

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Philosophy, like Stilton cheese, is found  
To please us most when just a thought unsound.*

P. J. BAILEY.

## Gentle-Jesusites.

CHRISTIAN Evidences in London, as many of our readers are aware, boasts a number of advocates of remarkable learning, extraordinary ability, and amazing good manners. We seldom mention them because we know what a terrible affliction it is to their modesty to see their names in print. But now and then we are obliged to turn the light of publicity upon them, and the present is such an occasion.

On Thursday morning, June 24, in the present year of grace, a certain minister of religion found his way to the Marlborough-street Police Court. Being bent upon a mission of Christian charity, he left his home at Sydenham very early, and took his seat in the Police Court so as to be there in ample time for the object of his visit. But the discomfort of setting out so early from home was nothing to the terrible pain the reverend gentleman must have experienced in listening to several "disorderly house" cases, which were described by a policeman as some of the "thickest" he had ever known.

The reverend gentleman went through these painful experiences in order to show that it was not his fault if people went on exclaiming with Thomas Hood against the rarity of Christian charity. When his opportunity arrived he told the magistrate how his heart yearned to save even an "infidel" from being punished. And the "infidel" got off, and the reverend gentleman went home a happy and exultant Christian.

That is the real truth of the matter, but the course of events looked very different to the uninitiated.

Our readers may recollect the case of Mr. James Toope, one of the Hyde Park orators who preaches Freethought "on his own." Mr. Toope got into trouble. He was brought before the beak by a conscientious constable, and charged with holding a disorderly meeting in Hyde Park. Christians kicked up a row at his meeting: but, as there were too many of them for one guardian of the peace to run in, the resourceful policeman settled the difficulty by running in Mr. Toope. In the same pantomime spirit Mr. Kennedy, the magistrate, lectured the "infidel" lecturer, bound him over to keep the peace (which he had not broken) for twelve months, and required a surety for his good behavior in the sum of five pounds.

After the lapse of a couple of months Mr. Toope walked into Hyde Park on a Sunday evening, and not feeling free to hold a meeting himself, he thought he would hear what the Christian Evidence lecturer was saying. When the lecturer had delivered himself of the Lord's message he asked for questions, and Mr. Toope accepted the invitation. Whereupon the lecturer waxed angry and told Mr. Toope to go home; but, as it was not supper time, the suggestion was considered inopportune. A constable then was called to expedite Mr. Toope's exit, and he incontinently marched the "infidel" off to the Police Court, where he charged him with "wilful interference."

Mr. Toope was arrested in the first instance

because Christians asked him questions; and he was arrested in the second instance for asking a question himself. It was all very solemn, though enough to make a rhinoceros laugh; and, as "justice" is often such an odd thing in Christian England, a legal defence was provided for Mr. Toope again.

The Christian Evidence lecturer was the Rev. Arthur John Waldron. Many of our London readers will have seen and heard him. They will remember his noble presence, his gentlemanly bearing, his vast and profound scholarship, and his entrancing eloquence. When he was asked by Mr. Toope who founded Christianity, he is alleged to have replied, "Not one of Darwin's monkeys." Several witnesses besides Mr. Toope declare that this was what he said. But they *must* be mistaken. There cannot be a doubt about it. Mr. Waldron denied on oath that he used such words, and it is well known that Christian Evidence lecturers are absolutely incapable of speaking in that way.

It appears that the criminality of Mr. Toope's questions lay in the fact that they were "irrelevant." This was sworn by Constable Marchant of the A division. The following is from his cross-examination:—

*Counsel.*—Were questions invited by Mr. Waldron?

*Constable.*—Yes, relevant questions.

*Counsel.*—You say the prisoner's questions were not relevant?

*Constable.*—Yes.

*Counsel.*—What was the subject of the lecture?

*Constable.*—I do not know.

*Counsel.*—How many persons asked questions?

*Constable.*—Many: but Toope's questions were repeated many times, and were not relevant.

*Counsel.*—Were you present when the lecture commenced?

*Constable.*—No: my attention was called to the disorder caused by Toope.

*Counsel.*—Then, if you were only present after the disorder commenced, and do not know even now the subject of the lecture, how can you say the questions were irrelevant?

(Here the witness had to be pressed for an answer.)

*Constable.*—I was told so by Mr. Waldron and his chairman.

What is it the song says? The captain told the mate, and the mate told the crew, and the crew told me, so I know it must be true.

Captain Waldron backed it all up in court. He declared that Mr. Toope's questions were "irrelevant." When asked to repeat one of them, he said that he "could not remember." But he was sure that they were "irrelevant." Not couched in improper language, but simply "irrelevant." Thousands of "irrelevant" questions are put by Christians to Freethought lecturers, who never send for a constable to help them out of the difficulty. But it seems that Christian lecturers are differently built, and require protection against such dreadful outrages.

Mr. Waldron could not stoop to personalities. But the mischief is that he has a special view of his own as to what personalities are. Witness the following passage from his cross-examination:—

*Counsel.*—Did you ask the audience to give you the name of any man whose conduct had been improved since he became a Secularist? (Witness denied the terms, but admitted the fact.) Did Toope give you his name and invite you to inquire in the neighborhood as to his respectability?

*Waldron.*—Yes.

*Counsel.*—And then did you not hold him up to

ridicule, and say, "I'll show you this man's character: he put up for the Borough Council and got 26 votes"?

Waldron.—Yes, I spoke of votes.

Counsel.—Had that anything to do with your subject? And do you know that the man elected received 100 votes only?

Waldron.—No.

Counsel.—Do you not consider that you were casting a slur upon this man's character, and did you not intend to do so?

Waldron.—No.

Counsel.—Was not this intended by you to be offensive? (No answer.) You do not like personalities yourself?

Waldron.—I expect to be protected.

Counsel.—You expected the crowd to bear with you however personal you were?

Waldron.—I never indulge in personalities.

To discuss the personal character of the men and women in your audience, and especially of those who accept your invitation to ask you questions, is quite an innocent diversion on the part of a Christian Evidence lecturer. There is no "personality" in it. Oh dear no! We have Mr. Waldron's word for that.

We humbly suggest, however, that Mr. Toope should not be considered an irredeemable villain because he only polled twenty-six votes at an election. This is twenty-six votes more than Jesus Christ polled when he stood against Barabbas.

Mr. Kennedy probably felt that Mr. Waldron's "Mr. Hyde" was more conspicuous than his "Dr. Jekyll." He asked the reverend gentleman whether his retorts were not calculated to create a disturbance. He also remarked that no complaint was made as to Mr. Toope's language. Whereupon the reverend gentleman rose to the full height of his Christianity. "It is not in my heart," he said, "to wish Mr. Toope to be punished." What a noble sentiment! Yet irreverent persons laughed at the back of the court. Perhaps they wondered what he was there for. They did not understand the breadth and subtlety (some might say *the depth*) of Christian benevolence.

G. W. FOOTE.

### How to Reply to Infidels.

THERE are a variety of ways in which "Infidels" may be answered. There is the good old-fashioned Christian method of burning them. This is a very effective method in individual cases, and some very high Christian authorities might be cited in its favor. It suffers, however, under one great disadvantage. It advertises the opinions for which people are burnt, and this is not always advisable. Then there is the more modern form of imprisonment. But here again, unless the "Infidel" is providentially removed while in prison, when he comes out he is apt to be more embittered against Christianity, and to be more blind than ever to the beauty of Christian Charity. Or the answer may come in the form of writings or speeches. This method has always had its followers, and, provided it is carried out properly, there is much to be said in its favor. In speaking, one must be careful that the address is delivered before a *Christian* audience, and where no talking back is permitted. This has the obvious advantage of leaving the reply unanswered, and it is quite safe for a preacher, under such conditions, to declare that his arguments are unanswerable. And, in writing, care must be taken that the arguments are at least a century old—in form—which enables one to point to some weakness in the way in which the infidel objection is framed, and to see that the sceptic's case is so stated as to make him look a cross between a rogue and an idiot. If these rules are followed, the Infidel-slayer is tolerably safe—among his own people.

English "Infidel-slayers" have just had their ranks strengthened by an American importation, the Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, who has accepted a "call" to Westminster (Congregational) Chapel. Mr. Morgan belongs to the old school of evangelical dissenters, and he is announced to be contemplating a very aggressive

policy in his new situation. If his courage would only lead him to answer Freethinkers in the open, in a place where equal opportunities were given to both disputants, he would relieve the general dreariness of the English clergy, which seems without a man of any ability with pluck enough to discuss Christianity with an avowed Freethinker either on the platform or in the public press. There is plenty of "answering," but it is all done in a hole-and-corner fashion, where the advocate is sure of a thoroughly religious audience.

In the *Christian Commonwealth* for June 23, Mr. Morgan writes what looks like the first of a series of articles on "How to Reply to Infidels." The column is headed "Question Class for Christians," and the question for this week is as follows:—

"There are several infidels and atheists in the little community where I live, and in reply to every argument I make among them on behalf of the Christian religion, they inquire why did not God make His revelations so conclusive that there would be no standing-room left for any doubt. I believe that David Hume, the infidel historian, once urged the same objection. I am unable to answer, and I hope that you will reply in a way that will enable me to silence these objectors."

Mr. Morgan's reply does not open in a very hopeful manner—for Christians. He confesses: "It is impossible for me to answer your question in a way that will enable you to silence objectors." But this is avowedly what the questioner wants. He does not want to *talk* to Freethinkers merely; he wishes to silence them altogether, and he appeals to this "great gun" of the Nonconformists for assistance. And the preacher replies, "I can't silence them; I can only supply you with some more words to roll out when the question is put to you." Which is cheerful! Anyone, I suppose, but a Christian parson would have reflected that the only merit in any answer is that it does meet the objection raised; and, when an answer confessedly does not do this, it is an admission of inability to cope with the objection.

Now the question Mr. Morgan sets out to deal with—whether an imaginary or a real one—is an apt question. If there is a God, and if that God is anxious that we should know he exists, there is surely nothing extravagant in asking why he has not made known his existence in such a manner as would leave no room for further doubt upon the matter. To say, as Mr. Morgan and other believers do say, that he *has* made known his existence both through nature and by revelation is an evasion of the question, and not an answer to it. For neither methods command anything like a general assent. Only a fraction of the human race recognise a God through the Christian revelation; and even among those who accept this revelation there is nothing like a common agreement as to what it means. And although a larger number accept the proof of a God through nature, yet some of the foremost thinkers have put this on one side as either inconclusive or valueless. Either way, the self-revelation of God is an admitted failure. Neither plan has ever brought a single mind to believe in a God. Where there was a belief already, nature or revelation has been used to bolster up that belief; but no one has ever been brought from rational disbelief to rational belief by either method.

It does not remove the objection to say the fault lies with man himself. A proof, to be worth anything, should be so proportioned as to overcome doubt. When it does not do this, it is undeserving the name of proof. If it was God's purpose in giving a revelation to convince man of his existence, the responsibility clearly lies with him to make that revelation of a satisfactory character. As it has not the effect of commanding assent, only one of two conclusions is possible—either there is nothing to reveal, or the revelation is just a piece of colossal blundering.

Mr. Morgan says "The revelation of God to man which convinces is never documentary nor argumentative," a plea that says little for the Christian revelation. And then, as there is much virtue in the repetition of familiar words, "God is a spirit, and

can only be known by the spiritual," a sentence that is positively meaningless to all—even to Mr. Morgan himself. Moreover, the Atheist is asking too much. "Atheists," he says, "have a very common habit of demanding exact definitions and simple demonstration in the matter of religion. These demands cannot be met in any realm of life." And as an instance of what he means, this "great preacher," whose settling in England is hailed with such a flourish of trumpets, says that if you define a chair as an article having four legs, a seat, and a back, it will apply equally well to a donkey; and if you "Ask the next Atheist to demonstrate that the woman he calls mother really bears that relation to him, you will see at once that what he is asking you to do about God he is unable to do concerning his mother."

Oh, wise preacher! Oh, fortunate congregation to have such a philosopher for a teacher! A profound thinker this who cannot see that the question of the relation borne by one person to another is really quite a different one to that of the mere existence of one of them. Surely it is possible to demonstrate that people do have mothers, and it is not an unwise inference that what is true in *all* cases is true in *each* case. But (lest this may tax our thinker's mental powers overmuch) let me just point out that in the case under discussion it is not the relation man holds to God, but whether there is a God wherewith to have any relations at all. The Atheist is not hard, and will not ask too much. He will not ask Mr. Morgan to demonstrate all the lights and shades of the character of deity; he will be quite content if Mr. Morgan can show that there is a deity anywhere. That one fact, the demonstration of bare existence, will be enough to destroy Atheism, if Mr. Morgan can leave off playing the buffoon long enough to accomplish the task.

Mr. Morgan insists that the fault of our not believing in God lies with us. He says: "The revelation that God has made is absolutely conclusive to those who are obedient to the essential facts of their own personality." Again a wonderful sentence. The revelation of God is absolutely conclusive to all—to whom it is conclusive. But the question is, Why is it not conclusive to *all*? Mr. Morgan replies, It is conclusive to *some*. Well, this may be due to their lack of reasoning. If they thought more clearly it might not be conclusive. And when one looks at those to whom it is conclusive and those to whom it is not—at the Salvation Army preacher on the one side, and at Herbert Spencer on the other—one is really inclined to wonder why God Almighty should have pitched his "conclusive" revelation at the mental level of a Salvation Army barracks rather than at some higher altitude?

And one would also like to know what are these "essential facts" of our personality which the Atheist ignores? Also, how on earth we can ever get away from a part of our nature that is "essential"? Accuracy of thought and speech is never a strong feature of the clergy, but there ought to be some limits, even in a Nonconformist pulpit.

It is only to be expected that Mr. Morgan, in his reply, would fall back upon the old doctrine of a sinful mind as the cause of unbelief. God cannot, we are told, "be perfectly known in a man whose mind is darkened as the result of sin." Well, but the question is not whether God can be *perfectly* known, but whether he can be known at all? And is it only sinful men who do not know God, perfectly or imperfectly? I do not care for bandying great names, but think of the men whom such a generalisation embraces. It embraces men like Darwin and Spencer, and Mill and Clifford, not to mention the more militant Freethinkers. And was it because all of them had their minds darkened by sin that they knew nothing at all about God? It is pretty safe to deal in vague generalities, but all generalities must have a particular application. And I imagine that even Mr. Morgan would hardly have impudence enough to say that it was because these men were so far below him morally that they were without the knowledge

of God that he possesses. Is it not time that respectable believers, who are not financially interested in the result of the dispute, raised some sort of protest against the refined blackguardism of the pulpit, which insists upon unbelief being due to the generally bad character of unbelievers?

Mr. Morgan says, finally, "It would be interesting to know what kind of revelation these men would consider to be conclusive." Well, there is only one answer to such a question, and this is—It must be a proof clear enough to remove whatever doubt exists. And the Atheist has a perfect right to ask this. He is warranted in demanding that if there is a God who will punish him for his disbelief, that every effort shall be made by God to make his existence clear and unmistakable. To give to mankind a revelation that three-fourths of the human race ignore, and a large number of the remaining fourth have no faith in, and then punish all for not believing in it, is conduct that only the "Aristophanes of the Clouds" would be capable of. Mr. Morgan's own attempts to answer the reasonable question of the Atheist are perfectly futile. They are poor—even for the pulpit. And worse than that could no man say of them.

C. COHEN.

## The Crucial Point.—II.

ONE of the side issues much harped upon by Christian apologists is the vital connection alleged to exist between Christianity and morals. Their persistent argument is that if people lose their faith in the sovereign truths of the New Testament, the moral code will be deprived of its supreme sanction. They say that Freethinkers dare not bring up their children in the creed of Atheism, lest by so doing they endanger their morality. There are three decisive answers to this plausible but fallacious argument. The first is that Freethinkers *do* train their offspring in the creed of Atheism without imperilling their morals. Some of the noblest and best young people among us to-day were never taught in childhood to believe in God, and Christ, and a future life. They are citizens of this world, and their highest ambition is to be of the greatest possible service to society. They are genuine lovers and doers of truth, honesty, purity, honor, and all other virtues that are essential to the safety and happiness of their fellow-beings. This is a fact that cannot be intelligently questioned. The second reply is that truth is the greatest thing in the world, and should be cherished at whatever cost. If the belief in God as a loving Heavenly Father rests on no sure foundation; if the Virgin Birth, the Miraculous Life, the Atoning Death, the Resurrection, and the Ascension are nothing but fairy tales, or pure myths which have their more or less exact parallels in most other religions; and if there be no valid proofs of the existence of an unseen, spiritual world, does it not of necessity follow that to base the moral code upon, or to derive it from, such doubtful realities is a most dangerous policy? "By faith, at any rate," one apologist says, "I have a great deal to gain; and even if, in the end, I am mistaken, why then I have nothing to lose; on the Atheist's own showing, I have nothing to lose." But if the objects of faith do not exist, where and when is the gain? Can there be any gain in believing lies? And surely no intelligent Atheist has ever admitted that the Christian has nothing to lose if his religion is false. To be without the truth is in itself an incalculable loss. If the Supernatural has no objective reality the interests of the Natural are bound seriously to suffer by the active belief in it. And yet a professional apologist has the effrontery to maintain that "even if, in the end, he is mistaken, why then he has nothing to lose." Why, he has everything to lose.

But the third reply to the apologist's argument is more conclusive still. To derive the sanction of the

moral code from an imaginary heaven is to do gross injustice to a very real earth. Such a habit never fails to have an injurious effect upon character. The child is assured that certain things are right and certain other things wrong because God says so, and that God will reward or punish him according to his conduct. How is it possible for such a child to form a strong, noble, and disinterested character? If he does right it is simply because he is afraid to do wrong. The shadow of an avenging Deity darkens his whole life. That is to say, the influence of religion upon the child is essentially deleterious, in that it introduces the bad element of selfishness into his conduct. Disinterestedness is impossible when we are allured to virtue by glittering rewards and deterred from vice by dreadful punishments. But the true sanction of the moral law is to be found in the Nature of Things. No conduct can be good unless it benefits both the individual and the community, nor can any conduct be pronounced wrong unless it harms all concerned. If a man lived alone on a desert island much of the moral code would be blotted out for him. He would have to study only himself. But when a man dwells in the midst of his fellows, a necessity is laid upon him to consider their interests as well as his own. He is to do unto them as he would that they should do unto him. Man is a social being, and all that Nature inculcates is such a conduct as shall make for the general weal.

Now, does Christianity enjoin a single virtue not included in the list prepared by the Nature of Things? Jesus is reported to have laid down rules the observance of which would certainly militate against the well-being of society, and which no Christian communion has ever even attempted to observe. The doctrines of non-resistance to evil, love of enemies, and hatred of relations, have never been converted into practice. Christians have never so busied themselves about the kingdom of heaven as to have left their dead unburied. There are several commandments of Christ in the Four Gospels which, if obeyed, would soon plunge society into unfathomable depths of pain and misery. Such social burdens Christians, although calling themselves the slaves of the Lord Jesus, never even touch with the tips of their little fingers. But while it is undeniable that the Christian moral code contains not a few impracticable rules, can it be proved that it recommends one sound ethical principle on which the Nature of Things does not insist? How is it that the ethics of every great religion is practically identical? Is it not because ethics is older than the oldest religion of which we have any knowledge? Christian apologists used to assert dogmatically that the moral teaching of Jesus is infinitely superior to that of all Pagan teachers put together; but that was because they were profoundly ignorant of what the teaching of any other Master was, or because they were blind partisans. The apologists of to-day are wiser; but even these emphatically declare that, ethically, Christianity is infinitely superior to every other religion. The truth is, however, that there are no reasonable grounds for such a silly boast. Religion was originally not *ethical*, but *ritual*; but society has been ethical from the beginning. Men cannot live together unless they agree to observe certain rules that are essential to social peace and happiness. What these rules are, in any period, depends upon the degree of civilisation reached by the people who make them. Even so conservative a writer as Professor Sayce admits that the Hammurabi Code, although eight hundred years older than, is yet, in many respects, much superior to, the Mosaic, because the Babylonians of Hammurabi's time were vastly more advanced than the Israelites could have been during their supposed wanderings in the wilderness.

In this connection it must be borne in mind that character is to be judged by its fruits. We are told that, while other ethical codes may be almost identical with the Christian, it is Christ alone, acting through the Holy Ghost, who can inspire mankind to obey the moral law. But if Christians are to be estimated

according to the ethical fruit that they bear, that claim, I fear, must fall to the ground. Christ's inspiration has, so far, utterly failed to give them moral pre-eminence. They may be devout to the last degree, they may enjoy sweetest communion with the heavens, the blood of Christ may be inconceivably dear and precious in their sight, and they may be the temples of the Divine Spirit who often kindles seraphic rapture in their hearts; but the question is, Does their religion make them honest merchants, kind, considerate employers, devoted husbands and wives, loving fathers and mothers, and altruistic members of society? Take the Brotherhood of Man, which is said to be incapable of realisation apart from the Fatherhood of God. Well, from all the pulpits in our land the latter doctrine is eloquently proclaimed twice every Sunday, and books are published and circulated by the million to explain and enforce it. But the Brotherhood of Man is still but an empty dream. Does not the Christian employer treat his servants as mere "hands," subordinates, whom he sweats and bleeds for his own enrichment? They are anything but brothers and sisters to him. Even within the churches themselves the sense of brotherhood is often conspicuous by its absence. Christianity has not succeeded in knitting those who profess it into a harmonious and loving whole, or in constituting them into a united and happy family. This is a fact which all of us alike are bound to acknowledge.

I am aware that Christian apologists refer continually to individual instances in which Christ's redeeming power habitually glorifies itself. Drunkards become sober, thieves honest, liars truthful, and blasphemers worshipers, as if by magic. Such wicked people, the moment they surrender to God in Christ, become victors over their lordly appetites and passions, and begin to lead lives of inward peace and outward consistency. True; but why cannot these moral conversions take place without so much artificial and wasteful excitement? Why cannot the Holy Spirit accomplish the transformation apart from such a display of human machinery? To save a few drunkards and thieves in Manchester, Birmingham, or Liverpool, it is essential to form big committees, and hold innumerable preliminary meetings, and bring out special evangelists from another country, and expend thousands of pounds, and, as a rule, the desired and scientifically worked-for success follows. Far be it from me to sneer at revivals, or to cast a suspicion upon the reality of their results; but I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that *revivals constitute the strongest and most conclusive of all arguments against the truth of the Christian Religion*. They prove beyond a doubt that so-called Christian conversions are purely human achievements. The revivalists and their associates return fervent thanks to God for the work accomplished. They pay pretty compliments to the Holy Ghost. But does it never occur to them that the whole business is an irrefutable witness to the impotence of the Spirit of God? If there were a Holy Ghost, the omnipotent agent of an omnipotent Redeemer, would he require to be coaxed, and cajoled, and wheedled, and flattered into doing his own appointed work? Would it be necessary to give him such elaborate and expensive assistance as is rendered at every Torrey-Alexander mission? This is the crucial point which ought to be candidly faced. If there be a Holy Ghost, these scientifically manufactured missions must be an insufferable insult to his honor and dignity.

For years before I ceased to be a believer the elaborate and complicated machinery adopted by the Churches was a serious stumbling-block in the way of my faith. I could not understand why God was unable to work through simple, ordinary means, or how he did so much more through some men than through others. But now the whole matter is perfectly clear to me. I always knew that the machinery was wholly human, although graciously owned and blessed of God; but my present conviction is that no God has ever had anything whatever to do with the revivals, and conversions, and reformations which

are the perpetual boast and glory of the Churches, the machinery alone, set in motion by enthusiastic and devoted men and women, being a sufficient explanation of them. God's help, the Holy Spirit's influence, and the spiritual presence of Christ in the world are mere fictions of the mind, and are often doubted even by the most zealous believers. These have all been dropped by the great army of Free-thinkers, and their places are to be filled by well-organised and wisely manipulated ethical schemes and activities. Secularism ought to be ethically constructive as well as theologically destructive. We must, of course, detach ethics from supernaturalism; but while thus detaching we must be careful not to lose hold of it. It is our duty and privilege to utilise it as a purely secular science. Secular Societies exist for the purpose of promoting the principle that human conduct is based, not upon supernatural beliefs, but upon natural knowledge, and that, consequently, all education should be conducted on purely ethico-secular lines. It is our settled conviction that for the moral redemption and ennoblement of the world we do not need the intervention of supernatural beings and forces, the resources resident in human nature itself being grandly equal to the accomplishment of that sublime task.

JOHN T. LLOYD.

### The Despised Grave.

BRITTANY is a corner of France where the country-people are intensely Catholic. It is true that Renan was born there; but he was a freak of nature so far as Brittany was concerned. The Bretons retain their piety and their prejudices. A very singular example of both piety and prejudice may (so it is said) be seen from time to time in certain rustic places in Lower Brittany. The people cross a cemetery on their way to church. Some of them leave the path, walk in among the tombs, and proceed to a bare mound that has no headstone. They—especially the older women—stamp fiercely on the ground with their wooden shoes. Why do they make these angry gestures? Who is buried in this despised grave? I will answer the questions presently.

When the French States-General met in May, 1789, it was generally felt that a more rational and just use ought to be made of the property of the Catholic Church. The majority of the members of the States-General were real or professed believers in the Catholic religion. But some of them were poor clergy who wanted larger incomes. Many of the middle-class members had invested money in the national funds, and dreaded lest the bankruptcy of the government should deprive them of both interest and capital. In August, 1789, after the news came to Paris of burning mansions and murdered tax-collectors in the rural districts, the States-General sought to appease the furious country-folk by abolishing tithes. It is calculated that the tithes had taken some three or four million pounds a year from the farming population. Two months later it was resolved that the goods of the Church belonged to the nation, and that the State should pay the salaries of the clergy, taking care that no village curé got less than £45 a year, besides his residence. The minimum had previously dropped occasionally to a beggarly £16 per annum. In February, 1790, the Constituent Assembly (as the States-General were now called) declared that it would henceforward recognise no monastic vows. A year later, every congregation of monks and nuns was broken up. I admit these measures were harsh and impulsive. Those of us who love freedom cannot help feeling that people have a right to live a secluded life in monasteries if they so choose. Yet one can see a wholesome purpose in the attack of the Revolution on the monasteries. It was deemed wrong that bodies of men and women should live in a kind of inner country, renouncing fatherhood, motherhood,

politics, and social intercourse. Humanity ought to mingle. But monasteries erect walls between men, and divide them into castes.

In April, 1790, an eccentric monk, named Dom Gerle, rose in the Constituent Assembly and proposed a motion that the Catholic religion should be acknowledged as the official religion of France. The majority refused to accept the monk's motion. Already the Assembly had decreed that all State employments were open to Protestants. And now it took thought for the Jews, and abolished certain taxes that still remained as peculiar burdens on men of Hebrew blood. In July, 1790, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was adopted. The payment of the salaries of priests by the State was made a permanent function. All priests were to be popularly elected, and must publicly take an oath of fidelity to the secular constitution. All the clergy who happened to be members of the Assembly were ordered to swear the oath in the presence of Parliament. About a hundred (a third of the clerical deputies) did so; the rest refused. Of 135 bishops in France only four, including the shrewd and witty Talleyrand, complied. All priests who declined must lose office and salaries. What was the result? The French clergy were split into two camps—those who took the oath, or Constitutionalists; and those who would not, or Refractories. All over France, but especially in rural areas, the Refractories were honored as martyrs by the pious. The villagers would not forgive the priest who took the oath. His very grave was despised. This explains why the Breton women, to this very day, stamp with their sabots on certain graves—the burial-places of priests who, more than a hundred years ago, swore fidelity to the laws of France.

The Constituent Assembly was in no mood to yield to the Refractories. In May, 1791, it proclaimed liberty for all creeds. In the eyes of French law, all forms of religious belief were equal. The Dissenter, the Catholic, the Jew, were all alike free to speak their ideas of God, and follow what modes of worship they chose. A load was lifted from heresy. First among the nations, the French people had affirmed the right of every man to obey his conscience in the sphere of religion. One reform still awaited sanction. In September, 1792, the Assembly decided that the register of births, deaths, and marriages should be kept by the municipalities. Henceforward only those marriages were legal which were contracted before the civic authorities. Even in England we are lingering till a democratic government brings us abreast with France. No marriage should be legal because it is celebrated in a place of worship. The State should be the sole legal witness.

Now, up to this point the French Revolution was not anti-Christian. But Mirabeau had prophesied what would happen. In January, 1791, he warned the Constituent Assembly that if the clergy opposed democratic reform the people would de-Christianise themselves, curse the priesthood, and regard the churches as monuments of lying. Look, then, at the summer of 1793. Almost all Europe had turned against France—England, Germany, Prussia, Austria, the Papal power, Naples, Spain, Holland. Hostile armies marched on the eastern frontier. Just at that crisis an alarm was sounded on the west, in La Vendée. In that western province 100,000 peasants had risen in arms against the Republic. The peasants had been inflamed by the Refractory priests of the Catholic Church. The country was between two fires; and the greatness of the peril was due to the priests who would not submit to the new order of things in the economic and political interest of the whole community.

Before the year was out the Republic struck back in wrath at the Christian creed. In September the doctrine of God was ordered to be erased from the public school instruction. In October priests and nuns were forbidden to teach children. Many churches were closed. The gold and silver vessels of altars were minted into coin. Church bells were

cast into cannon for the defence of the fatherland. At Nevers, an inscription was written over the cemetery gates—"Death is an eternal sleep." Sunday observance was swept away. The day of rest was now to be the *décadi*, or each tenth day. All festivals of the saints were suppressed. In November, 1793, the church of Nôtre-Dame in Paris was changed to a temple of Reason, and the Goddess of Reason was symbolised by an opera actress, dressed in white robe, blue mantle, and red cap. I am neither defending nor condemning these acts; I am trying to explain them. They were in large measure the natural signs of the people's indignation against a stiff-necked priesthood which would not accept the new social order, and had even endangered the existence of France as a nation. In 1794 the government declined to support the Catholic Church any further. Complete separation of Church and State lasted for eight years. And then, in 1802, the Church was re-established by the agreement with Rome known as the Concordat. The man who was responsible for the Concordat was a soldier who needed the assistance of the priest—Napoleon.

The lesson of the story just told is clear. Church and State must be rigidly divided. Even if a religion is beneficent, it can do no good to a country when it becomes a property owner and aspires to legislate. The secular State must be the supreme law-giver. No priest must be allowed to conduct a legal marriage. No priest, as such, should sit in the national parliament. Religious teachers and prophets must be content with the voluntary subscriptions of their disciples. They must make their appeal to the conscience of the people by moral means alone, and never rely on privilege.\*

F. J. GOULD.

### Acid Drops.

In opening his big International Show in the Strand, in a temporary building which symbolises the temporary character of his organisation, General Booth offered his samples from everywhere a cordial welcome in the name of the King. "I have permission," he said, "to extend a welcome to you in the name of King Edward VII. of Great Britain and Ireland and Emperor of India. In my interview of Wednesday last, his Majesty gave me permission to say that he had with pleasure met your leader, that he watched our movement with great interest, and regarded its success as of importance to his Empire." This is very likely. But for what reason? Probably for the reason which prompted Constantine to make Christianity the religion of *his* Empire. Christianity was a religion that just suited his temper and ambition. "The throne of the emperors," Gibbon says, "would be established on a fixed and permanent basis if all their subjects, embracing the Christian doctrine, should learn to suffer and obey." General Booth forbids his "soldiers" to meddle with politics; they are *in* the world but not *of* it; all their collective force is in the hands of their leader; so King Edward pats him on the back to keep him loyal and friendly; which shows that his Majesty is, as his friends say, a good diplomatist.

Nothing succeeds like success. "General" Booth has been to see King Edward at Buckingham Palace, and the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience declared the next morning in a leading article that "the vast development of the Salvation Army is the one grand and overwhelming fact in the contemporary history of Christianity." Just think of it! God Almighty brought Christianity into the world himself nearly two thousand years ago; and, after the lapse of all that time, the immensely best thing Christianity has to show is the Salvation Army! Did any "infidel" ever pen such an indictment of the faith of Christ?

Pass in the train by the Salvation Army "Social Colony" in Essex, look at the place as you fly along—if the train should happen to be flying—and you will gain a very fair idea of what William Booth is doing for the world. The place is the *beau idéal* of the ugly and the sordid. It looks for all the world like the dreariest section of purgatory. To spend a year there would be too heavy a punishment for the worst criminal even in Christian England.

\* The historical matter in this article is mainly drawn from Brizon's *L'Eglise et la Révolution Française*, a useful little hand book recently published.

The *Daily News* regards the Salvation Army as "grand and overwhelming." Herbert Spencer thought it "overwhelming" too. He considered it one of the chief agencies in the rebarbarisation of England which went on during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. Professor Huxley's opinion of the Salvation Army is well known. He looked upon it as a growing menace to our civilisation.

Herbert Spencer showed his wisdom in refusing to applaud this Salvation Army, which some "Agnostics" spoke of so flatteringly. In the strong essay on "Rebarbarisation" in the last book he published (*Facts and Comments*, 1902), Spencer charged the Salvation Army with having largely contributed to the degradation of the English character. "The word," he said, "is significant—Army; as are the names for the ranks, from the so-called 'General' descending through brigadiers, colonels, majors, down to local sub-officers, all wearing uniforms. This system is like in idea and in sentiment to that of an actual army. Then what are the feelings appealed to? The 'Official Gazette of the Salvation Army' is the *War Cry*; and the motto conspicuous on the title-page is 'Blood and Fire.' Doubtless it will be said that it is towards the principle of evil, personal or impersonal—towards 'the devil and all his works'—that the destructive sentiments are invoked by this title and this motto. So it will be said that in a hymn, conspicuous in the number of the paper I have in hand, the like *animus* is displayed by the expressions which I cull from the first thirty lines: 'Made us warriors for ever, Sent us in the field to fight.....We shall win with fire and blood.....Stand to your arms, the foe is nigh, The powers of hell surround.....The day of battle is at hand! Go forth to glorious war.' These and others like them are stimuli to the fighting propensities, and the excitements of song, joined with martial processions and instrumental music, cannot fail to raise high those slumbering passions which are ready enough to burst out even in the intercourse of ordinary life. Such appeals as there may be to the gentler sentiments which the creed inculcates, are practically lost amid these loud-voiced invocations. Out of mixed and contradictory exhortations the people who listen respond to those which are most congruous with their own natures and are little affected by the rest; so that under the nominal forms of the religion of amity there are daily exercised the feelings appropriate to the religion of enmity. And then, as before suggested, these destructive passions directed towards 'the enemy,' as the principle of evil is called, are easily directed towards an enemy otherwise conceived."

William Booth was naturally puffed in the *Daily Mirror* after he had seen the King, and of course the laudation was rapturous. The success of the Salvation Army was represented as a case of "the World against One Man, and the One Man has conquered the World." It was said that "General Booth has done more for Christianity than any other human being since the days of John Wesley." "No Pope, no Primate," it was declared, "has ever established a record like that of William Booth." And so on, and so on. Evidently the *Mirror* forgets that Jesus Christ established no record, his mission at the moment of his death being to all appearance an ignominious failure. Our halfpenny contemporary may reply that Jesus Christ established a record afterwards. But will it dare to prophesy the same of General Booth? The Salvation Army is a "One Man" affair, and unless a second William Booth arises it is bound to go to pieces like (to compare small things with great) the empire of Alexander.

Having puffed William Booth as the greatest Christian of the present age, the *Mirror* went on to show the real value of its Christianity. In the very next leaderette it chuckled over the Russian losses and sufferings in the war with Japan; and right in the middle of the same page there was something that was probably meant for a cartoon, representing the Russian bear badly mauled with large portions of his skin torn off, the largest solution of continuity being near the parts that Moses saw of Jehovah in that cleft of the rock on Mount Sinai. Such is Christian charity to a nation that is getting the worst of it! No doubt the *Mirror* would sing smaller if Russia were going ahead, instead of Japan; just as it would probably spit at William Booth if he passed his zenith and sank down into failure.

Right under this second leaderette in the *Mirror* was "A Thought for To-Day." It was an extract from Detective-Inspector Sweeney's volume of reminiscences just published. "I would strongly recommend," says Mr. John Sweeney, "that any person calling himself an Anarchist in public should be *ipso facto* liable to a term of imprisonment ranging in duration from one month to two years. Such a measure would, I think, tend effectually to extinguish many political firebrands." Such is political and social wisdom offered to

the public by a retired detective, and endorsed by a Christian journal immediately after lauding General Booth and kicking the under-dog in the fight in the East! Nothing could be more brutally absurd. To imprison a man for his opinions is, on the face of it, an act of oppression; for, in the nature of things, one man must be as much entitled to his opinions as another. And in this case the proposal is very far-reaching if carried out with impartiality. Detective Sweeney, backed up by the pious *Daily Mirror*, would have men like Herbert Spencer, Count Tolstoy, and the Honorable Auberon Herbert under lock and key. Nay, if Jesus of Nazareth were living now in England, he would share their fate; for, if he was not an Anarchist, what was he? But the absurdity of the Sweeney-Mirror philosophy is even worse than its brutality. History shows that if you want to suppress ideas the very worst thing you can do is to fight them with material weapons. Persecution, unless it extends to extermination—which is no longer possible, if it ever was so—only stimulates and strengthens what is persecuted. People who count everything in pounds, shillings, and pence are baffled when they deal with a man who has convictions. The fact is rather that the convictions have him. Torture him, burn him, and the conviction flies from the funeral pyre into the brain of another man, and presently into the brains of hundreds of other men, until at last you stand enringed with an irresistible army of your own evocation. That is how things have happened, and that is how they will happen again.

Detective Sweeney has not been able to frighten the criminal classes in London. They flourish as splendidly as ever. How, then, is he to frighten men of principle? He may be a clever detective, but he is not a philosopher. And the *Daily Mirror* cannot make him one. It is not one itself.

General Booth once said that pressmen were the most hopeless of sinners. But amongst the exhibits at his Grand International Show is "The Saved Editor" from Japan. So the age of miracles is not passed.

The Alake of Abeokuta does not touch alcohol himself, and he is anxious to have it banished from West Africa. But he says that as Europe sends strong liquors there the natives will buy. Precisely so. All over the world it is the Christian nations who are debauching the "heathen." Sending them missionaries is the grim jest of the tragedy.

According to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* the Alake of Abeokuta, while a professed Christian, has not been baptised. He objects to having to pick out one of his wives to live with and turn all the others adrift. He is therefore "an Old Testament Christian." But why (we ask) is he so particular? The New Testament does not, any more than the Old Testament, contain a single word against polygamy.

At the annual festival dinner of the Church Lads' Brigade the Duke of Portland said that the three "M's" were as necessary as the three "R's" in a young man's education. These were—morality, manliness, and manners. Good! But where does *piety* come in? Something should have been said about it at a Church meeting.

How to make the best of both worlds has always been an accomplishment of the clergy. These gentlemen are now combining religion with recreation. Special Seaside Conferences are being organised by the Evangelical Free Churches, at which Nonconformist men of God may discuss pious topics part of the day, and amuse themselves elsewhere during the rest of it. Scarborough and Blackpool are amongst the places selected. No wonder that "prominent leaders" are going to take part in these agreeable assemblies.

Captain Mark Sykes's new book of travels through Asiatic Turkey, *Dar-ul-Islam*, is both praised and damned by the *Daily News*; praised for what are obviously great merits, and damned for a want of respect for the Christian part of that country's population. Here is a passage that naturally offended our pious contemporary:—"The rest of the Christians of Syria, living in villages, are generally a poor race of people, resembling degraded Fellahs, but of worse morals and physique; indeed, they are not worth a description, and are interesting only to archæologists in ritual and early Christian sectarian controversy." Here is another passage even less complimentary: "This Christian we at once recognised by the fact that he was fat, stealthy, insolent, and cringing."

The suicide of Mr. Robinson, Chief Justice of New Guinea, calls attention to the display of practical Christianity to which the natives out there are treated. Four years ago two missionaries were killed. At least it is said so.

Messrs. Chalmers and Tomkins were sent on by express to their heavenly destination. From a secular point of view, this was wrong; from a religious point of view, it was a great benefit to the missionaries—who are now in glory. Anyhow the matter should have ended there—piously speaking; for the New Testament represents persecution as a blessing, and distinctly forbids retaliation. "Vengeance is mine," the Lord says; and his poor little creatures should not contest his claim. But of course they did so. For four years the missionaries' friends have been trying to get their own back. Many members of the tribe of the "murderers" have been shot, but the two dead men are still unavenged. Some fifty more appear to have been massacred about three months ago; and it is in connection with the outcry against this massacre that Chief Justice Robinson has committed suicide. Perhaps a few hundred years hence a batch of New Guinea natives will still be slaughtered annually to satisfy the spirits of Chalmers and Tomkins.

The *Daily Telegraph* observes that "the essential condition of salvation in Dr. Dowie's system seems to consist in handing over to the prophet a tenth of the disciple's income." But may not the same thing, and worse, be said of other "systems"? Has our contemporary ever read the Acts of the Apostles? If not, we advise it to buy (or borrow) a New Testament, and look up Acts iv., 35.

Another complaint against Dowie is that he does not imitate the ancient prophet whose name he has appropriated. "The Tishbite," the *Telegraph* says, "was fed by the ravens and drank of the brook. Elijah the Second prefers grand hotels and French cookery." A sad case of inconsistency, no doubt; but why reserve all the sarcasm for extra-territorial culprits? Have we not plenty of inconsistent preachers at home? Why not "go for" the Bishops who preach "blessed be ye poor" on thousands a year, and live in palaces while professing to follow their Master who had not where to lay his head? We dare say these right reverend fathers in God are not averse to French cookery. We never heard of their dining at Lockhart's. And we don't suppose they have fourpenny "dosses" when they travel abroad.

A prisoner recently found guilty of murder by an Old Bailey jury, on being asked why sentence of death should not be passed upon him, replied: "Yes, I consider the judge summed up the case as if he had a personal spite against me, and he went to sleep while my counsel was pleading for my life." It is not pleasant to hear such things said of a judge, and they may not be true in this instance. But it is undeniable that judges do sometimes act as partisans. Mr. Justice Grantham did so in Mr. J. M. Robertson's libel action, and his lordship's remarks on "Bob" Sievier and the late Queen Victoria in a more recent libel action were, to say the least, of a very gratuitous character. When the editor of the *Freethinker* was being tried for "blasphemy" in 1883, Sir Hardinge Giffard (now Lord Halsbury) walked out of court and left his brief in the safe hands of Mr. Justice North.

William Pratt, of Dadlington, Nuneaton, in his ninetieth year, complained of a pain in his chest after breakfast. Lying down on a sofa, he had his Bible and his spectacles handed to him. Soon afterwards he was found dead. We suppose it will never be decided if the breakfast or the Bible finished him. It could hardly have been the spectacles.

Marie Corelli blames the clergy for "Pagan London." She declares that a Pagan clergy are responsible for a Pagan people. Anyhow, the "Pagan" remains, whatever is the explanation. Archdeacon Sinclair has just been lamenting that "four-fifths of the people of London" do not worship God at all. Out of a population of three and a half millions in the London diocese of the Church of England "only 113,000 attended at the greatest of festivals, the Easter Communion." And what is the remedy? More money, more money! That is what the Archdeacon asks for. He begs for support of the Bishop of London's fund. It reminds us of Hood's "Black Job," in which a pious Society for washing the blacks white admits its failure, but declares that the remedy is "More soap."

Canon Allen Edwards, who has a large experience of South London, joins in this lamentation. "I have seen it coming," he says, "for years. It has not come in a moment. It has come gradually. The children of those who thirty years ago went regularly to church twice on Sunday now go only once; and their children, in turn, are learning not to go at all." Dreadful! "We are going from bad to worse," the

Canon adds, "and unless things turn, and until they do turn, I wonder what is going to be the result."

"The reason why the working classes do not go to church," Canon Edwards says, "is the same reason why I don't go to the Derby—not because I think it wrong, for I have no opinions on the subject, but because I have no interest in the things that go on there. And this is the reason, and no other, why many men do not go to church. They are not interested in what is done there." This is frank, anyhow.

Dealing last week with the burning of the *General Slocum* near New York, we drew attention to the fact that the excursionists on board the steamer were all connected with St. Mark's Lutheran Church; therefore they all believed, nominally, in heaven; yet they were so anxious to keep out of it that they became a howling mob of frenzied hooligans. Read the following account from the pen of the New York correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*:—

"Neither the captain nor the crew could maintain a vestige of discipline. Death by burning or drowning confronted the people within a few hundred yards of shore, and as the flames, fanned by the breeze, advanced, the people lost all control, and they retreated before the furnace to the after portion of the ship. As the space available for the terror-stricken people grew less and less the pandemonium became worse and worse. Men fought each other in their efforts to secure a place of safety; women acted like fiends, clawing and scratching indiscriminately; little children were trampled upon; the shrieks of mothers imploring help for themselves and their babies were heard above the roar of the conflagration. There were inhuman struggles for the life-belts, which proved to be rotten, and tore into tiny pieces."

Could a boatload of "infidels" by any possibility have done worse?

"Famous Men's Favourite Books" is the headline of an extract sent us from an unnamed paper. "George III.," we are told, "for many years of his life read nothing but his Bible and prayer-book." Was this during the time he was mad? "Cowper," we are told, also "read only his Bible and prayer-book." What pious nonsense, to be sure! The man who wrote that sentence had never read Cowper himself. Cowper read plenty of books besides the Bible and the prayer-book. He actually translated Homer and some Italian poets.

Stands Scotland where it did? That immortal question must be answered now in the negative. Sabbatarianism is breaking down all over the country of the "unco guid." Even at Falkirk the *plebiscite* of the ratepayers on the question of running tramway cars on Sunday has resulted in 2,097 "for" and 1,103 "against"—a very decisive majority of 989 in favor of common sense. There will be much weeping and wailing, and more gnashing of teeth, over this in the local kirks.

Canon Hensley Henson is not going to be frightened by the Bishop of London. He tells the Bishop, to begin with, that he is not under his lordship's authority. "I hold an exceptional position," he says, "among the clergy of London. As Canon of Westminster I am extra diocesan, and as Rector of St. Margaret's I neither receive institution from the Bishop of London nor take with respect to him any oath of canonical obedience." This is a plain slap in the face, and we are very glad to see it, for the upstart Bishop of London wants taking down a bit. He has met his superior in every way (except station and salary) in Canon Hensley Henson.

Canon Henson lays down five propositions, all deduced from his *Hibbert Journal* article, and blandly asks the Bishop of London which of them he is prepared to disprove, as well as to condemn. This is a very pointed challenge. Will the Bishop accept it? We have our doubts.

General Bobrikoff, one of the chief assassins of the liberties of Finland, who brought upon himself a natural retribution, appears to have been a very pious gentleman. At any rate, the chief assassin of all (the Czar) is as pious as they make them. His messages to General Bobrikoff's widow are full of piety and references to God. The Chief Priest of St. Petersburg signs a certificate that General Bobrikoff was "a true Christian." So *that's* all right. But when the Czar calls the assassination of the Russian Governor of Finland a "dastardly crime" he is simply talking the usual "rot" of such occasions. A man who kills another man, knowing the deed is to cost him his own life, may be mistaken, wicked, or whatever else of the same kind you please. But it is positively childish to call his act "dastardly." It is the very opposite of that, anyhow.

A circular reaches us signed by the Rev. J. W. Leigh, Dean of Hereford, and headed "A Tribute to Frances Power

Cobbe." It is proposed to raise a memorial fund which "will go to the support of the monthly Journal which she founded, and which she carried on to the time of her death." That is to say, a Journal in which she identified Vivisection with Atheism, and claimed pretty nearly all the virtues for persons of her own way of thinking. We should be sorry to assist in promoting the longevity of such sectarianism. At the same time, we cheerfully acknowledge Miss Cobbe's merits in other directions.

Lady Battersea writes on "My Friend Miss Cobbe" in the *Abolitionist*. Her ladyship need not have crowded so much sectarian piety into the article. One would fancy, in reading her, that Vivisection was opposed only by Christians and practised only by Freethinkers. Miss Cobbe may have "pursued Truth for its own sake," but she had not found it when she advised Atheists and Agnostics to cry over "the grave wherein they bury the Divine Love and Immortal Hope of our miserable race." Miss Cobbe can no longer exercise her imagination, but Lady Battersea might exercise hers; and if she did so for a few minutes she would see the folly of supposing that people must be miserable who do not believe as she does.

Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan, having given America enough of the light of his countenance, is now illuminating England again. According to the *Daily News*, his recent sermon in the New Central Hall, Birmingham, was a "remarkable" one. "The preacher's aim," we are told, "was to show that the undisputed facts concerning the influence of the Christ in the world to-day, and through the centuries of the Christian era, were sufficient evidence of the truth of the Gospel story." Suppose we leave "the world" out of the question and take Birmingham. What has Christianity done there? This it has done, beyond all dispute. It has produced a multitude of bigots who, in the name of their own religion, deny as far as they can the rights of citizenship to those who reject it. The Birmingham Christians use the public school buildings for Sunday meetings, and will not let a single one be used by the Secularists. Their pretence is that the Secularists are wicked people. But who are wicked people? Those who oppose Christianity. Thus we come back to naked bigotry; naked—and unashamed.

Rev. R. C. Fillingham, of Hexton, states his opinion that if Christ returned to earth just now he would be locked up as a dangerous lunatic. Very likely. Especially if he tried to whip out the tradesmen from St. Paul's Churchyard.

Mr. Labouchere stood up in the House of Commons for cigarette smoking. It soothed the nerves, he said, like reading the Bible. Which reminds us that Mr. Labouchere is "the Christian member" for Northampton.

Rev. Vincent Lucas fell down at Oxford. He said it was through short-sightedness. The police said he was drunk and incapable, and the bench fined him five shillings and costs. The reverend gentleman protested his innocence. He had only had three glasses of Scotch whisky, and that was far below the limit of his carrying capacity. Which is instructive.

Alexander Brogden Parsons, arrested at Guildford on a charge of bigamy, appears to have had an interesting career. At one time he was in charge of a mission chapel in East London, and was sent to the Church Training College for Laymen, Commercial-road.

I think I could turn and live with the animals, they are so placid and self-contained;  
I stand and look at them long and long.  
They do not sweat and whine about their condition;  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins;  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God;  
Not one is dissatisfied—not one is demented with the mania of owning things;  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago;  
Not one is respectable and industrious over the whole earth.

—Walt Whitman.

Faith is the best evidence in the world; it reconciles contradictions and proves impossibilities. It is wonderfully developed in the blind.—*Dod Grile*.

Those who cherish the opposite opinion may be very good citizens.—*Dod Grile*.



## Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Suspended during July and August.

### To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—July 3, afternoon and evening, Victoria Park; 10, afternoon and evening, Victoria Park.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- G. J.—Cuttings to hand. Thanks.
- A. G. LYE.—There is no edition of the Bible that we know of calculated "for a Freethinker's use." Bagster's "Teachers' Bible" is probably as good as you could obtain at present. It is published by the Sunday School Union, 57 Ludgate-hill, London, E.C. The price has been reduced lately, we believe, to four or five shillings.
- J. W. H. (Bombay).—Thanks for the paper, the marked parts in which we have dealt with.
- G. WEIR.—Cuttings welcome. See "Acid Drops." Also paragraph in "Sugar Plums."
- V. ROGERS.—Your communication received from M. Furnemont has been dealt with in "Sugar Plums." Mr. Foote hopes to be able to go to Rome himself, and trusts to have the pleasure of your company.
- R. JOHNSON (Manchester).—Pleased to know that you will join the N. S. S. party which is being organised for the visit to the Rome Congress in September.
- E. M. PEGG.—Thanks for your letter. Mr. Foote will write you about a date for Manchester early in the next season. It is pleasant to know that, even at the end of June, such fine audiences assembled at the Secular Hall to hear the "blatant Atheist."
- B. C. LEWIS.—Always pleased to receive cuttings. With regard to the other matter, it has never been our policy, any more than it is our inclination, to play the part of a Paul Pry. We make no inquisition into people's lives, even when they happen to be well-known Christians. When cases get into the newspapers, through magistrates' courts or other recognised channels of publicity, we hold ourselves free to criticise when we choose to do so—which is only when a useful purpose may be served. You will see, therefore, that we cannot undertake to deal with the case you allude to.
- W. CROMACK.—Yes, we remember shaking hands with you at Leeds. Thanks.
- S. R. SHERMAN.—There is no cheap edition of Dr. Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine*, and we don't suppose there ever will be. We have often thought of writing a popular biography of Paine ourselves. There is room for it, and we happen to know the ground well, besides having materials fairly ready to hand.
- T. MARSHALL.—We do not think the Hyde Park speaker you allude to was an N. S. S. lecturer—and you do not give his name. But, in any case, it would not be the business of the N. S. S. to intervene between licensed and unlicensed medical practitioners, or to warn its speakers that they must not believe in the bone-setting powers of "the man at Blantyre." Nor do we see what this has to do with "miracles." Surely you do not wish the N. S. S. to commit itself to the dogma of medical infallibility? You yourself must know that pretty nearly every medical theory is controverted amongst doctors themselves. Why not smilingly allow differences of opinion in the midst of uncertainties?
- JAMES TOOPE writes: "I beg to thank the President of the N. S. S. for support in my last case at Marlborough-street, and those who came forward to give evidence in my behalf."
- The conclusion of Mr. Foote's review of Herbert Spencer's *Autobiography* stands over till next week.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*, which are most useful in the Freethought Publishing Company's business.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

## The Rome Congress.

AN International Freethought Congress will take place at Rome on the twentieth, twenty-first, and twenty-second days of September. This will be the greatest gathering of the kind that the world has ever seen. All parts of the civilised globe will be represented, and in some instances by very distinguished men. Professor Haeckel will be one of the representatives of Germany, Professor Bethelot of France, Professor Lombroso of Italy, Bjørnsen of Norway, Salmeron of Spain, and Dr. Conway of America. M. Furnemont, member of the Belgian parliament, and secretary of the International Freethought Federation, who has been travelling on behalf of the Congress all over Europe, reports in glowing terms of the prospect, and declares that the assembly of Freethinkers at Rome will startle the Christian world.

At the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society, held at Leeds on Whit-Sunday, the following resolution was carried unanimously:—

"That the N. S. S., as the one national Freethought organisation in Great Britain, should be strongly represented at the International Freethought Congress to be held at Rome in September; that a Special Fund should be raised for this purpose; and that the Continental officials of the International Freethought Federation should be apprised of the practical determination of the N. S. S. to contribute as fully as possible towards rendering the Rome Congress a splendid demonstration of the Freethought forces of the world."

In pursuance of this resolution I, as President of the N. S. S., and editor of the *Freethinker*, call upon the members and friends of the Society to provide the necessary funds. A subscription list is hereby opened, and starts with the name of Major John C. Harris, R.E., who forwarded a cheque for £10 to the Secretary immediately on reading the Conference report. Subscriptions should be forwarded direct to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C. Those who happen to be writing to me can, if they so wish, forward their remittances to me at the same time; but it would be better, generally speaking, for remittances to be sent direct to Miss Vance. All subscriptions will be acknowledged officially, week by week, in the columns of the *Freethinker*.

How many delegates the N. S. S. will send to Rome must depend on the funds available for the purpose. It is therefore hoped that the response to this appeal will be prompt as well as generous.

I shall have a good deal more to say about this matter next week. Meanwhile I beg English Freethinkers to make an effort to let their country cut a proper figure at the Rome Congress. The land of Shakespeare and Darwin (not to go farther) ought to send a worthy selection of delegates to the land of Galileo and Giordano Bruno.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's lecture on "Holy Russia and Heathen Japan" drew to the Secular Hall, Manchester, the largest afternoon audience that has been seen in the place for years. The lecture itself was much enjoyed and warmly applauded. The evening lecture on "What Did Shakespeare Think?" was followed with the closest attention for nearly an hour and a half, and was obviously greatly appreciated. Some discussion ensued, of a more profitable character than is usual nowadays.

Freethinkers attended Mr. Foote's Manchester lectures from Ashton, Bolton, Failsworth, Wigan, Leigh, Staley-bridge, Rochdale, Halifax, Marple, Sale, Urmston, Hyde, and even Warrington. "It was gratifying," Mrs. Pegg, the secretary, writes, "to see a number come from a distance to hear Mr. Foote. Many of them expressed the pleasure it had given them to listen to the lectures. Several had not heard Mr. Foote before." A fair number of Jews were present at both lectures. One of them informed Mr. Foote that a Freethought association was being formed amongst the Jews in

Manchester. Perhaps this may be advisable temporarily. But in the long run it will be best to break down the barriers and let Jew and Gentile work together in the common cause of Humanity.

The International Freethought Congress at Rome opens on Tuesday, September 20, in the Aula Magna of the Collegio Romano. The Minister of Public Instruction has graciously granted the use of this Hall to the Congress. A Roman committee has been formed to arrange for the reception of delegates and to look after their comfort while in the Italian capital. Delegates will be entitled to a personal pass giving them the privilege of a reduction of from 40 to 60 per cent. (according to distance) on their fares over all the Italian railways for two months from September 10.

British Freethinkers who intend to join the N. S. S. party of delegates and visitors to the Rome Congress should lose as little time as possible in communicating with the Secretary (Miss Vance) in London.

We see by the *Truthseeker* (New York) that Dr. Moncure D. Conway has expressed his willingness to attend the International Freethought Congress at Rome in September as a representative of the Freethinkers of the United States. A subscription is being very properly raised to defray Dr. Conway's expenses, and the treasurer of the fund is Dr. E. B. Foote, jun., 120 Lexington-avenue, New York City. Dr. Conway will be an ideal representative of America.

The *Truthseeker* notices the National Secular Society's Annual Conference and Mr. Foote's re-election as President, and reproduces some passages of the Annual Report. The *Truthseeker* announces amongst its "New Editions" a fresh issue of Mr. Foote's *Injidel Death-Beds*.

The Birmingham Branch goes for its annual picnic to-day (July 3) to Stratford-on-Avon. Train leaves Snow-hill Station at 10.10. Coventry "saints" will join at the Victoria Hall, 36 Wood-street, for tea at 2 o'clock.

The clerical party has failed again in Victoria. A point was thought to be gained when a referendum was secured. Three questions were put to the electors. The third was this: "Do you prefer Education as it is—free, compulsory, and secular?" In reply 23,000 said "Yes" and 15,000 said "No." Which is a very satisfactory majority, seeing that the Protestant Churches have striven desperately to get the Bible and religious teaching back in the Colony's schools.

According to the Liverpool *Daily Post* the spiritual "cures" wrought by Revivalist Torrey are not "permanent." It has been found, "as a result of fair and unprejudiced inquiry, that in a certain Midland town the five hundred 'converts' secured by Dr. Torrey at a mission had all in three months fallen back into their former spiritual condition." This is what we have said all along about every form of Revivalism.

The discussion on "Agnosticism" initiated by Mr. J. W. de Caux in the *Yarmouth Mercury* still continues. There were excellent letters from Mr. de Caux himself and another writer a fortnight ago, and in last week's issue "Natural Religionist" had some very strong language against Christianity, which he called "a gross superstition and a vile blasphemy."

The *Darwen Gazette* takes in good part our correction of the misquotation from Wordsworth, and admits that "Mr. Foote is an able—a very able—and a straightforward antagonist of Christianity." But it should not say that "he does not deny that his and Mr. Bradlaugh's propaganda has been defeated by" the Primrose League. We certainly deny that it has been defeated by any League. It has not been defeated at all. There is more Freethought in England to-day than there was twenty years ago. If less is heard about it, that is only because it is so much more taken for granted. And the old attack on the Bible (for instance) is actually now being carried on *inside* the Churches by the so-called Higher Critics.

The June number of the *Open Court* (Chicago) contains some interesting articles, amongst them a long and informing one on Babism, the reformed religion in Persia, which was drenched with the blood of its martyrs, and in forty years has converted half the population. During that period it has broadened so that it is now cosmopolitan, reckoning all men as brethren and the children of one God. Its adherents rejected the idea of miracles, and practise humanitarian ethics.

## The Jewish Life of Christ.—VI.

(Concluded from p. 413.)

Our belief is, that the Gospels were evolved from anonymous documents containing the Teaching of the Logos, or the Teaching of the Word, or the Logia of the Lord, without mentioning the name of Jesus; that probably Jesus brought some of these teachings or gospels from Egypt and taught them, and, after his death, his followers declared that he himself was the Logos or Lord. It may be that his life was compiled so long after the time he lived that they had forgotten when it really happened. Or—and we think this more probable—that the Jews propagated such a campaign of slander against Jesus that his later followers altered the time, and placed his birth a hundred years later.

That the original writings, or gospels, have been altered into their present form we have certain proof. The author of *The Gospel History* states that an old MS. of the fourth gospel which is preserved in the archives of the order of the Temple shows that John vi., 41, 42, was originally: "The Jews then murmured at him because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then he saith, I came down from heaven? Is it because he has dwelt with the Greeks that he comes thus to hold converse with us? What is there in common between what he has learnt from the Egyptians and that which our fathers have taught us?" (pp. 249, 250). As this writer points out, "To say that he had dwelt among the Greeks to obtain instruction in Egypt is to say that he came from Alexandria." This, of course, could only refer to Jesus ben Pandera. Again, we have the express testimony of Celsus in the second century to the fact that the Christians deliberately altered the gospel story—the better to answer their opponents, he says. They "remodel their gospel from its first written form in a threefold, fourfold, and manifold fashion, and reform it so that they may be able to refute the objections brought against it."\* Celsus knew all about the Pandera story; so did Justin Martyr, fifty years earlier, whose *Apology* was written before our four gospels were known. Epiphanius (385 A.D.) not only puts Pandera in the genealogy of Jesus, but actually attempts to combine the two conflicting dates, as follows:—

"The order [of succession] failed and stopped at the time when He was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Alexander, who was of high-priestly and royal race; and after this Alexander this lot failed, from the times of himself and Salina, who is also called Alexandra, for the times of Herod the King and Augustus, Emperor of the Romans." ("Haer." xxix., 3.)

"No Father has given more minute indications of the date of Jesus," says Mr. Mead, commenting upon this passage, "than Epiphanius. Nevertheless here we have the Bishop of Salamis categorically asserting, with detailed reiteration, so that there is no possibility of escape, that Jesus was born in the days of Alexander and Salina—that is, of Jannai and Salome."†

Mr. Mead also cites a very important passage from the "Panarion" of Epiphanius. This work has been very much bowdlerised and "emended." Epiphanius was—as we have seen—too fond of letting the cat out of the bag, and whole passages have been cut out of his work. The passage we are about to cite is one of them. Mr. Mead cites from the recent text of M. Dindorf, who discovered an unused MS. in St. Mark's Library at Venice, dated 1057 A.D., the oldest manuscript previously employed being dated 1304 A.D. After declaring how many things in the past and present bear witness to the birth of Christ, Epiphanius cites a case in point:—

"For instance, at Alexandria, in the Koreion,‡ as it

\* Cited by Mead. *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.?*

† *Ibid.*, p. 393.

‡ The Temple of Kore. Dindorf suggests that it may be the Temple of Persephone. Mr. Mead thinks it is more probably the Temple of Isis.

is called—an immense temple—that is to say, the Precinct of the Virgin; after they have kept all-night vigil with songs and music, chanting to their idol, when the vigil is over, at cockcrow, they descend with lights into an underground crypt, and carry up a wooden image lying naked on a litter, with the seal of the cross made in gold on its forehead, and on either hand two other similar seals, and on both knees two others, all five seals being similarly made in gold. And they carry round the image itself, circumambulating seven times the innermost temple, to the accompaniment of pipes, tabors, and hymns; and with merry-making they carry it down again underground. And if they are asked the meaning of this mystery, they answer and say: 'To-day, at this hour, the maiden [Kore]—that is, the Virgin—gave birth to the æon' (Hær., ii., 22).

Mr. Mead comments upon this: "Here we have a definite statement that one of the most widespread mystic festivals of the ancients was connected with a rite of 'resurrection,' and that in Egypt the one who was "raised from the dead," and returned from the underworld or Hades, was sealed with five mystic crosses on forehead, hands and knees (? feet)."

It seems to us that we have here the germ of the Crucifixion Myth. This was the crucified one; not because he had been nailed to a Cross, but because he was sealed with the sign of the Cross, and in the process of turning myth into history, the five marks of the Cross are converted into the five wounds, caused by the nails and spear. It should be noticed that this mystery was celebrated at Alexandria, the city so closely connected with the origin of Christianity.

To enter into the labyrinthine mazes of the so-called "heretics"—many of which heresies existed before the four Gospels—would fill a goodly volume. We will content ourselves with glancing at one of these heresies; that of Basilides, A.D. 125. This Basilides was a gnostic of Alexandria; he is said to have written a commentary in twenty-four books on "The Gospel." He taught the doctrine of the "Logos," and made use of "The Traditions of Matthias."\*

According to the Talmud, Jesus had five disciples, the first named being Mathai. Now there was an ancient Gospel of Matthias. Judge Waite says:—

"There are no fragments of the Gospel of Matthias extant. It was well-known by the ancients, having been referred to by Origen, Eusebius, Ambrose and Jerome, and in some copies of the decree of Gelasius.

"Origen calls it a gospel of the heretics.

"Jerome and Erasmus include it among those which they think were written before Luke. So also Origen. Venerable Bede was of the same opinion. Dr. Grabe and Dr. Mill think it the same as the Traditions of Matthias."†

It is certain that this Gospel was nothing to do with our Gospel of Matthew, for it was denounced in early times as a Gospel of Heretics.

Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, wrote a work—about the middle of the second century—entitled *Exposition of the Lord's Oracles*. This work is now lost; but Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, cites the statement made by Papias in this work, that "Matthew composed the oracles in the Hebrew dialect." We know that this was not the Gospel of Matthew known to us, for two reasons. First, because our Matthew is an original Greek document, and not a translation from the Hebrew; and, secondly, because our gospel contains, not merely the oracles, or sayings, of the Lord, but the history of his life as well.‡ Perhaps these sayings were connected with the lost "Traditions of Matthias," and in all probability were written by the Mathai of the Talmud, selected by Jesus upon his return to Palestine as one of his disciples, and who, being a Jew, would naturally write in the Hebrew language.

Again, the great arch-heretic, Simon Magus, who, says Mosheim, "nearly all the ancient and modern writers make him to have been the head, the father, and ringleader of the whole heretical camp," was

educated at Alexandria.\* The account of his flying from a tower to prove the truth of his teaching reminds us irresistibly of the performance of Jesus as related in the Toldoth or Jewish Life of Jesus.

Two of the best chapters in Mr. Mead's book, *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.?* are chapters xvii. and xviii., "On the Tracks of the Earliest Christians" and "Concerning the Book of Elxai." Read these chapters in connection with that scholarly work, *Antiqua Mater*, and one cannot resist the conviction that the connection of Jesus—whether of Jannai or Herod—with Christianity was a mere accident; that the theological system known as Christianity would have existed if Jesus had never lived. All the elements were there waiting to crystallise into shape and substance in the cloudy and amorphous doctrines of the Logos, the Æons, Wisdom, and the like; in the teachings and dramas of the Mysteries; and the religions of Mithra, Osiris, Bacchus, Adonis, and many others. But the cloudy visions of Plato and Philo could not be appreciated by the common herd. The crowd was too anthropomorphic; they must have a body in it. It was useless for the heretics to declare that Jesus was a spirit, and a body only in appearance; or that he appeared suddenly when he was thirty years of age; or that he flew up to heaven and someone else was crucified in his stead. They declared that Jesus was "The Word," or "Logos," made flesh. As Rogue Riderhood protested, in *Our Mutual Friend*, it "might have happened to any man."†

The Christian Fathers admitted that the doctrines of Christianity were known and practised before the advent of Christ. Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria both declare that those who lived according to the Logos were really Christians. Lactantius declared that if anyone had collected these things from the different sects into one there would have been no difference between him and us. Augustine roundly affirms that the Christian religion was really known to the ancients, nor was wanting at any time from the beginning of the human race until the time when Christ came in the flesh; and Eusebius heads the fourth chapter of his *Ecclesiastical History* with the statement "That the religion published by Jesus Christ is neither new nor strange."

In conclusion, we believe that, if there is any historical figure at all behind Christianity, it is this Jesus Ben Pandera, who lived one hundred years before our era, and not the mythical Jesus of Herod's time.

W. MANN.

### Socialism and Christianity.

CAN a Socialist be a consistent Christian, or a Christian be a consistent Socialist? On this question there seems to be a wide difference of opinion among Socialists and Christians. Some Socialists think that Socialism has nothing to say against Christianity, and therefore a Socialist can be a Christian. Some Christians say that true Christianity is Socialism, and that Christians can, and ought to, be Socialist. Other Socialists believe that Christianity is anti-social and not true, and ought to be opposed; and the great majority of Christians declare that Socialism is wicked and Atheistic. It will be useful, may be, to consider this matter, so as to get some clear thought about it.

The first thing to do is to get a clear idea of what Socialism is, and what Christianity is, and then we can see whether they agree or disagree with one another. Socialism is a system of society in which mutual aid and co-operation exist, instead of indi-

\* Waite, *History of the Christian Religion*, p. 105.

† Renan says that Mithra "held for a moment in the balance the fate of Christianity." So closely did his worship resemble Christianity, and so popular did it become, that Renan declares "that if Christianity had been arrested in its growth by some mortal malady, the world would have been Mithraistic" (*Marcus Aurelius*, p. 332).

\* Waite, *History of the Christian Religion*, pp. 222-3.

† *Ibid.*, p. 83.

‡ *Supernatural Religion*, vol. i., chap. iv., Ed. 1874.

vidualism and competition. Under Socialism private property would become communal or national property. The land and all its treasures would belong to the people as a whole instead of being owned by private landlords, and all the tools of labor, and the wealth produced by labor, would be owned by the people, and not by individuals. Therefore, there would be no millionaires and no poor. In a short definition, Socialism means Co-ownership, Co-laborship, and Co-useship.

Evidently Socialism concerns itself with society in this world only, and with material things. It is secular—from man for man. It cares for the body by providing food, clothing, and shelter as a foundation and means to provide for the mind intellectually, ethically, and joyously. It has no god or idol, and knows nothing of any world to come. It has no religion or creed but itself, and no worship but work and the service of man.

What Christianity is it is difficult to say. There are so many sorts of Christians, and all differ from and oppose each other—Catholic and Protestant; Calvinist and Arminian; Quaker and Unitarian; High, Broad, and Low Church, Free Church, and many others, all claiming to be Christians; and each has a different Christianity. Hence it is difficult to say what it is. Evidently it is useless to ask the Churches, for each Church will give a different answer. The only thing we can do is to turn to the Bible; and here, again, contradictory statements stare us in the face, and we must be satisfied with a few plain features. Christianity is a belief in God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the creation of the world in six days; the fall of man; the atonement; the resurrection of Jesus; immortality of the soul; resurrection of the body; heaven and hell; the Bible as a revealed word of God; and, of course, the Church, with its priests and sacraments. In all these matters there is nothing for this world; it is all for some other world to come. There is nothing for the physical body; it is all for the spiritual—whatever that may mean. There is nothing to make this life comfortable; it is all to prepare for eternity.

How a speculative system of this sort can agree with Socialism I cannot see. Is Christianity, as a doctrine, anything but superstition? The mythologies of the world were once the living theologies of the people. Has Christianity any more evidence than they had? Were those mythologies of any good to the world when alive? Is Christianity of any more good than they were? Has it anything to benefit man temporally in this world? If none of these questions can be answered in the affirmative, how can any Socialist be a Christian, or a Christian be a Socialist?

The doctrines of Socialism and Christianity seem to me contradictory, and I can see noway of reconciling them. Christianity treats of another world, Socialism of this world. One teaches people to have faith in God, the other to have faith in themselves. One tells men to pray, the other to work. One deals in spiritual things, which may mean anything or nothing; the other concerns itself with bread-and-butter first and accessories afterwards. Besides, Christianity cannot be separated from the Christian Church and Christians. As a doctrine apart from the Church, it is powerless for either harm or good. It is the Church, which in the main means the priesthood, that makes Christianity a power that has to be reckoned with.

And has the power of the Church not been always on the side of authority, wealth, and privilege, and against the toiling masses? Is it not so to-day with few exceptions? The conspicuous exceptions are mostly clerical. I do not like to be uncharitable, but I feel compelled to ask, Are they reliable as Socialists? There is a saying, "Scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar." I fear we must say, "Scratch a Socialist parson and you will find a priest." In a crisis, it is more likely than not, with most Christians Socialism will go down and Christianity will go up on the top of it. I would rejoice to think otherwise if I could.

Are not all the religions of the world a crushing weight on the shoulders of the masses? Are they not huge barriers in the way of reform and progress? Are not all the numberless priests idle non-producers? Are they and their dependants not all fed, clothed, housed, and maintained by the workers? Are not all the temples, cathedrals, churches, and chapels built and maintained by the toilers? What need is there for them? What benefit are they except for the priesthood? Is there a more needless and useless institution in any country than the priesthood? If landlordism is opposed because it is useless and injurious, why not oppose clericalism for the same reason?

And there is still a more serious aspect to the question. Do the Churches not distract the attention of the masses from the wrongs they have to bear, and the duties to themselves that they ought to attend to? Do they not propagate and perpetuate errors, falsehoods, and superstitions? Are not errors and superstitions harmful to the people? Fortune-telling is punished by the civil power because it is a baseless superstition, harmful to society. Is there a greater fortune-telling fraternity than the priesthoods of the Churches? The dealings in superstitions and fortune-telling in many Churches, for ready cash, are carried on on such a huge scale and in so barefaced a manner that all the fortune-telling of gipsies is innocent and insignificant by the side of it. Why should the poor fortune-teller be punished, whilst far greater fortune-tellers in the Churches are not only spared, but rewarded and honored for the same thing?

Really, is it not apparent that Christianity and every other superstitious religion, as well as the social orders, must be mended or ended before the masses can ever be lifted from their poverty, degradation, and misery? I should be glad to think it was possible to win the Churches for Socialism. They have such splendid organisations, and, if used to help Socialists to transform the social order, that great work would much sooner be accomplished. But I confess that I am in doubt that it can be done. But one thing is certain—the Socialists must convert and win the Churches, or the Churches will absorb the Socialists; the Socialists will have to fight and abolish the Church, or the Church will vanquish Socialism. War against Socialism has already been declared by the Church of Rome, the largest and strongest of all the Churches; and many isolated threats have been uttered from other Churches. The work that Socialism has to do is no child's play. Human nature is very conservative. Opinions, habits, and institutions, deeply rooted in the past, are very persistent, and most difficult to eradicate. The priesthood, backed by the Churches, possessing immense wealth, allied with and backed by the State, are very powerful. Their resources for influencing the people are almost unlimited, and the people reared under their influence from the cradle are easily led and excited. Under the force of heredity and habit the people love their errors and superstitions, and are ready to fight and die for them. Socialists must take these things into consideration. They cannot afford to ignore them, for, if they do, the consequence will be disastrous.

The best and most effective way, I think, is to compete with the Churches for the masses. With a better gospel, and a more promising and more rational doctrine, we ought to win. Socialism, once understood, is as simple as A B C. It has no esoteric and exoteric teaching. It has no mysteries, no superstitions, no altars, no idols, no miracles, no sacraments and rites, no gods or ghosts to fear, atone, or worship, and no priests. It has no heaven in some other world to offer, but it offers one here and now. It has no hell after death, even for the capitalist; and the real hell on earth it promises to abolish by abolishing poverty (the chief source of wickedness), immorality, degradation, and misery.

Socialism is all-embracing. Every interest of society is contained in it. Whatever men need and ought to do socially are within its domain. The

doing and conduct of every individual in society are under its supervision. Its motto is, All for each and each for all. Socialism is a religion in the best and fullest sense of the word. It is truth, justice, and righteousness. Its prayer is work, its worship is service of man, its rewards prosperity and happiness in this world. Its gospel is peace and universal brotherhood. It will abolish the idle rich and the degraded poor. By mutual aid and co-operation it will create such abundance of wealth that all will be well fed, well clothed, well housed, well educated, and well conditioned. The hours of labor will be lessened, leisure will be increased, and the means of enjoyment will be multiplied many fold. Morality and righteousness will become possible, and all will have a chance to live a happy life, such that a few only enjoy at the present time.

R. J. DERFEL.

### A Day in Shelley Land.

INSPIRED by the able article on Percy Bysshe Shelley which appeared in your paper on November 16, 1902, I recently visited those parts of Sussex which were likely to throw more light on the life of the great poet.

My first venture was to Worth Church, two miles from Three Bridges, which in point of antiquity can vie with any almost in the kingdom. The Anglo-Saxon style of architecture, heavy and solid as it is, gives one the impression that it is a copy of the early Italian. The windows are set rather high up in the walls, and it gives one a good idea of the turbulent nature of the times when the reason for this is considered. In those days churches were also regarded as forts, and then again the leaded and costly glass windows were a great temptation to thieves.

In the north wall is the original Devil's Door, now bricked up. The old idea was that at the baptism of infants, the evil spirit made a point of being present, and therefore the only thing to do was to open this door, request him to depart, and close it again before he had time to recover from his surprise and return. Above the pulpit I found the first item likely to aid me in my quest. It was a memorial tablet inscribed as follows:—

"In a vault near this place lieth the body of John Shelley, of Fen Place, in this parish, Esq. Of the ancient family of ye Shelleys, of Worminghurst. He was Son and Heir of Timothy Shelley, Gent., By Catherine, his Wife, Daughter of Edmund Mitchell, of Stamesham, Esq. Was born at Wolfshill, in West Chillington, in this county, Jan. 27th, 1666, and died Feb. 4th, 1739. He married the Daughter of Roger Bysshe, of Fen Place, Esq., by whom he had nine children. He was remarkable for that exalted part of Humanity, forgiving injuries how great soever. And many other eminent Virtues, a recital of which this monument could not contain, which is dedicated to the memory of the best of husbands, by his most sorrowful wife, who was born April 16th, 1667, and died Feb. 10th, MDCCLXII."

And again, in the chancel, a tombstone bearing the following inscription may be seen:—

"Here lieth the body of Roger, the *Onely* Son of Roger Bysshe, of Fen Place, Esquire. Which Roger was borne of Hellen, his wife, the 19th of November, A. 1668, and departed this life the 30th of July, 1679."

From here I journeyed on to Fen Place, Turner's Hill (four miles from Worth), but could only find reference to the Bysshes; so I turned to Smallfield Place (three miles from Horley).

Here I discovered an old manor house erected by Edward Bysshe, who was a lawyer in the time of James I.

Local tradition has it that this estate was given to John Burstow, as an acknowledgment for assistance to him when thrown from his horse during the wars with France.

What may be termed the poetic instinct was present in both the Shelley and Bysshe families, as I have before me a copy of *The Art of English Poetry*, by Edward Bysshe, Gent., 1737, which ran through over eight editions, and is mentioned by Fielding in one of the introductory chapters in *Tom Jones* (book xiv.).

In the reign of Edward I, Sir Edward Bysshe (Eddardo Bissas) was appointed Garter King of Heralds, a position of great importance in those days. It appears that Bysshe was spelt with the double "s," and not with one, as seen in the baptismal entry of the great poet, which is as follows:—

"September 7th. Percy Bysshe, son of Timothy and Elizabeth Shelley. Born August 4th, 1792."

Timothy Shelley, of Fen Place, Turner's hill, by marriage acquired the Worth estate from the old Surrey family of Bysshe, whence the second name of the poet.

E. B.

### Correspondence.

#### FLOGGING IN THE NAVY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Is it not remarkable that the Navy League should continue to withhold its support from the movement for the abolition of the cane and birch in the Royal Navy, as summary punishments in the case of boys and young men convicted of comparatively trivial offences against discipline?

In view of the fact that the British Army is now better disciplined *without* the lash than ever before, and that flogging is not permitted in the navies of other Great Powers, it seems extraordinary that the Navy League should remain silent about these disgusting naval punishments.

Lord Nelson detested flogging, and it would be a sincerer compliment to his memory to secure the abolition of this barbarous and indecent practice than to decorate his statue in Trafalgar-square.

J. C.

#### Same in America.

In his annual report to the National Secular Society, Mr. G. W. Foote makes the same accusation against the spirit of the time that Mr. Joseph Symes does in his letter from Australia to Mr. Foote's paper. "Never was there a time within living memory," says Mr. Foote, "when it was so difficult to move the masses by the inspiration of great principles, or to stir them up to a vital interest in a high and noble policy. The fact must be admitted that the whole nation has fallen for the present on a lower level of thought and feeling. The craving for physical excitement and sensuous entertainment is well-nigh universal; and the death of a thinker like Herbert Spencer excites in the general mind an emotion which is probably a thousandth part of that which is excited by a cricket test match or the performance of a popular football team." The same may be said of this country, and we presume of other countries. A week ago thirty-seven thousand people crowded into the Polo grounds to see a baseball game, and ten thousand more were turned away from the gate. The horse races attracts from fifteen to fifty thousand persons daily. About thirteen millions of voters will talk politics from now to November, when it won't make the slightest difference to anyone but the office holders and seekers whether Roosevelt, Parker, or McClellan is elected. The people have no real voice in shaping the policy of the government, and the corporations will run the country with any one of the talked-of candidates in the presidential chair just as they do now, with the Church in the background, and the Supreme Court ready to decide that the Constitution is an outgrown instrument, and that anyone not born under the flag is entitled to no protection from its provisions. "High and noble policies" are not for the present day. Nero fiddled while Rome burned, and history repeats itself. If the Man on Horseback arrived now, society would go off to the races or the ball game and calmly read about the arrival in the yellow journals of the evening. Those who itch for an empire should make hay while the sun shines.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

#### Festival of the Sun.

A NIGHT ON THE EIFFEL TOWER.

THE gathering was the first of the sun festivals, which the Astronomical Society, inspired by its poetically tempered ex-President, M. Flammarion, has resolved to perpetuate. A revival of sun worship, some of the papers have been calling it. It is simply a scientific festival, with the propagation of popular interest in the wonder and beauty of the universe as one of its chief motives.

We were all congregated on the first landing of the tower, when the crash of a gun down below, on terra firma, announced that the sun had at that moment reached the solstice. Time, twenty-eight seconds past nine.

Then we went into the theatre—one of the numerous structures on the first landing, whose area is large enough to hold at least 8,000 persons.

The address was followed by a great many beautiful illustrations projected on a white screen.

A luxurious "luncheon" at midnight followed. Half an hour after midnight the huge lift was ready to carry to the top of the tower all who wished to wait for sunrise. Some fifty of us went to the top, and remained there till four o'clock this morning.

Nearly a thousand feet below the Seine shone dimly. The lights of Paris looked as if the firmament itself had exchanged the heavens for the earth.

—*Paris Correspondent of the "Daily News."*

**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.****OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; Brockwell Park, 3.15, Debate between W. Hatch and W. J. Ramsey, "The Authenticity of the Gospels"; 6.30, F. A. Davies.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, F. A. Davies.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, a Lecture; Hammersmith, 7.30, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, W. J. Ramsey.

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Annual Picnic, Stratford-on-Avon (train from Snow Hill, 10.10); July 7, at the Coffee House, Bull Ring, Miss M. Ridley, "Mrs. Besant."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (entrance to Glasgow Green, Jail-square): Open-air Propaganda, 4, Ignatius McNulty and J. Glen.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, George Berrisford, a Lecture; see Saturday's local papers.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Business—Picnic and Autumn Lectures.

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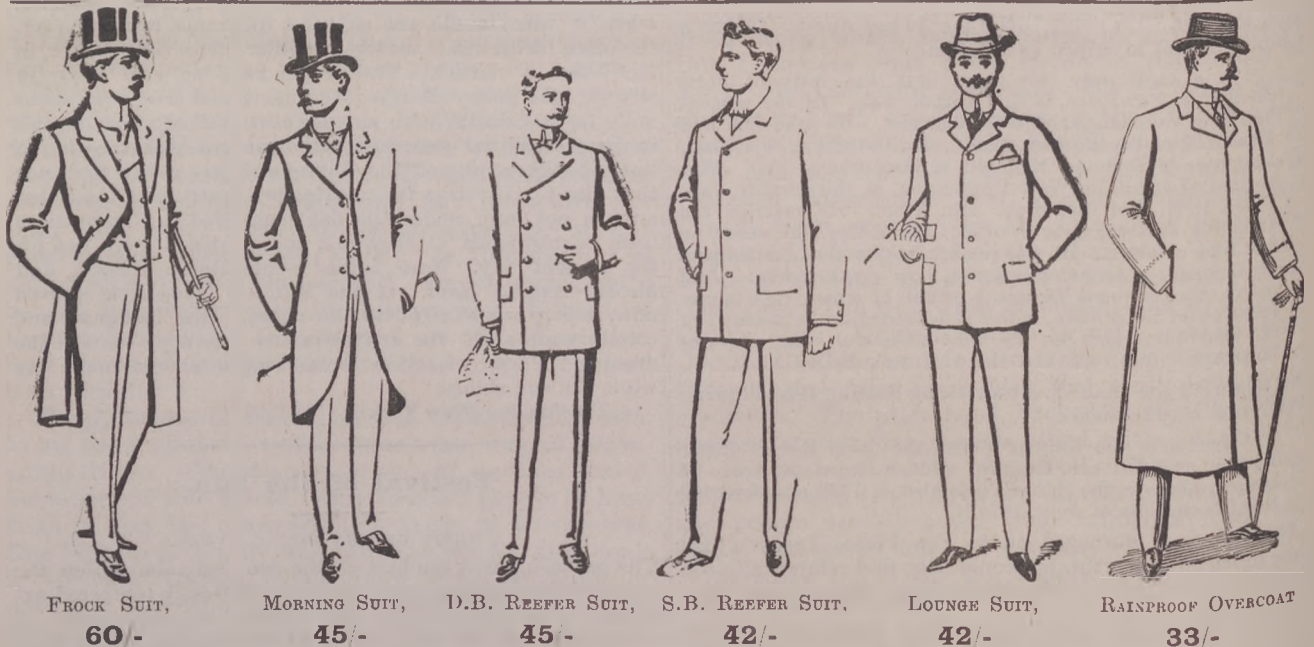
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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of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

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