the fine thirteenth chapter of the first of Corinthians—which is one of the things that "infidels" do not object to in the Christian Bible. For our own part, we admire it and applaud it; and we congratulate Mr. Woffendale on turning to it in the more advanced part of his life in preference to the darker and harsher texts that also, alas, came from the mouth of the same great Apostle to the Gentiles.

We regret, however, that we cannot accept Mr. Woffendale's invitation to reply to his replies to Mr. Blatchford. That is too roundabout a method of controversy for us in the *Freethinker*. Besides, it seems to us that Mr. Blatchford is—first of all, at least—the proper person to deal with his own critics; and we dare say he is able to give a good account of himself whenever he chooses to do so. Moreover, it is as well-known to Mr. Woffendale as it is to ourselves, that all the points in Mr. Blatchford's attack on Christianity, and all the replies to them, have been dealt with long ago in the columns of this journal. Mr. Blatchford's attack is only novel on account of its personal freshness and eloquence.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain is off to Egypt. There was once another Joseph in that country, who had a coat of many colors and something to do with corn. His story may be found in "the Book"—if the modern Joseph ever reads it.

We all remember the story of King Richard of the Lion Heart, who roundly expostulated with God for letting him fall into the hands of his vilest enemies on returning home from one of the Crusades. "I would not have served you so," he plainly told the Almighty. A sentiment which seems to have been commoner in the old "heroic" days than it is now. According to Lady Gregory's *Gods and Fighting Men*, it existed amongst the ancient Irishry. When St. Patrick told Oisín, son of Finn, that "God is better for one hour than the whole of the Fianna of Ireland," the answer came prompt and swift:—"How could it be that God or his priests were better men than Finn, a generous man without crookedness? You say that a generous man never goes to the hell of pain; there was not one among the Fianna that was not generous to all.....The Fianna used not to be saying treachery; we never had the name for telling lies. By truth and the strength of our hands we came safe out of every battle.....It would be a great shame for God not to take the locks of pain off Finn; if God himself were in bonds my king would fight for his sake. For the strength of your love, Patrick, do not forsake the great men; bring in the Fianna unknown to the Kingdom of Heaven.....For all that I have suffered I forgive the King of Heaven." Which reminds one of the great and famous "Man's forgiveness give—and take!" in Omar Khayyam.

The *Watford Messenger* is, we believe, circulated by the Plymouth Brethren from door to door. We have been favored with a recent copy of this remarkable production. The frontispiece is a picture of a meeting which is referred to subsequently in the letterpress. Ladies and gentlemen in the front seats are looking towards the platform, on which is a person of the male sex standing up behind a table, while a withered old person of the female sex shakes the whole four fingers and thumb of her left hand at him. This is designed to illustrate a story of "The Sceptic Lecturer Silenced," but somehow or other the artist has forgotten *the chairman*. The story itself is probably as accurate as the artist's design. We have seen it before; indeed, it has been told in relation to the late Charles Bradlaugh. Stupid as it is, we reproduce it in order to show what silliness is imposed by Christian apostles upon their credulous followers:—

"After an infidel had concluded a lecture in a village in England, he challenged those present to discussion. Who should accept the challenge but an old, bent woman, in antiquated attire, who went up to the lecturer and said:

"Sir, I have a question to ask you."

"Well, my good woman, what is it?"

"Ten years ago," she said, "I was left a widow, with eight children utterly unprovided for, and nothing to call my own but this Bible. By its direction, and looking to God for strength, I have been enabled to feed myself and family, I am now tottering to the grave; but I am perfectly happy, because I look forward to being in the glory with Jesus. That's what my religion has done for me. What has *your* way of thinking done for you?"

"Well, my good lady," rejoined the lecturer, "I don't want to disturb your comfort; but—"

"Oh! that's not the question," said she; "keep to the point, sir. What has your way of thinking *done* for you?"

"The infidel endeavored to shirk the matter again; the meeting gave vent to uproarious applause, and the champion had to go away discomfited by an old woman."

That old woman ought to be exhibited, stuffed, in a Christian Evidence museum. She would be a fit companion for the fabulous old women who played eavesdropper at the deathbeds of Voltaire and Thomas Paine.

Magistrates who play the fool and bigot over the Conscience Clause of the Vaccination Act sometimes meet a tartar. They met one the other day at Kingston. Being asked by the Chairman if he had a conscientious objection to vaccination, he replied that he had a good one. "What is it?" asked the Chairman. "Well," he replied, "I myself have been vaccinated three times, and each time I was paralysed, and had to undergo an operation." Not even a Kingston magistrate could dispute the force of *that* objection. The exemption was granted.

Suffering from mental depression, the Rev. Alfred Sprague sought benefit at a Ministers' Home of Rest in the New Forest. Becoming worse, he started returning to his home at Dorchester. He had to change at Poole and wait for the Weymouth express. On the train approaching the station he deliberately threw himself in front of the engine and was cut to pieces. He was fifty-eight years of age, and leaves a

widow and family. Of course the jury brought in the usual verdict of temporary insanity. The incident, therefore, calls for no particular comment. But what a lot of pens would have flourished, and what a lot of tongues would have wagged, if this unfortunate man—with the still more unfortunate wife and children—had been a Freethought lecturer.

One thing befalleth them (as Solomon or somebody said), yea they have all one breath. Rev. Walter Smith, Kelvin-side, Glasgow, has cut his throat from ear to ear with a razor, after trying to drown himself. Rev. W. Clifford Aston, Lockhampton, Cheltenham, has succumbed under a dose of carbolic acid. We do not know that there is any particular moral to these sad events. There might have been a moral if the two reverend gentlemen had been Freethought lecturers.

Harry Marker, a French polisher, has been sentenced to two months' hard labor by the Lord Mayor of London. He pleaded in excuse the Bible text that "God helps those who help themselves." Of course there is no such text in the Bible. The teaching of that volume is trust in the Lord—though that sometimes leads to starvation, which is worse than two months in the stone jug.

Harry Marker ought to have seen that "text" in its most edifying form. This is how it appeared in an American dry-goods store: "God helps those [who help themselves. But God help the man found helping himself here."

It is one of the silliest ideas in the world that Free Will is a Christian doctrine. It is certainly not taught in the New Testament, and is apparently negated by St. Paul. It has also been rejected and refuted by a long list of eminent Christians, including Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards. Dropping down a good way in the scale, we see by a paragraph in the *Portsmouth Evening News* that the Buckland Congregational Church Mutual Improvement Association has lately had a debate on Free Will, with a division after the debate, the voting being twelve for Free Will and eight for Fatalism. So much for Christian unity on this vexed problem.

Who said that bigotry was dead? Let him take it back. He spoke some hundreds of years too soon. We are constantly meeting with proofs to the contrary. Here, for instance, is an extract from a letter by a correspondent at Bristol. "I wish you would come down here," he says, "and give the bigots a good dressing. My daughter applied for a situation at Wills's tobacco factory. Everything was all right, character from school was marked excellent, and then came the question, What Sunday-school do you go to? None, sir. Then I won't put you on." What a dear good soul your average Christian is when he meets with a person who doesn't think exactly as he does!

Canon Blake, at St. Jude's Church, Portsmouth, recommended some sixpenny orthodox publications. A correspondent of the local *Evening News* got some of them, and he reports that "two give a rational account of the origin of evil, and discredit the teaching of St. Paul on the so-called Fall; and a third is written by a man who has many times expressed his disbelief in the credibility of St. Matthew and St. Luke, and his conviction that Jesus Christ was the natural son of Joseph the carpenter." Canon Blake will have to make another selection. And it might be better if he read the books he recommends.

When on the rampage "Providence" does not discriminate in favor of its own houses. It will knock you down a gospel-shop as readily as a liquor-saloon. St. Nathaniel's Church, Windsor, Liverpool, has just been destroyed by fire. The fire brigade tried hard to save the building, but "Providence" got well in first. It is a sarcasm, if you look at it from a proper point of view, that the damage is covered by insurance. Even the clergy trust "Providence" as little as possible.

#### PATENT.

We'll live upon a patent food,  
And draw a patent breath,  
Until upon a patent bed  
We die a patent death.

Then after that we will be sure  
To criticise and carp,  
Unless on patent golden streets  
We play a patent harp.

—Life.



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, February 21, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W. : 8, "Holy Russia and Heathen Japan."

Friday, February 26, Queen's Hall Demonstration in favor of Secular Education.

February 28, Coventry; March 13, Liverpool; 27, Birmingham

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—February 21, Newcastle; 28, Liverpool; March 6, Queen's Hall, London.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 21, Birmingham; 28, Queen's Hall; March 6, Glasgow; 13, South Shields; April 3, Sheffield.

A SOUTH AFRICAN FREETHINKER, writing to Miss Vance, the N.S.S. secretary, from Colesberg, says: "It gives me great pleasure to know how much good work the N.S.S. does on the small income debited to it on the balance-sheet which you have so kindly sent me. It also rejoices me to see that ladies are active in the cause—a thing unknown out here—and that Mr. Foote keeps up his wonderful and telling freshness."

ANNUAL CHILDREN'S PARTY.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges £1 1s. from Major John C. Harris, R.E.

A. WEBBER.—Yes, better late than never. Tracts sent as desired.

CONSTANT READER.—We agree with you. "Priest in the house" is one of the worst afflictions. The husband should simply show the interloping man of God the way out, and help him out if he finds any difficulty in going. Of course it makes no difference whatever to the black gentry in what part of the world they operate. They are always and everywhere the same. But they ought to be found out quicker in South Africa than in old conservative countries.

A. POWELL.—Thanks for your good wishes.

W. ROWLAND.—Shall be glad to receive such cuttings whenever the spirit moves you to send them.

H. G. (Sheffield).—You can obtain the paper you mention from our own publishing office. We cannot print a list of such papers in this column.

J. DAWSON.—We took the trouble to answer your letter by post. But if you obtained a copy of the *Bible Handbook* from our publishing office you would be able to reply to all such questions yourself.

C. D. STEPHENS.—Thanks for cuttings and good wishes.

W. J. McMURRAY.—You will find the price of *God at Chicago* in our advertising columns. What you mention is not illegal. But you should avoid being offensive.

J. SHIPP.—See "Acid Drops."

J. JONES AND J. THACKRAY.—Your subscriptions should have appeared in the fourth list, but were accidentally overlooked. Very sorry.

W. SCRIVENER.—Thanks. We will see to it.

A. SIMMONDS.—We don't care to go back over the case you refer to, though what you say is probably right enough.

T. H. ELSTON.—We hope you will be pleased with our paragraph on Mr. Cohen's lecture at Newcastle-on-Tyne. Glad to hear that you are circulating copies of *God at Chicago* freely.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your useful cuttings.

W. BINDON.—We cannot discuss in this column. Think out the quotation from Quetelet yourself. We do not quite understand your question *re* the first verse of the fourteenth psalm. The text is not very polite, anyhow.

FRANK SMITH.—Much obliged for your kind letter and cutting. We will write you on the matter of your suggestion with respect to Queen's Hall.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's audience at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening was somewhat marred by the very unfavorable weather. Still, there was a fairly good meeting, and the lecture was hugely enjoyed. Mr. F. A. Davies made an excellent chairman. It should be added that the meeting included a gratifying proportion of ladies.

Mr. Foote occupies the Queen's Hall platform again this evening (Feb. 21), when it is to be hoped the weather will be more propitious. There will be a departure on this occasion from the printed program. Mr. Foote will take for his subject "Holy Russia and Heathen Japan." London Freethinkers should spread the news of this lecture among their friends and acquaintances, and thus help to bring a crowded audience.

A Public Meeting in favor of "Secular Education" as the "Only Solution of the Religious Difficulty" will be held next Friday evening (Feb. 26) at the Queen's Hall, Langham-place, London. Workmen are invited to "come in their thousands and help to realise the Education program of the Trade Union movement." The speakers announced are Mrs. Bridges-Adams, Mr. J. Keir Hardie, Mr. H. M. Hyndman, Mr. J. F. Green, Mr. H. Quelch, and Messrs. Will Thorne and Bowerman representing the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress. The historic side of the "Secular Education" movement will be represented at this meeting by Mr. J. M. Robertson and Mr. G. W. Foote. Secularists should therefore strive to make the meeting a grand success.

The *Zoophilist* notices Mr. Foote's article on "The Kinship of Life" in the January number of the (quarterly) *Humane Review*, and says that he "deals in the most lucid manner with the vexed question of the Rights of Animals." Clearly we are getting along. The "vulgar blasphemous" view of Mr. Foote is dying hard—but it is dying.

Mr. Cohen delivers this evening (Feb. 21) what, for want of a better term, we may call an "outside" lecture. The Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society have engaged him to address their Tyne Theatre audience, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, on "Social Evolution and the Survival of the Fittest." A very appreciative notice of Mr. Cohen's public work, including that portion of it connected with the *Freethinker* and the *Pioneer*, is given in the Society's *Weekly Notes and Program*. Still, there may be a few bigots who will keep away from this lecture on account of Mr. Cohen's militant Atheism; and to compensate for this, as well as to show their appreciation of him, the Tyneside "saints" will doubtless make it a point to swell his audience to the largest possible extent.

Mr. John Lloyd pays a second visit to Birmingham to-day (Feb. 21) and lectures afternoon and evening for the local N. S. S. Branch in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms. No doubt the Birmingham "saints" will give him another hearty welcome.

Mr. John Lloyd has been engaged to deliver, at South Shields on Sunday, March 13, two lectures, morning and evening. Upon this occasion the new "Tivoli" Music Hall has been engaged for the meetings, and friends are requested to specially note that HIGH Shields is the nearest railway station, or by local tram to Green-street and Laygate.

The platform at the Camberwell Secular Hall this evening (Feb. 21) will be occupied by Mr. W. H. Thresh, who delivers his first Secular lecture, which is entitled "From Christian Pulpit to Freethought Platform."

We are glad to see that the Committee of the Society for the Reform of School Discipline have sent a copy of the following resolution to the London School Board:—"That this Committee record their protest against the recent and unprecedented concession made by the London School Board in granting the unnecessary power to their manual instructors of inflicting corporal punishment on pupils set apart for manual instruction."

The Glasgow Branch has a Musical Evening to-day (Feb. 21), under the conductorship of Mr. J. F. Turnbull. The program is an excellent one, including selections from Wagner down to Sousa. It also includes two songs by a lady, and a reading by a gentleman. We hope to hear that

the hall was crowded. It is said that there is no Sunday music for the people in Glasgow, but the Secularists do their best to belie the statement.

Mr. J. W. de Caux, with boldness and spirit, and a fine defiance of local bigotry, initiated a discussion in the *Yarmouth Mercury* on "The Story of the Resurrection." No local Christian has ventured to break a lance with him. All his orthodox fellow-townsmen can say is that they derive much "joy" from believing what they feel they cannot substantiate. One Christian (perhaps a parson) first sneers at Mr. de Caux for not being an Oxford or Cambridge man—which would be justifiable enough if juries called together to determine the most important and delicate cases had to possess University degrees—and then begs the editor to put an end to the discussion. This the editor says he will do, although with uncommon fairness, he adds that he will allow Mr. de Caux the right of a brief final reply.

Mr. de Caux took advantage of the editorial offer, and his last letter on this subject has just appeared in the *Yarmouth Mercury*. We like the style in which he reminds Christians of what they have to prove. "Where," he asks, "is the evidence that a corpse rose from the dead, and walked, and talked, and ate, and digested what it ate?" Everything beside that is what the Chinese call "talkee, talkee." Mr. de Caux's letter is one that does great credit to the Free-thought cause, of which he is such an ardent champion; and we fancy that some of the Christian readers of the *Mercury* will wonder why, not only the controversial skill, but the straightforwardness, good temper, and urbanity are so conspicuously on the "infidel" side in these recent discussions.

Some good, after all, accrued from that foolish letter in the *Birmingham Daily Post* complaining of the inclusion of Thomas Paine's writings in the Free Library. A number of persons wrote other letters in defence of Paine's right to literary hospitality. They far outweigh the Christian Evidence bigot called Aston, who first claimed Paine as a believer in God and a future life (which he was), and then tried to blacken Paine's character by quoting some hackneyed slander from *Maunder's Biographical Treasury*. Such maundering, at this time of day, is simply ridiculous. The real facts of Paine's life are now thoroughly established and may be known by all who will take the trouble to refer to Dr. Conway's monumental biography.

Herbert Spencer's *Autobiography* is to be published in two volumes, illustrated with portraits. It will be ready late in March or early in April. Spencer in the Preface calls it a "natural history" of himself. Presumably, therefore, it is somewhat on the lines of John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*. Such histories have practically no incidents; nevertheless they are sometimes of entrancing interest.

The *Searchlight* (Waco, Texas) reproduces, with due acknowledgment, from our columns a large part of Mr. Foote's article on the death of Herbert Spencer, and adds that he "made the most appropriate reference to the providential phase of that awful calamity" in the Iroquois Theatre. *Searchlight* also reproduces, with words of praise, Mr. John Lloyd's article on "Science v. Theology."

## The New Year's Gift to Freethought.

### SEVENTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

A. Webber 2s. 6d., Dr. James Kay 10s., Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Deakin £1, West Ham Branch N. S. S. (for *Freethinker* advertising) 10s., A. Cayford 1s., J. Pruett (Bristol) 5s., W. B. 3s., O. Ford 2s., W. Stewart 2s. 6d., C. Bowman 10s., A. Powell 5s., J. Shipp 2s., J. Thackray 2s., J. Jones 10s., F. Bonte 9s. 7d.

### "PRACTICAL" CHRISTIANITY.

It needs but to glance over the world and contemplate the doings of Christians everywhere, to be amazed at the ineffectiveness of the current theology. Or it needs only to look back over past centuries at the iniquities alike of populace, nobles, kings, and popes, to perceive an almost incomprehensible futility of the beliefs everywhere held and perpetually insisted upon: horrors like those which Dante described notwithstanding. If this lack of results be ascribed to the sale of indulgences and the assumed priestly power of absolution, then a glance at the condition of England after Protestantism had been established proves that where such perverting influences were inoperative, the fear of hell and the hope of heaven influenced men's actions in an incredibly small degree.—*Herbert Spencer, "Facts and Comments."*

## Odds and Ends.

CASE OF CONSCIENCE.—A farmer's wife at Driffield has given 17s. to the Church Missionary Society, "proceeds of eggs laid on Sundays."—*Daily Mail*.

WHAT WORRIED HIM.—"My friend," said the parson, "you should be content with what you have." "I am," replied the grumbler. "It's what I haven't got that worries me."—*Chicago News*.

PROGRESS.—The Bride: "We have come to be married." Modern Minister: "Ah, yes. With or without?" The Bride: "What?" The Minister: "Obey."—*Town Topics*.

ITS FIRST TEST.—Adam was explaining in the wee small hours. "You see," he began, "I had to sit up with a sick friend—" Suddenly perceiving his blunder, he stopped, but the mischief was already done.

WHAT SAVED HIM.—Daniel had just been cast into the lion's den. "To think," he exclaimed, "that I should get down to being a ready-to-serve breakfast food." However, seeing his name had no fancy spelling, the sagacious beast passed him by.

THE DIFFERENCE.—Mary had used "hope" instead of "expect" in her composition, with a lower mark in consequence. Mary complained to her mother, insisting that she could see no difference in the two words. Mrs. Flannagan upheld the teacher. "Mary, mi dear, I can't explain the difference to ye, but I can illustrate it. I *hope*, Mary, mi dear, to see your dear father in heaven, but I don't *expect* to!"

NO OTHERS LIKELY TO ATTEND.—The Rev. Dr. P. S. Henson recently lectured in Springfield, Mass., and one of the foremost pastors in the city was asked to announce the lecture from his pulpit. This is the way the pastor made the announcement: "The Rev. Dr. Henson will lecture on 'Fools' in the State-street Baptist Church on Wednesday evening, and I trust a great many will attend."—*New York Tribune*.

THE DIFFICULTY.—Here is the way a Benton county man confessed at a revival. He had been pressed to repent, and finally got up and said: "Dear friends, I feel the spirit moving in me to talk and tell what a bad man I have been, but I can't do it while the grand jury is in session." "The Lord will forgive," shouted the preacher. "I guess that's right," said the penitent. "but he ain't on the grand jury."—*Warrensburg (Mo.) Journal Democrat*.

MORE NATURAL.—Gen. Pleasant Porter, the last chief of the Creek Indian nation, is a sufferer from that highly civilised disease known as gout. "If I had stuck to the life of my youth," he says, "I should not be a sufferer from any such trouble. I used to live out of doors, sleep on the ground, and eat plain food. Then I was healthy. Oh, but this gout hurts. It just compels you to swear. A religious friend told me I ought to pray for relief. Maybe so, but it's easier to swear, and seems to be more natural."—*Sherman Democrat*.

"THE FIRS."—A minister in a country town once instituted a series of reform measures against the local organisation analogous to Tammany. He began his political campaign by sending to the chief boss of the district a card upon which were written the number and chapter of a verse in the Bible. When the boss and his associates looked up the text they found it to be a fire-breathing threat against evil doers. The minister had hoped to awe them by the use of Scripture. The worst resort in town was a so-called hotel known as "The Firs." "The Firs" was the headquarters of the "gang," and the minister preached hotly against the place for two months preceding election, making "The Firs" a household word synonymous with evil. The evildoers, however, not only refused to tremble, but they won the election. Some months afterwards, when all was going at the lively pace of old, the minister received a postal card which read thus: "Dear Sir,—We respectfully refer you to the 14th chapter of Isaiah, 8th verse, "'The Firs.'" The Devil was quoting Scripture, and the minister was curious. Upon looking up the text he was amazed to read the following: "Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller has come up against us."

## Religion.

RELIGION fills a large space in social life. From the cradle to the grave it meets the eye and falls on the ear continuously—that is, the word and the sound of it. There is a very numerous and a very expensive class of men trained to talk about it, but few of them practise what they preach. Years ago we could have newspapers and magazines without meeting with the word "religion" on every page we read; but now we can scarcely ever take up a paper or a book without summaries of sermons or religious addresses in them. Therefore it will not be out of place to consider a little about it.

What is religion? Those who live by talking about it seldom try to say what it is, and when they do their definitions mostly disagree. Is it something objective or subjective? A reality or a phantom idea—a ghost? The sun is an objective reality, and all intelligent men would describe it much alike, and in a way that all would understand what they meant. The same remark may be made of a spade, a plough, a mill, or any other tangible object. If religion is something real and objective, why should there be any difficulty in telling what it is? And why should it be a different thing in a Free Church and a Catholic Church? But it is. It differs not only in every sect, but more or less in every locality. The religion of Ireland differs from the religion of Scotland, and the religion of Wales from that of England. There is a society which calls itself "the Catholic Truth Society." I suppose they mean the Catholic religion, which all but themselves would call Catholic superstition. It is astonishing what fools religion makes of men. To talk of truth being Catholic is utter nonsense. They might as well say a Catholic potato or a Catholic sun. Truth is the same everywhere, and knows no country or sect. What our friends mean by Catholic truth evidently is Catholic religion, which, on the whole, is anything but truth. Protestant truth and Free Church truth would be quite as appropriate as Catholic truth, but would be quite as nonsensical and misleading.

Religion, as popularly understood and practised, means ritual, ceremony, and devotion. Few Christian apologists of an intellectual order would define religion in those terms, owing, probably, to the objections that would naturally arise, and perhaps because the Bible in certain portions denounces such a religion. As a matter of fact, few Christians seem inclined to say what religion is, and in this they show much worldly wisdom, as any definition they could give would only reveal its unreality and ambiguity. We must judge what religion is from the practice of Christians, as we have no other guide. From these practices we learn that religion is a belief in God, in the Bible as the Word of God, in Jesus as God and Savior, in the immortality of the soul, in heaven and hell, in the resurrection of the body, and in the fall of man, the atonement, and, of course, in the Church and its sacraments. A religion is a belief, a profession, and a ritual or worship. It is evident that religion in a chapel differs from it in a church, and that it is a different thing in a Catholic country to what it is in a Protestant State. In this sense a man may be very religious without being very good. We are told that the Devil believes and trembles, without ceasing to be a devil. And there are men who are loud in their profession and praise, and apparently very devout in church and chapel, and very different outside. There were men of that religious character amongst the Jews of old, as we find from the denunciations of Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah, the prophets. And the Pharisees in the time of Jesus were extremely religious and exact in their devotions, and yet Jesus denounced them as hypocrites, devourers of widows' houses, pretenders in long prayers; and he calls them blind fools, blind guides, whited sepulchres, serpents, and a generation of vipers. And these were the respectable religious people of the time. The twenty-third chapter of Matthew is

full of woes against them. In view of the fighting between the Churches over the child, and the proselytising spirit manifested by all of them, a specimen of the woes spoken by their Savior-God, which is as appropriate to the Churches to-day as it was to the Pharisees, will not be amiss: "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Pretty strong language that, is it not, from one who is said to be meek and mild? And if he came again he would use the same, or similar, language against the Christians of to-day—at least, against the Christian priests of all Churches and sects, who are using religion as capital in a trade business.

It is only fair to point out that there is in the Bible a higher and a nobler ideal of religion than ritual and ceremony, against which the prophets and Jesus after them, hurled their condemnation. Thus Isaiah: "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings: cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." And thus Micah: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Then there is the definition of religion by James: "Pure religion is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Similar sentiment is expressed here and there in the Gospels. "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven." What the doing the will of the father means may be seen in the parable of the last judgment. It is feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and the prisoner, and hospitality to a stranger. According to the parable this is the religion that entitles a man to go to heaven. The absence of it sends a man to hell. There is not a word in the parable of the last judgment about the church and its bishops, deans, parsons, curates, ministers, preachers, and officers; not a word about the sacraments, baptism, confirmation, the mass, Lord's supper, profession, confession, creeds, catechism, sermons, prayers, and hymn singing.

In the parable of the last judgment and the passages quoted, the religion portrayed is a religion of practical goodness and benevolence, a religion of usefulness and service of man, a religion of duty and doing in this present world and the present time. A religion of this kind can be accepted and practised and recommended by all. In this sense, a Rationalist, Agnostic, Atheist, heathen, and even a savage, can be a truly religious man. As a matter of fact, unbelievers have been and are now, as intensely religious as any Christian, in the best sense of the word. All the real virtues and worthy deeds of life can be practised without a belief in theology or being a member of any church. This is evident to every intelligent man. We know from sad experience that many who are outwardly devout inside a church are devils outside, and many there are who are saints who never enter church or chapel. The truth must be told plainly and boldly. Churches and chapels with their creeds, sacraments, forms, catechisms, and services, are the tools and stock-in-trade of priestcraft. It is likely enough that the priests and their flocks are not conscious of this truth, in the bulk, and many of them will be shocked at the very suggestion. They have received their belief from the past, and have been carefully trained in all its ways. But that does not alter the facts. The priests of other religions are quite as self-conscious of being right as Christian priests are, but that consciousness of theirs does not make their creed right, as our Christian priests themselves would freely admit. Neither does the absence of

conscious fraud in the priesthood make the system anything else than a priestcraft.

But many ask, why do you oppose religion? Why speak and write against it? If you cannot accept it, why not keep silence and let it alone? Is it not a fact that religion is doing a vast amount of good, whatever may be its nature or foundation? The questions include too vast a field to enter largely into their consideration. The advice to keep silence, however, is silly. It would be cowardly to do so. No opposition will injure truth. As long as religion as a superstition is proclaimed from thousands of pulpits and urged on young and old, to keep silence and let it alone is impossible. I would not deny the possibility of superstition doing some sort of good, directly or indirectly. A murder in some cases might bring about good, but the good would not change the character of the murder. In the same way, admitting that religion does good, if it is not true and is founded on fraud, its good results will not make the false true and the fraud good. The good fruit, if any, must be balanced by the bad fruit, and the difference figured out.

R. J. DERFEL.

(To be concluded.)

### The Deists and Nature.

(BY THE LATE COLONEL INGERSOLL.)

Now First Printed in England.

WE who deny the supernatural origin of the Bible, must admit not only that it exists, but that it was naturally produced. If it is not supernatural, it is natural. It will hardly do for the worshipers of Nature to hold the Bible in contempt, simply because it is not a supernatural book.

The Deists of the last century made a mistake. They proceeded to show that the Bible is immoral, untrue, cruel, and absurd, and therefore came to the conclusion that it could not have been written by a being of infinite wisdom and goodness—the being whom they believed to be the author of Nature. Could not infinite wisdom and goodness just as easily command crime as to permit it? Is it really any worse to order the strong to slay the weak, than to stand by and refuse to protect the weak?

After all, is Nature, taken together, any better than the Bible? If God did not command the Jews to murder the Canaanites, Nature, to say the least, did not prevent it. If God did not uphold the practice of polygamy, Nature did. The moment we deny the supernatural origin of the Bible, we declare that Nature wrote its every word, commanded all its cruelties, told all its falsehoods. The Bible is, like Nature, a mixture of what we call "good" and "bad"—of what appears, and of what in reality is.

The Bible must have been a perfectly natural production not only, but a necessary one. There was, and is, no power in the universe that could have changed one word. All the mistakes in translation were necessarily made, and not one, by any possibility, could have been avoided. That book, like all other facts in Nature, could not have been otherwise than it is. The fact being that Nature has produced all superstitions, all persecution, all slavery, and every crime, ought to be sufficient to deter the average man from imagining that this power, whatever it may be, is worthy of worship.

There is good in Nature. It is the nature in us that perceives the evil, that pursues the right. In man, Nature not only contemplates herself, but approves or condemns her actions. Of course "good" and "bad" are relative terms, and things are "good" or "bad" as they affect man well or ill.

Infidels, sceptics—that is to say, Freethinkers—have opposed the Bible on account of the bad things in it, and Christians have upheld it, not on account of the bad, but on account of the good. Throw away the doctrine of inspiration, and the Bible will

be more powerful for good and far less for evil. Only a few years ago Christians looked upon the Bible as the bulwark of human slavery. It was the Word of God, and for that reason was superior to the reason of uninspired man. Had it been considered simply as the work of man, it would not have been quoted to establish that which the man of this age condemns. Throw away the idea of inspiration, and all passages in conflict with liberty, with science, with the experience of the intelligent part of the human race instantly become harmless. They are no longer guides for man. They are simply the opinions of dead barbarians. The good passages not only remain, but their influence is increased, because they are relieved of a burden.

No one cares whether the truth is inspired or not. The truth is independent of man, not only, but of God. And by truth I do not mean the absolute; I mean this: Truth is the relation between things and thoughts, and between thoughts and thoughts. The perception of this relation bears the same relation to the logical faculty in man that music does to some portion of the brain—that is to say, it is a mental melody. This sublime strain has been heard by a few, and I am enthusiastic enough to believe that it will be the music of the future.

For the good and for the true in the Old and New Testaments I have the same regard that I have for the good and true, no matter where they may be found. We who know how false the history of to-day is; we who know the almost numberless mistakes that men make who are endeavoring to tell the truth; we who know how hard it is, with all the facilities we now have—with the daily press, the telegraph, the fact that nearly all can read and write—to get a truthful report of the simplest occurrence, must see, that nothing short of inspiration (admitting for the moment the possibility of such a thing) could have prevented the Scriptures from being filled with error.

### Correspondence.

#### CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Please allow me to thank Mr. Lloyd for his kind reply to the various points raised in my communication of the 10th ult. I must, however, say that I take serious exception to some of the statements in his reply. For example, it was asked: "In what Buddhist Scriptures, anterior to the rise of Christianity, is this [the supernatural birth of Buddha] found?" For answer, Mr. Lloyd says he follows Dr. Rhys Davids' *Buddhism*; and quotations are given from pages 10, 11, and 179—presumably in verification of his original statement and my rejoinder, couched as a question. But on none of these pages do I find anything substantiating either the supernatural or virgin birth of the Buddha. On the contrary, on page 183, Dr. Davids directly contradicts it. He says: "That Maya was a virgin.....has not been confirmed."

Again, the Lalita Vistara is given as confirming this incident; and it is also stated that Dr. Davids dates it "in the century before Christ." On page 11, in considering M. Foucaux's date of the Thibetan Version, he says: "How much older [than the sixth century A.D.] the present form of the Sanskrit work may be is quite uncertain." And in a note (p. 11) dealing with Foucaux's having placed it in Kanishka's reign (who ascended the throne 10 A.D.), he actually says: "Foucaux, without any evidence whatever, assigns the Sanskrit original to Kaniska's Council." The question, then, remains still unanswered, and it is again asked—In what Buddhist work, prior to the rise of Christianity, is this related?

Another point is the "channel of communication" by which Buddhism influenced Christianity. In reply Mr. Lloyd refers me to the Council of Patna, where it was "resolved to send innumerable missionaries into the different countries of the world." If Mr. Lloyd will turn to page 227 of the author he is presumably dependent upon, he will find, in lieu of "countries of the world," "different countries." And if he examines the list there given, he will see that it includes the countries of—India. But the Asokan Edicts, to which appeal might have been made, do show some connection between the East and West—much more, in fact, than

that adduced by Mr. Lloyd in respect to the Greek domination in the N.W. (Bactria). Unfortunately, however, it does not establish a "historical channel," one whereby "Buddhist myths passed into Christianity." Proof has yet to be adduced that Buddhistic religious thought infused itself either into the philosophical or religious schools of Greece before it can be shown that they transmitted such thought to Christianity. The little difficulty experienced by Mr. Lloyd in affirming a *via media* for the dissemination of Buddhist myths Westwards is in strange contrast with those who have made the supposed influence of this branch of Orientalism upon the West a particular study. With data which are far more convincing than that adduced by Mr. Lloyd, this influence is practically an unknown quantity. Ritter, with strongest predilections in its favor, had to confess his inability to detect the process of transmission. And Zeller, "impressed with the necessity of supporting indefinite theories of influence by definite historical facts, relinquished the quest." This judgment is identical with that expressed by the majority of Buddhist experts. Thus Dr. Davids asserts he can find no evidence whatever of historical communication. And Max Müller says he has been seeking such for forty years, but has failed to discover it.

As endorsing a historical communication, Mr. Lloyd refers to Burnouf. This scholar alleges that the pathway Buddhism followed was traced, step by step, from India to Jerusalem. It is not the first time that this statement has been made upon the authority of Burnouf. And as it involves issues of such vital importance, and as it is diametrically opposed to the majority of scholars, I must ask Mr. Lloyd to advance some proof in substantiation of its truth. I might here add, I have some very good reasons for questioning the validity of some of Burnouf's allegations, to which, if necessary, reference shall be made.

Mr. Lloyd asks three questions: (a) Were not the Essenes akin to the Buddhist? (b) Is it not clear that Jesus was an adherent of that sect? And (c) "was not that connection the secret of his being baptised by John, who was the high priest of the Essenes?" In reply, I would briefly remark that there are similarities subsisting between the two systems; not, however, more striking than those existing in other religious communities, where there is no proven indebtedness. Lightfoot, one of the authorities cited by Mr. Lloyd, in a learned dissertation upon the Essenes, tells us there is but little that suggests "any historical connection" between them. Schurer thinks the connection is "improbable." Kuenen, more emphatic, declares that the "foreign origin of Essenism" has failed to be established, whilst its "purely Jewish character" has been firmly proven. It consequently follows that a consideration of the semi-alleged dependency of Christianity to Buddhism, via Essenism, would be quite *ultra vires*. Respecting *b* and *c*, I would add that the evidence, such as it is, as well as the judgment of scholarship based upon it, is opposed to all that these two questions imply.

It is stated that "ethically" the two religions are practically synonymous. Phraseologically there are likenesses. Fundamentally considered, there are no two great teachers whose ethics are so opposed to each other as Jesus and the Buddha. The Sermon on the Mount pre-eminently attests these differentia.

The "parallels are innumerable." Perhaps no one has done more laborious work in order to show this than Seydel. He instances fifty-one resemblances. But of these he has given five—five instances only, which, by reason of their close identity, clearly establishes adaptation by Christianity. An impartial examination of these has led me to the conclusion that if the theory of derivation has no stronger proofs to offer it may be safely rejected as worthless.

I notice that Schmiedel and Dr. Abbott are instanced on behalf of the mythical character of the Gospels, and they appear in juxtaposition and as apparently endorsing Mr. Lloyd's contention as to the non-historical character of the One who is the central figure in these Records. As a swallow does not make a summer, neither do the above authorities constitute Christian scholarship. Against them one might place Dr. Sanday and Lightfoot. With this equitable adjustment we leave, at least for the present, the matter.

But do these two scholars aid Mr. Lloyd's contention? No. For in spite of their conclusions, they do not deny the historical personality of Jesus, as it is delineated in relation to time, in the Gospels.

As to a numerical comparison between Christians and Buddhists, I gave no less than six authorities in support of my contentions. Two of these were statisticians and well fitted to pass an opinion. They are much more recent too, than those given by Mr. Lloyd. The chief authority mentioned in support of the contra-contention is Dr. Rhys Davids. Over four hundred million are given as belonging to China. When that number is analysed, it is found that

Confucianists, Taoists, and Shintoists, are reckoned as one with the followers of Buddha. It is, therefore, not surprising that in his second table five hundred millions are given as Buddhists. But there is another objection, these figures are based on very questionable data, data as ancient as the years 1842 and 1857-8. Modern statistics are not always reliable, those of half-a-century ago may be regarded as next to useless.

W. H. HOWARD NASH.

### "Bits" from the "Sydney Bulletin."

"E. F.": What I like about that address presented to the Chermisides by the State-school children of Irvinebank (N.Q.) is the religious sentiment of the concluding lines—"We wish you both all health and happiness now and hereafter." Everybody hugs the hope of enjoying a healthful, jolly Hereafter, but you never hear the future state spoken of in that way by the parsons. With them it is either damnation or regeneration. The idea of a cheerful three-meals-a-day Eternity is never suggested, not even to vice-regal sinners.

"R. A. K.": Saw in South Melbourne, the other day, a well-fed spinster-looking person holding forth earnestly to a down-at-heel family (father, mother, and kid). She had a finger significantly planted in the open page of a pocket Bible. As I passed I heard: "And you'll never have any disease, and your bread will be sure." The father looked especially hungry and woebegone, and gazed up and down the street as he listened, as if he half expected to see a ticket to S' Africa floating past on the breeze or dropped from a tram. Put the spinster with the Bible down for a Dowieite.

If Haddon Chambers wants to write a play a great deal more squalid than *Dolores* he ought to take for his raw material a maintenance case heard at the Melbourne District Court last Friday, when a young white woman sued her husband, a Chinese catechist, or missionary, who gets £8 1s. 8d. a month salary, with an extra 5s. a week to keep a horse and trap. One choice extract from the press report reads like this:—"Witness, continuing, said a girl-child was born. Defendant went to the bed and said, 'What have you got there?' and when he found out said, 'You have got a dirty girl; you will be punished.' He lifted his hand to strike the infant, but she caught his hand. Then he was going to turn her out of the bed. She refused to go back to him. She was too ill, and only wanted maintenance for the children. He had beaten her with a stick and injured her back." The irony of it! The Chinese was garbed in clerical broadcloth, and said he was a Christian!

Either the craze for medallions of celebrities is about played out, or Melbourne people took very little stock in the late Pope Leo. The medallion merchants hastened to put photographic buttons on the market as soon as Leo's early demise was predicted, and there were fully a dozen men selling them on the day the gold-and-white flag was half-masted at St. Patrick's. Initial price asked was a shilling, but within an hour the vendors recognised that they were not likely to clear much money at that figure, and they came down to sixpence. A couple of days sufficed to bring the papal souvenir down to the modest "thrums," but even that reduction brought few buyers, and the day after the Cathedral requiem Leo's countenance was going at a penny a time.

Christian Science still has its devotees. In a woolly district, where the squatting clan prospers exceedingly on record fleecings, a smart little dame holds frequent meetings of Hope. The other day there was a rallying of all the Scientists for miles about in order to cope, by prayer, with the serious indigestion of one of the circle. After some strenuous avowals of faith, without much benefit, the leader suggested the chorusing of an anthem or something. There was quite a controversy as to the choice, and finally it fell on the old-fashioned chant:—

When Jonah was by the whale upheaved  
Then that whale was very much relieved.

Whether any benefit resulted I have not yet heard.

It is always good business to back the "kirk" to make a really profitable bargain. The weekly print of the Victorian Presbyterians offers a five-shilling book prize for the best 250-word paragraph sent in. For its 5s. it gets about a page of decent pars. The winner gets his book, but the rest aren't even given a tract.

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.**

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

**LONDON.**

QUEEN'S (Minor) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 8, G. W. Foote, "Holy Russia and Heathen Japan."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30. W. H. Thresh, "From Christian Pulpit to Freethought Platform."

NORTH KENSINGTON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Cornwall Hall): 7, C. E. Oliver, "Environment."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Professor Hudson, "George Eliot's Religion."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, G. Lowes Dickenson, "Pagan Ethics."

WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Harringay): 7.15, Councillor Holding, "The Ethics of Protection."

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): John Lloyd, 3, "At the Bar of Reason"; 7, "Our New Bible."

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane Failsforth): February 22 and 23, Charles Watts. "Rationalism: its Philosophy and Mission"; "Mr. Blatchford's Clarion Crusade." Chair taken at 7.45.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class. "The Class Struggle," Mr. Stuart; 6.30, Instrumental and Vocal Concert.

LEEDS (Covered Market, Vicar's Croft): 11, H. R. Youngman, "Thomas Paine's Age of Reason"; Woodhouse Moor: 3, George Weir, "St. John's Nightmare"; Town Hall Square: 7, W. Woolham, "Robert Blatchford and his Critics."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 3, "A Search for God"; 7, "Religion in the Grip of Science: A Reply to the Rev. John Wakeford's Sermon on Blatchford," Monday, 8 p.m., F. A. Burnard, "Shakespeare."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 6.30, Harvey Simpson, "Cremation." Lantern views.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, 25, 8, G. E. Patterson, "The Education Question."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Ernest Evans, "How to Prevent Consumption"; 7, "Some More Remarkable Animals."—Illustrated by Lantern Views. Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7. Business Meeting.

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