

THE  
**Freethinker**

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXIV.—No. 37

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1904

PRICE TWOPENCE

*Human rights are the only divine rights.*—GARTH WILKINSON.

### Some Defenders of the Faith.

If you look at a British coin you will see some Latin words more or less abbreviated. One portion of them signifies that the King reigns by the grace of God. The other portion signifies that he is Defender of the Faith. Both are romances of the British constitution. Our monarchs have not really reigned by the grace of God since the death of Charles I., whose divine right to govern wrong was let out of his jugular vein when his head was cut off on the scaffold. Certainly they have not reigned by the grace of God since the accession of William III., when the succession to the crown became regulated by Act of Parliament. Nor is the King any longer an actual Defender of the Faith. That title was given to Henry VIII. by the Pope for replying to Martin Luther. It has been worn ever since, but it involves no fresh duties. King Edward did, indeed, swear at his Coronation to uphold the Protestant Faith, but that was a mere farce, and we are surprised at the rumpus the Roman Catholics make about it. We may be quite sure that he will do nothing to carry out that part of his Coronation oath. He will smile alike on Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Jews; on those who worship Jesus Christ as God, and on those who believe that he was justly executed as a blasphemous malefactor. For the King is a man of peace, and would even shake hands as cordially with a Freethinker like Mr. John Morley as with a Christian like Mr. Balfour. It is impossible to imagine him writing a book in defence of any faith, not even of *his own*—whatever that is. He probably thinks that one book of that sort by a royal author is quite sufficient in any one country, and is entirely willing to leave the fat Tudor king in undisputed possession of such a barren honor.

Defenders of the Faith are not now found in royal circles. We mean in Great Britain. In Germany the Kaiser, who is an all-round man, includes preaching amongst his countless accomplishments. But his uncle does not preach sermons, and is not too fond of hearing them. On a certain occasion he limited the Bishop of London to five minutes. Within that brief space of time he had to save the King's soul or let it perish.

There are some Defenders of the Faith amongst laymen. Mr. Gladstone was one of them. He rushed in where Bishops feared to tread. Another is Mr. Samuel Smith, M.P., the patron of Orangemen and the Bible. We understand that he believes he has utterly settled the hash of "infidelity," and we have never sought to disturb that pleasing delusion. We leave it as a bit of comfort for his old age and his infirmities.

There are many Defenders of the Faith amongst the clergy. Most of them defend it in the pulpit, with the enemy at a convenient distance. When they are asked to step out into the open arena they nearly always discover the futility of discussion. They find that their duty is to deliver their message, take their stipends, and leave the rest to the Lord. Sometimes they declare that the voice which

challenges them is not a living voice at all, but a mere echo of a dead one. They tell their congregations that "infidelity" is buried, and that there is nothing left to reply to. But this piece of strategy is not always successful. Congregations prick their ears now and then and wear a look of expectancy. On such occasions it is necessary to say *something*. And one of these occasions has just arisen.

Mr. Robert Blatchford has compelled the clergy to open their mouths. He has said nothing new, though he has said it gracefully. It was all said before by Voltaire and Paine, and Ingersoll and Bradlaugh, and through the Freethought press and platform generally. Why, then, is there agitation in religious circles? The explanation is very simple. Mr. Blatchford would have caused no particular stir if he had made his attack on Christianity through the customary channels. The mischief was that he spoke out in a non-Freethought paper, which (and this was the unkindest cut of all) had fifty thousand readers. Those readers had been gained by social and political attractions. Many of them were Christians, and might be led astray by a brilliant journalist who already commanded their admiration. Had they been Freethinkers, the clergy would have discreetly left them to go to perdition in their own way. But the majority of them were presumably *not* Freethinkers. There was the rub. It made the old ostrich policy dangerous as well as ridiculous. So the men of God had to break through the old conspiracy of silence.

They were deeply annoyed, and some of them were intensely angry. Occasionally they "said things" of Mr. Blatchford, who complained that the Christians were abusing him instead of answering him. But this ought not to have excited his astonishment. It was the ancient trick of alarmed theologians. Mr. Blatchford could have understood it easily enough if he had put himself in their places, and looked at the matter from their point of view. A man of God with a nice church, a nice congregation, and a nice income, cannot be expected to look cheerfully at an eloquent heretic coming down the street. Once upon a time he could have silenced the heretic with the aid of the law. There were prisons, racks, thumbscrews, and stakes. But the time for those luxuries is past. Another plan must be adopted. What is to be done then? Why, this. If the man of God cannot close the heretic's mouth he may be able to close his congregation's ears. And it really comes to the same thing. So the man of God, with a frightened face and glaring eyes, warns his congregation against listening to the heretic. He tells them that the heretic is a leper, that he carries a moral contagion with him, far worse than small-pox or typhoid fever, that their wives and daughters are unsafe in his presence, and that the very spoons and forks have to be locked up in every house that he lodges in or visits. Such a tale, told by a professional exhorter whose living is in peril, produces its effect. The congregation keep the heretic at a respectable distance, and put their fingers in their ears when accident brings him near them. And the result is that the man of God keeps his going concern from injury. Yes, the abuse of Mr. Blatchford—as of many before him—is not mere malice, it is good business.

Some of the "replies" to Mr. Blatchford that have

found their way into print have been answered in the *Clarion*. We shall therefore take no notice of them here—at least for the present. But there are others which Mr. Blatchford has, apparently, no immediate intention of dealing with. A few of these have been sent to us by the publishers for review; and, instead of giving them the usual brief notice, we propose to criticise them at greater length in the present series of articles.

We cannot pretend that in doing this we shall give our readers any considerable enlightenment. What they do get in this line will be chiefly accidental. The "replies" under consideration are, from a mental point of view, and even from a moral point of view, simply worthless. But they may afford us an opportunity of clearing up some points, and pressing home others; and occasionally, by an appeal to no very recondite facts of scholarship, we may show the wonderful erudition, or strange assurance, of these modern Defenders of the Faith.

The first of these "replies" to Mr. Blatchford that we shall take in hand is *Blatchford Answered*, by the Rev. Frederic C. Spurr, published by the Christian Commonwealth Company, Limited, at the price of one shilling. Judging by the shape of the volume, we assume that its contents are reprinted from the *Christian Commonwealth*. We do not notice any statement to this effect, but the fact, if it be a fact, should have been acknowledged.

Mr. Spurr is announced on his title-page as the author of several books; amongst them being *The Causes and the Cure of Doubt*. We have not seen this book, and we do not want to see it. One sample of Mr. Spurr is sufficient. And from this one, which we trouble about only in the way of duty, we conclude that Mr. Spurr does not possess a rudimentary knowledge of the "causes" of doubt, and is one of the very last men likely to "cure" it.

We never read a more egotistic, ill-conditioned performance than *Blatchford Answered*. It is possible to be severe, caustic, witty, relentless, and yet to wear a smile. Duellists who mean to "pink" each other if they can may parry and thrust without a malignant grin upon their faces, or pull the trigger with something like a gentlemanly expression. There are the seconds to be considered, anyhow; and in some cases the spectators.

Mr. Spurr could not have expressed himself in this way if he had met Mr. Blatchford on a public platform. He would have been hooted off in five minutes. Nor could he have used such impudent language if he had discussed with Mr. Blatchford in a neutral journal. He takes advantage of the special circumstances in which he writes; and probably he believes—no doubt from long experience—that Christians will stand anything in the way of insult to unbelievers.

Having said this about Mr. Spurr, we are bound to justify it. Unfortunately that is only too easy. Mr. Spurr says on his last page that he has "hit hard"—which he should have left others to say; but he hopes "it has been a fair fight," and he affirms that "never once have I hit below the belt." Well, it all depends upon where he thinks the belt is worn. What we may certainly say is that he has never read with any profit the eloquent and admirable thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. There are good things in the Bible, and this is one of them. But how odd it is that Freethinkers have so frequently to remind Christians of the best portions of their own Scriptures.

Let us see what Mr. Spurr considers a good-tempered fight. Let us see what he believes is not hitting below the belt.

Turning over the pages where we have marked some of the flowers of his courtesy, we take the following specimens—not placed in a special order for effect, but just as they happen to present themselves. All the references are, of course, to Mr. Blatchford:—

"the poorest and silliest of jokes."

"A joke that would be hissed in St. James's Hall at a minstrel entertainment."

"actuated by ignorance or malice."

"I am now going to laugh at you until you learn to be honest."

"bluster and sneer and caricature truth."

"slop sentiment."

"drivel."

"a desperate man, who suffers from a moral twist."

"If any man holding your sentiments about the Ten Commandments visited at my house, I should certainly keep an eye on the spoons and umbrellas until he had departed."

"you call yourself a man of honor!"

"silly questions."

"had you been a little more modest."

"there is extinguished within you the love of honesty."

"such an admission disgraces any man who makes it."

"poor buffoon."

"remarkable drivel."

"destitute of the first principles of morality."

"juggling."

"extraordinary amount of imbecility."

"Your assumption of omniscience is only equalled by your dogmatism."

"you have the indecency."

"transparently foolish."

"a gratuitous falsehood."

"another of your gratuitous falsehoods."

This list of Christian courtesies might be considerably prolonged, but we dare say our readers will think that enough is as good as a feast. Henceforth we will take Mr. Spurr's manners for granted, and not draw attention to them unless it is specially necessary.

Considering how frequently Mr. Spurr twits Mr. Blatchford with his ignorance, it is surprising that he did not take the trouble to learn something about the editor of the *Clarion* before talking about him with such confidence. It is not true that Mr. Blatchford "had been known only as a Socialist" prior to 1903. He had written *Secularism* as well as *Socialism* in the *Manchester Sunday Chronicle* before the *Clarion* was started. True, he kept quiet on Free-thought for many years in the latter journal, and some of his references to "Christ" may have been rather misleading; but he spoke out when he thought the time was ripe, and in such a matter he was entitled to judge for himself.

And now for the literary form of *Blatchford Answered*. Mr. Spurr thinks he has pursued the "Socratic method" of debate. Now there are two Socratic methods of debate. One is the method of the Platonic Dialogues, where Socrates appears, in which the argument is largely, but not exclusively, carried on by means of questions and replies. The other is the method of exclusive question and answer, which was occasionally adopted by Charles Bradlaugh, and is very much like examination and cross-examination in a court of law. But the method adopted by Mr. Spurr does not belong to either of these categories. He picks out passages from *God and My Neighbor*, and starts them with "Blatchford." His own reply in each case is started with "Spurr." It is always as long as he pleases to make it, and he always has the last word. On the first three pages we count thirty-one "Blatchford" lines and a hundred and thirteen "Spurr" lines. Sometimes a few lines of "Blatchford" are followed by a couple of pages of "Spurr." And Mr. Spurr fancies that this is the Socratic method of debate!

It was by this Socratic method of debate, Mr. Spurr says, that Father Lambert (he calls him Mr. Lambert) delivered "the most crushing reply offered to the late 'Colonel' Ingersoll." There is something exquisitely comic in the idea of Father Lambert eclipsing Judge Black, Dr. Field, Cardinal Manning, and Mr. Gladstone—all of whom crossed swords with Ingersoll. There is also something characteristically polite in Mr. Spurr's printing the "Colonel" part of Ingersoll's designation in inverted commas. Colonel Ingersoll did not wear a fancy title, like some English ministers who possess shoddy degrees. He was a real Colonel and commanded a regiment in the Civil War.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

## A "Dicky" Sermon.

THE world knows nothing of its wisest men—and it is also true that it is equally ignorant of its finest productions in the opposite direction. The ancient maxim was recalled to me on reading a sermon delivered at Springburn, near Glasgow, and which was sent to me by a correspondent, with a hope that I may reply to it. The author of the sermon is a Rev. J. H. Dickie, and the occasion a church parade of the Springburn Friendly Societies' Council. The report of the sermon covers about three columns of the *Springburn Advertiser*, and is headed, in large letters, "Rev. Mr. Dickie Challenges the Atheistic Critics." As, however, the challenge is delivered from a pulpit, where no Atheist is allowed to enter, and directed to critics whom Mr. Dickie will not meet, the reverend gentleman is perfectly secure. If Mr. Dickie could really screw his courage to the sticking point, we have no doubt but the Glasgow Secularists could provide him with all he needs. At present he is like the gallant duellist who *would* fight, but who insisted upon one hundred yards—and bayonets.

The first thing Mr. Dickie does in his sermon is to take the parade as a proof that the friendly societies are Christian bodies. As, however, he is incautious enough to point out that he is himself responsible for the whole affair, it is evidence of a not *quite* conclusive character. And following this comes the following very striking declaration:—

"All friendly societies owed their initiation to the Supreme Friend of Humanity, without whom there would have been no friendly society in this globe. For the friendly society movement is essentially a Christian movement. The spirit of the friendly society movement is the spirit of altruism; and the spirit of altruism, in its wide-world application, is the spirit of Christianity."

Mr. Dickie's history is as interesting as his reasoning. Jesus has been labelled as an ardent advocate of land nationalisation, municipalisation of tramways, etc.; but it has certainly been left for our Springburn preacher to discover that he initiated friendly societies. It would, I suppose, be quite useless to ask Mr. Dickie where for many, many hundreds of years after the reputed death of Jesus were the friendly societies he initiated, or to point out their growth as due to the secularising tendencies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He would assert that the Springburn societies have a church parade, and that is conclusive evidence—for him. But one might point out that the spirit of altruism and that of friendly societies are not *quite* identical. The spirit of altruism is, live for others; the spirit of friendly societies is that of simple co-operation. It is the recognition that by combination the ills of life are felt less heavily than when each is standing alone. If Mr. Dickie does not believe that this is the feeling animating members of friendly societies his knowledge of them must be of a remarkably limited character. And one may also venture to suggest that the prospect of the general benefit to the societies from the public parade had far more to do with its being carried out than the desire to offer the world a "proof that the great mass of the most intelligent working men in this district are by no means alienated from Christianity."

There is a certain Three-Tailors-of-Tooley-Street air about Mr. Dickie's next comment: "I have always held that the working men of Springburn have no sympathy with those Atheistic ingrates who greedily grasp at the benefits which follow in the train of Christian civilisation and yet rail at Christianity." I have no desire to say anything derogatory to the dignity of Springburn; it is doubtless an important intellectual centre—if for no other reason, because of Mr. Dickie's sermons; but I may safely point out that its decisions on Atheism are neither final nor binding on the rest of the world. Springburn may

demonstrate its loyalty to Christianity, but, as its minister points out that the demonstration "is much needed at the present time," it is as much an indication of weakness as of strength.

And what are the benefits which the "Atheistic ingrates" (how the Glasgow Secularists will squirm under this scathing denunciation!) grasp, and which follow in the train of Christian civilisation? Mr. Dickie does not specify. They can hardly include literature; for there was much literature before Christianity, and some of the best since its advent has been apart from it or against it. Nor science; bearing in mind how science was suppressed for centuries, perverted for other centuries, and is even now looked upon with suspicion. Nor social improvement either; seeing how dependent this is upon scientific development. Nor is it the treatment of disease. The Christian method is to pray; the other method is to treat it as a phenomenon quite apart from religious belief. Well, is it the art of kindness, of co-operation, of brotherhood? Mr. Dickie would doubtless reply in the affirmative. But stay. Mr. Dickie is surely not unaware of how much ill-feeling is generated between Christians *because* of their religion. He cannot be unaware of how difficult it is for Christians to agree with people of differing views. Nor can he be unaware of the fact that kindness, co-operation, brotherhood did exist before Christianity came, do exist quite apart from it, and are quite as well developed with non-Christians as with Christians. Mr. Dickie's sermon does not furnish very striking evidence as to the extent of his knowledge, or the depth of his thought; but he surely cannot be so extravagantly ignorant as not to know these things. And if this is so, cannot even he realise that human qualities that are so much wider than any religion cannot be made dependent upon any religion? And would it not be possible and justifiable for the Atheist to denounce the *Christian* ingrate who grasps at the benefits of secular science and non-religious human feelings, and exploits them in the interests of a creed that is only kept alive by misrepresentation and intellectual piracy?

Mr. Dickie, quite gratuitously, says that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because, "When I call to mind the triumphs of the Gospel.....over the world-wide curse of slavery. When I recollect that when Christ died at Calvary there was neither hospital nor refuge.....When I bear in mind that though there are hateful wars in places and on occasions to-day, the time was when the whole world lived in a chronic state of war.....When I read the records of Roman historians who tell us that the insane idea of tending a wounded man on the battlefield, and the equally mad idea of caring for the aged who could work no more, and the diseased who had fallen in the battle of life, was never so much as seriously dreamt of till the Lonely Man of Nazareth lived his wondrous life.....I am not ashamed of the Church of Christ."

Whew! There is more of the same sort, but the above is enough as a sample. One is tempted to ask whether the world only began to exist with the Church of Christ? But I presume Mr. Dickie must have something a little earlier, if only to saddle it with all the evil he can think of. But even in the pulpit some small regard should be shown for decency of utterance and accuracy of statement, although, to the "Atheistic ingrate," the most cheerful thing about Mr. Dickie's statements is that their extravagance is so pronounced that few are likely to be deceived by them. It would need a volume to properly expose the errors of Mr. Dickie, so one must be content with a word or two in passing.

Mr. Dickie asserts the Gospel abolished slavery. Perhaps Mr. Dickie would be good enough to indicate just what portions of the Gospel carry a clear condemnation of slavery. The facts, apart from that gentleman's flatulent rhetoric are, (1) the Gospels nowhere condemn slavery; (2) the writings of Paul emphatically endorse it; (3) the early

Christians accepted it as an established fact; (4) legislation for the improvement of slave life received a distinct check by the conquest of Christianity, while the number of slaves actually increased; (5) American slavery was wholly a Christian introduction and institution; (6) the growth of anti-religious feeling in the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries was directly responsible for anti-slavery legislation, "Infidel France" being actually the first to set the example of liberating its slaves; and (7) the pro-slavery party found its principal source of strength in appeals to the Old and New Testaments. I know, of course, that one need not bother much about what they say in the pulpit—so long as it is not *too* sensible; but really Mr. Dickie's disregard for facts is quite phenomenal—even for that place.

Mr. Dickie's remarks about war are almost comical. Has he *never* heard of the military hospitals of the ancient Romans? Does he really believe that the Roman people paid no attention to the wounded, to the aged, or to the diseased? If he has not heard, and does not know about these things, all that one can say is that his ignorance of these matters ought to make his Church notorious. There are hateful wars "occasionally," and in "some places" *now*, under Christianity. Why, bless the man's simplicity—or duplicity—are we ever without wars? Is there any century of pre-Christian history that can furnish a bigger list of wars than, say, the nineteenth century? And, mark, these wars were waged, in a very large measure, *between Christians*. Does he not know that Christian England spends at present about £70,000,000 annually on war? Is he ignorant of the fact that Pagan Rome could maintain peace with an army of 400,000 men, while Christian Europe, over substantially the same territory, needs four million? Why is it that English Christians need to watch so closely German Christians or Russian Christians, or Russian and German Christians need to watch English Christians? Why is it that our expenditure on militarism rises year by year and that we are threatened with conscription? Is there any place in the world but a pulpit where a man could, in the face of all these facts, talk such unmitigated rubbish about Christianity diminishing war? In the name of common decency let Mr. Dickie learn something of the nature of the old *Pax Romana* and of ancient civilisations, as well as of modern conditions, before he again ventures to lecture the "Atheistic ingrate."

Finally, Mr. Dickie advises his hearers "how to treat the critics." When people will not believe the teaching of the Church, the proper way is to answer them, if you will not believe Christianity for what it teaches, believe it for what it does. And then comes the familiar rigmarole about Christian charity, Christian work among savages, etc. That is the way to silence critics. The man who does not believe in the resurrection may be convinced by your giving a shilling to a beggar. The way to demonstrate the authenticity of the Pauline epistles is to show that some people calling themselves Christians subscribed to a hospital. The argument is so simple, and, to Mr. Dickie, so convincing. For if a man calling himself a Christian does a good work, does it not prove the good influence of Christianity? And if a man calling himself an Atheist does a good work, does that not also prove that his action is the result of a Christian civilisation? Mr. Dickie believes it does, evidently; for before Christianity came there was no sympathy for the sick, no care for the aged; people were always at war—in fact they lived by killing each other; there was no civilisation—in short, there was "no nothin' nohow." There was not even a Rev. J. H. Dickie, of Springburn Parish Church. But perhaps that ought to be counted to the credit of the pre-Christian world.

C. COHEN.

In all superstition wise men follow fools.—*Bacon*.

## Pessimism.

SECULARISM is often condemned on the ground that it inevitably leads to pessimism. It is maintained that without faith in God and immortality life on earth is not worth living. If man is not to live forever it would have been infinitely better had he never lived at all. We are assured that Matthew Arnold's poetry is so terribly pessimistic because of the large vein of Atheism that runs through it; and the same remark is said to be peculiarly applicable to the novels of Thomas Hardy and George Gissing. To renounce religion is to abandon hope, and hope is the light of life. This is the view generally held and proclaimed by Christian believers. Such people are not ashamed to confess that it is their hope of heaven alone that makes the troubles and sorrows of earth even bearable.

The truth is, however, that Secularism engenders something radically different from pessimism. To be a good Secularist is to be above the awful tyranny of the pessimistic spirit. I go further and assert that religion is the chief cause of the withering curse of pessimism. Professor Wallace, in his article on "Pessimism" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, observes that this is true only of non-theistic religions, or of "all forms of nature-worship, from the grossest and most trivial polytheism to the abstrusest schemes of naturalistic pantheism." But I must enter a caveat against the limitation made in that observation. Pessimism is not only contemporaneous with, but also a prominent characteristic of theistic as well as non-theistic religions. The Old Testament teaches that there is no joy in life apart from confidence in and love of Jehovah. "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job v. 7). "O remember how short my time is: for what vanity hast thou created all the children of men!" (Ps. lxxxix. 47). "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (Eccles. i. 2). "Youth and the prime of life are vanity" (Eccles. ix. 10). The only possible deliverance from, or even amelioration of, this dreadful state of things is through faith in the justice and goodness of Jehovah, which faith often completely breaks down before the perplexing facts of life. The same thing is true of Christianity also. Jesus is represented as dwelling much upon the woes and worries of the present world. Said he to his disciples: "In the world ye have tribulation" (John xvi. 33). Paul writes: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans viii. 22). As the popular hymn puts it, "Here we suffer grief and pain"; and nothing better can be expected on this side of the grave. Our present duty is to bear, endure, and be resigned, buoyed up by the hope of deliverance and ample compensation in heaven. Preachers frequently denounce accidie as a great sin, and forbid their believing hearers to lie down and moan under the heavy loads of sorrow they are obliged to carry, using as their authority these words: "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice" (Philipp. iv. 4). What is the ground of this recommended rejoicing? These words attributed to Jesus: "Rejoice, and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. v. 12).

Christian optimism is rooted alone in the hope of immortality. The present life, judged on its own merits, must be pronounced a failure, a farce, a mocking curse. "If in this life only," says Paul, "we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable" (1 Cor. xv. 19). Judaists believed that Jehovah would redeem them from all their troubles *while they lived*; but their belief never justified itself. Christians having learned wisdom from the disappointments of the past, say: "Here we have sufferings, and sorrows, and afflictions, but hereafter we shall receive a crown of glory, and be arrayed in white raiment, and sing songs of victory, and be forever, in bliss ineffable, with the Lord."

Now, is not this precisely the teaching of Buddhism? The phraseology may be different, but the

fundamental idea is the same. All life is sorrow and pain, and while it lasts there can be no relief except in the hope of emancipation when it ends. The cause of this sorrow is the thirst for pleasure, for existence, for power. The goal which the Buddhist ever keeps in view is Nirvana—supreme happiness in the ocean of unconsciousness. All life is sorrow, but the confident expectation of a speedy entrance into Nirvana enables the Buddhist not to brood over the fact and grow melancholy. Christians may be of opinion that Nirvana is not worthy of comparison with their heaven; but my point is that both ideas serve the same practical purpose, and that in essence they are identical. Christianity and Buddhism are equally pessimistic religions so far as their attitude towards the present life is concerned.

As a mood pessimism has always been alarmingly prevalent. People easily fall into the habit of thinking and speaking of life as if it were a burden, and not a joy; a curse to be borne, and not a blessing to be enjoyed. This attitude is most beautifully expressed in the Book of Job:—

"Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night which said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it.....For now should I have lain down and been quiet; I should have slept; then had I been at rest" (Job iii.).

The same mood attacks the majority of people to-day. Those who have faith in God either regard him as their relentless enemy, or try to believe that he is leading them through a fiery discipline, while unbelievers bemoan the fact that they are under the rule of dark and cruel Fate. In every land and in every language the complaint is to be heard that life is hard, and cold, and dreary, with little in it to endear it to those upon whom it has been thrust without their consent. Who can forget these mournful lines from Byron:—

Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,  
Count o'er thy days from anguish free,  
And know, whatever thou hast been,  
'Tis something better not to be?

I have now conclusively shown that pessimism is not a product of Secularism, but flourishes best under the shadow of religion. It is not for me to deny that individual Secularists may cherish melancholy and depressing views of life, because, like other people, they are subject to varying moods; but it is incontrovertible that Secularism, properly understood, tends to make people, not merely contented with their lot whatever it may be, but, rather, intelligently determined either to improve their lot, or to turn it to the best possible advantage as it is. Life is not all sorrow; it is joy intermixed with grief and pain, and the grief and pain may become subservient to the purification and ennoblement of the joy. Our appreciation of the day is all the keener because we have experienced the night, and summer is all the brighter and gayer and sweeter because it follows winter. So, likewise, sickness teaches us the value of health, suffering prepares us for pleasure, loss gives us renewed eagerness for gain, and trouble engenders fresh relish for tranquility. This is a precious truth, which a careful study of Nature never fails to reveal to us. It is not passive submission to the evils of life that Nature enjoins, but conquest over them. We are to put bits in their mouths and break them to our service.

It would not be true to say that all things naturally work together for good unto us. We are surrounded by many enemies bent on our destruction. Nature herself often seems to be arrayed against us, and displays no spirit of sympathy and helpfulness. If you fall into the water, and cannot swim, she will drown you without the slightest hesitation. Her fires crackle all the more when human beings are being consumed in them. Her marshes, her earthquakes, her volcanoes, her oceans, and her carnivora are all hostile to us. "Nature is red in beak and claw," and the idea of mercy has never occurred to her. Her forces seem to be in a conspiracy to destroy us. All this is undeniably true;

but it is not the whole truth, nor is it the greater part of the truth. Nature has endowed us with conscious intelligence; and in the exercise of this wonderful gift she wants us to survey the road along which we have travelled to our present position, and learn wisdom with which to order our lives aright. If her lightning strikes us it kills us at once; and yet electricity is the most valuable servant we have ever had. It conveys our messages from one end of the globe to the other without a murmur; and with equal ease and delight it illumines our houses and our streets, and propels our carriages, tramcars, and trains. In like manner, Nature's oceans and rivers have become our ministers. This is what intelligence has done for us; and it is only in its infancy yet.

We are often shamefully unjust to Nature. We blame her when she deserves our unqualified praise. When a man is healthy and conducts his life prudently, does not every sense and organ he possesses minister pleasure to him? And are not all such pleasures perfectly legitimate? If we are noble and good, our joys are always in excess of our sorrows. But what about disease? It is an accident and a misfortune, never the product of normal conditions; and Nature is ever seeking to restore the equilibrium, not from pity or compassion, but from sheer necessity. We frequently suffer because we are ignorant and careless, because in our folly we endeavor to cheat Nature, and snatch from her what we have no right to possess. Nature's gift is health, while disease is the outcome of some intentional or unintentional violation of her laws.

The mission of Science is to disclose Nature's secrets to us. The better we understand her the more capable of happiness we shall become. The greater our harmony with her laws, the fuller and sweeter shall be our life. We are told that God helps only those who help themselves; but is it not clear that those who help themselves do not require any outside assistance? If a man is weak he is bound to go to the wall, even though he may be the ripest saint on earth. His piety gives him no advantage over his fellows. The God in whom he believes bestows no supernatural strength upon him. He goes to the wall, not only on the market and in society, but also in the Church itself—the very temple of the Holy Ghost. But what has science to say on this important point? It brings no promise of immediate salvation to the lost. It does not cheer the hearts of the sick by assuring them that if they believe in her they shall be made every whit whole in the twinkling of an eye. Its message is not one of cheap comfort, but of broad and deep wisdom. To many—perhaps to the majority—of earth's present sufferers it holds out no hope of deliverance except in death, because they are too far sunk ever to be reclaimed. Such people may experience numerous and considerable alleviations of their misery on the way to the tomb, but salvation is not for them. The general message of Science, however, is very different from that. It is this: The struggle for existence is life and joy to the strong, though it means certain death to the weak. Let the strong acquire wisdom as well as strength, and let them do their utmost to bring healthy children into the world; and, when the children arrive, let them be carefully trained in Nature's ways, that they, too, may be strong, and capable of successfully fighting life's battles. If this message were only believed and acted upon, the weaklings would gradually disappear, and all would be strong and fit to survive.

Such is the gospel preached by Secularism, and it is the only gospel calculated to redeem the world from all its ills. Certainly it is not the gospel of pessimism, and usually Secularists are anything but pessimistic. They are not in the habit of going up and down the world with faces a yard long, moaning and sighing, and crying out for death. They do not curse the day of their birth, nor yearn for that of their death. They take the bitter with the sweet, knowing that both are essential factors in true life. Life is good, and to be cherished. Those old monks who, whenever they met, greeted one another thus,

"Brother, we must die;" "Yes, Brother, we must die," may have been excellent monks, but they were shockingly imperfect men. The breath of human health was not in them. As Tennyson says:—

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
Oh life, not death, for which we pant;  
More life, and fuller, that I want.

JOHN T. LLOYD.

### Acid Drops.

Weidman, the Dover swimmer, having announced his intention of beginning his swim across the English Channel on Sunday, September 4, was favored with a letter of remonstrance from Mr. Charles Hill, the secretary of what is comically called the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association. Mr. Hill begged Weidman not to start on a Sunday. A hundred years ago he might have said that the bold bad swimmer would probably be drowned, or swallowed by a whale, or something of that sort. But the time for such romantic warnings is past. The champion of Sabbatarianism had to sail on another tack. He begged Weidman not to do anything to destroy a "quiet Sunday"—as though he were going to make a big row in the middle of the Channel, instead of saving his breath for his great adventure. Then came this touching appeal: "Many who admire your pluck and courage [same thing!] will feel a pang when they read that you propose to start your enterprise on the divinely-appointed day of rest." But the only divinely-appointed day of rest in the Bible is Saturday—the last, not the first, day of the week, which the Jews still observe. So that Mr. Hill was twenty-four hours wrong in his chronology.

Mr. Hill seems to have felt there was some weakness in that part of his argument. Anyhow, he supplemented it with a more personal appeal. "I am certain," he said, "that if you would make it a rule to rest on the day of rest you would not only be benefited yourself, but you would gain increased respect from millions of Englishmen who view with alarm the many encroachments on their national day of rest." This seems almost a hint that if Weidman started on Monday he might win the divine favor and succeed in reaching the French coast. But we dare say the swimmer thought a good deal more about the state of the tides than about any such fantastic advantage.

On the whole, it looks like a bit of impudence on Mr. Hill's part to meddle at all in this matter. And his frequent use of the word "rest" is rather hypocritical. "The Lord's Day" in the name of his Association indicates his real object. The world would not lose very much if this gentleman took a "rest" himself.

Thirty men of God, who have churches and chapels to fill, have sent a formal protest to the Hastings Town Council and the Omnibus Company against the running of motor omnibuses on Sunday. These gentlemen base their objection on "moral and religious grounds," but everybody knows that their real motive is professional. They also appeal to the self-interest of the inhabitants, telling them that Sunday omnibuses will prove very detrimental to the prosperity of the town, and that visitors will go elsewhere if their quiet Sunday is rudely disturbed. But what on earth have the men of God to do with the temporal prosperity of the town—except as far as their stipends are concerned? Let them stick to their last; in other words, let them mind their own business. In one sense, of course, they are doing that all the time.

The *Vegetarian* is run by a Christian, who overlooks the fact that the God of the Bible accepted Abel's roast meat and turned up his nose at Cain's vegetables. We might also remind him of Ingersoll's epigram. Why did Jehovah demand sheep of the Jews? Because the priests wanted mutton. If they had been vegetarians, Jehovah would not have required blood-sacrifices, and in that case there would have been no salvation by the blood of Christ.

The September number of the *Vegetarian* confesses in a candid moment that the Rev. F. B. Meyer once asked, "How is it that Vegetarians do not love our Lord Jesus Christ?" Our contemporary does not answer this question. It prints a column and a half of sloppy piety instead. We see, too, that it refers to General Booth as "our great Salvation leader." What is the matter with Jesus Christ? Has William Booth got his job?

In our leading article, a fortnight ago, we referred to

General Booth's "Moses nose and Aaron beard." Evidently this resemblance strikes other people as well as ourselves. The Mayor of Bacup, who received the motor-car soul-saver in the Co-operative Hall, "likened him to Moses, the leader of the Children of Israel." The mayor also described him as "the consecrated man of the world." Which is rough on all the other gentlemen in that line of business. The definite article "the" excludes all the rest of the tribe. It is Booth first and the rest nowhere.

Booth's speech at Bacup had some remarkable points. The Grand Old Showman has taken up a fresh shibboleth, and is now running "humanity" for all it is worth—as though he had patented it. He asks for a College of Humanity, by which he clearly means a place bossed by the Salvation Army for teaching (at the public expense) Salvation Army methods of social improvement. About the Army itself Booth has no sort of doubt. He knows he will die, but he says that "God Almighty is not going to die, and it was he who made the Salvation Army." Yes, Booth says so; but what does God Almighty say? He is never allowed to speak for himself. We believe it is ten to one that the Salvation Army will split up and go to pot when General Booth dies. There is no order of succession in one-man enterprises. And probably Booth knows this in his heart of hearts as well as we do.

"If a man is hungry," Booth said at Bacup, "give him something to eat before you pray with him. In doing so you will bait your hook and be able to pull him into the Kingdom of Heaven." The Salvation Army is a hook and "humanity" is the bait. We thank the General for the admission. It confirms all we have ever said on this subject.

Salvationism did not enable Samuel Reed, of Gillingham, Kent, to stand his wife's nagging. He cut her throat and his own, and wound up the tragi-comedy. Of course there is no more to be said. But what a lot would have been said if Samuel Reed had been a Secularist instead of a Salvationist!

The Passive Resisters go on supplying all their fellow-citizens who do not happen to be Nonconformists with reasons for not paying the Education rate if what is facetiously called "unsectarian religious teaching" should ever be established in the public schools again at the nation's expense. Three Nonconformist men of God at Bristol declared that it was against their conscience (besides being against the will of God) to pay a farthing for religious teaching they did not believe in. Very good! This will justify Churchmen and Catholics in refusing to pay for "unsectarian religious teaching" if the Nonconformists upset the present Education Act. It will also justify Freethinkers in refusing to pay for *any* religious instruction all the time. It will likewise justify the Jews all the time in refusing to pay for teaching from the New Testament. Yes, the Nonconformists are digging a pit for their own feet.

A Passive Resistance man of God at Kidderminster, the Rev. E. D. Braimbridge, President of the West Midland Federation of Free Churches, told the magistrates that "No man ought to be victimised for his religious convictions." This gentleman should show his sincerity by agitating for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

Passive Resisters, meeting in a Baptist Church at Windsor, have resolved that a direct appeal to the King is the proper course to adopt. But if his Majesty has to tackle the job of bringing about peace between rival religionists he will soon want to go back to Marienbad. Fortunately, as the constitutional maxim says, the King reigns but does not govern; so the resolution of these Passive Resisters is more sound and fury, signifying nothing. But it shows the temper of the sectarians. They would upset the Constitution (or anything else) to get their own way in religious matters.

Councillor Brazil, a Woolwich Passive Resister, is a comical person, though we are afraid he does not recognise the fact. He tried to convince Mr. Baggallay, the magistrate at the Police-court, that it was quite wrong to make anybody pay the Education rate who objected to it. It did not occur to him that if Mr. Baggallay took this view there would soon be a vast crowd of Passive Resisters in Woolwich. A magistrate, of course, has to administer the law, not to violate it, and Councillor Brazil was plainly told so. "Yes," he replied, "but if the rate is legal, it is unjust," and he proposed to argue that point. But as the magistrate was not attending an amateur debating society he declined to hear such a discussion. Councillor Brazil, and other persons who want a law altered—especially a law passed, as it were, but yesterday—must discuss it at the bar of public opinion, and try to effect what they wish in a legitimate manner.

What a farce this Christianity is, to be sure! The Venerable Archdeacon Thomas Henry Freer, of Sudbury, Suffolk, who died in his pulpit last June, has left estate valued at £75,525. What a practical sermon on the texts, "Blessed be ye poor" and "Woe unto you rich"! If the Sermon on the Mount be true this deceased man of God is now being cooked in the bottomless pit. Does any man in his senses believe that he believed what he preached? Is it not clear that Christianity is an organised bamboozlement and exploitation of the people? It is simply one of the greatest devices for enabling thousands of cunning hypocrites to live on the industry of their fellow-men.

Another man of God, this time a Nonconformist one, who left a fair pile behind him was the Rev. Dr. Marshall Randles, of Heaton Chapel, Manchester, president of the Wesleyan Conference in 1896-7. The amount he was unable to carry to glory with him is announced as £14,150. What sermons would be preached if an "infidel lecturer" were to die worth such a sum of money! How the Christians would cry that he had battered on the faith of his dupes! But there is no astonishment or censure expressed when a "Blessed be ye poor" gentleman amasses a nice little fortune. The thing is so common.

Cadbury's cocoa is a splendid support in sickness or health. If you doubt it, ask Mr. Alexander.

A correspondent of *T.P.'s Weekly* bemoans "the persecution of religion by the French Government." One of the proofs he adduces is "the removal of the religious emblems from the Courts of Justice." So this is *persecution*, is it? We beg this Christian gentleman to perform a slight act of imagination. Let him put himself for a moment in the place of his fellow-citizens who happen to be (say) Jews or Freethinkers, and then ask whether it is just or considerate to thrust emblems of *his* religion, and his religion *only*, into the public places where citizens of all varieties of belief have to assemble. Is it not he who persecutes those who differ from him by acting in this way? All the French Government has done is to enforce the law of religious equality. Christian emblems are all right in Christian places of worship. They are all wrong in places of public resort. And perhaps the correspondent of *T.P.'s Weekly* could see this if he tried.

The review of the late Sir Leslie Stephen's new book on *Hobbes* in *T.P.'s Weekly* wound up as follows:—

"One characteristic saying may be quoted. 'He was,' says Aubrey, 'very charitable to those that were true objects of his bounty. He gave sixpence one day to a poor beggar in the Strand. Whereupon a divine asked him: 'Would you have done this if it had not been Christ's command?' 'Yea,' said he. 'Why?' quoth the other. 'Because,' said he, 'I was in pain to consider the miserable condition of the old man, and now my alms, giving him some relief, doth also ease me.' This shows, perhaps, that his practice was better than his ethical theory."

Philosophy does not run very deep at *T.P.'s Weekly* office. *Hobbes's* practice was quite consistent with his ethical theory, and his reply to that divine is admirably true and sound. What Hume called sympathy, and Schopenhauer compassion, is, and always was, and always must be, the basis of all moral action. If pain in others did not give us pain we should never try to relieve it. The one common fact with regard to criminals is that they have no sense of the sufferings of others. If they had they would act differently.

Mr. W. L. Courtney, reviewing the late Sir Leslie Stephen's *Hobbes* in the *Daily Telegraph*, said some good things about the old philosopher, and admitted that he was "the very first who put into definite form the antagonism of science towards a recognised theology." Also that in *Hobbes's* philosophy "there can be no such thing as spirit or soul, no such thing as free will, and no Providence, but according to any ordinary interpretation of the term." But we regret to see Mr. Courtney echoing the old nonsense about *Hobbes's* cowardice. It is simply not true that he was a "timorous philosopher, who was always running away because in a very troublous period he was extremely anxious for the safety of his own skin." The fact is that *Hobbes* gave offence to both Puritans and Cavaliers by his gospel of reason. He was obliged to take shelter behind powerful patrons to keep himself alive. Without their aid he would almost certainly have fallen a victim to the law against heretics; and who shall blame him for not wishing to be a martyr? What he most feared was private assassination, for he was held up to detestation by the clergy of every Church, and broad hints were thrown out about ridding the earth of such a monster. Moreover, it should be remembered that *Hobbes* was a seven-months child, born in the perilous year of the Spanish Armada. Frightened

before birth, so to speak, it was not wonderful that a lonely thinker should not be a man of ostentatious physical bravery. Moral courage (the rarest form of courage) *Hobbes* undoubtedly had. This, at any rate, is quite indisputable.

What is the matter with Mr. Zangwill? Talking with a *Daily News* interviewer about Mr. Harold Begbie's bad report of East-end Jews, Mr. Zangwill said, "If there is any immorality at all it is among Jews who have quite abandoned their religion." Does he mean that Jewish Freethinkers are responsible for all the immorality that may exist amongst the Children of Israel in East London? Surely this is a very large order. And it is quite unworthy of Mr. Zangwill.

Gipsy Smith continues to carry all before him in South Africa. He says so himself, and he ought to know. Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener may hide their diminished heads before this victorious soldier of the Cross. Gipsy Smith reports (we see by the *Daily News*) the most extraordinary success at Pretoria. Theatres and public-houses have suffered dreadfully from his bombardment. One saloon bar found its sales drop £40 before he had been twenty-four hours in the city. It must have been a very prosperous bar! We suppose it shut up altogether in forty-eight hours. Gipsy Smith doesn't sit long before *his* Port Arthurs.

We never heard that Gipsy Smith shut up any public-houses in England. But it is astonishing how easy these achievements are at a distance.

We always understood that the Boer Generals were very pious, but one of them was "amongst the inquirers" at Gipsy Smith's mission in Pretoria. Another "inquirer" was a grandson of President Kruger. We read of a first-rate football team, who played on Sunday. Gipsy Smith converted the lot. He attacked them rear and flank, and cut off their retreat. Not one escaped. Marvellous! Who said the age of miracles was passed? Jesus Christ said that those who believed in him should do greater wonders than he did himself. And this is true. Gipsy Smith proves it.

The extraordinarily feeble replies to Mr. Blatchford which appeared in the *Clarion* are reprinted in sixpenny book form by Macmillan with the title of *The Religious Doubts of Democracy*. We may have something to say about this book by-and-by. Meanwhile we may note a curious puff in the *Daily News*—perhaps written by Mr. George Haw himself. "The amazing thing," it says, "is that these papers have been appearing week by week in a non-Christian journal! The religious press has a lesson to learn from Mr. Blatchford's magnanimity and courtesy." Now we have no objection to the compliment to Mr. Blatchford, but where does the "magnanimity" come in? Mr. Blatchford secured some marketable copy from more or less "distinguished" Christians—probably for nothing. He also secured a good gratuitous advertisement. Of course this was quite legitimate business, but what on earth had it to do with "magnanimity"? Nor is this all. Mr. Blatchford's friends in the Christian camp mostly write as though he had just invented Freethought, or at least the Freethought party. Had they known anything of the history of Freethought they would have been aware that Freethought papers have always been ready to give representative Christians a hearing. Passing over the *Freethinker* altogether, as we do not wish to make this a personal question, we may point out that Charles Bradlaugh actually carried on written debates with several reverend gentlemen in his *National Reformer*.

A question put by the *Daily News* on this subject is probably more significant than it imagined. "We wonder," our contemporary said, "which of the religious weeklies would allow its columns to be used for the statement of views it existed to disprove." None of them would. But why? "Infidels" court discussion, and Christians shun it. What is the reason? Simply this. "Infidels" know that discussion is their great opportunity. The other side gets a hearing, and they get a hearing; and that is all they want—because they are sure they have the truth. This is the secret of their confidence. Christians detest discussion because it is their greatest danger. They hate to let the other side have a hearing, which discussion necessitates, because they feel in their heart of hearts that their faith will not bear criticism. This is the secret of their fear. There is nothing "amazing" in either case. The matter is as simple as A B C.

"The Future of England"—a very large subject—was the theme of a recent sermon by Mr. A. C. White at the Clarence-road Baptist Church, Southend-on-Sea. Judging from the report in the local *Standard*, we should say that

the preacher spent a lot of his time in talking nonsense about Freethought. He told his congregation that the "infidel lecturer" was a thing of the past—which is just as true as gospel. This obsolete advocate was succeeded by the "cultured rationalist" who lectured to Ethical Societies. Well, the "cultured rationalist" who does that generally gets a mere handful of listeners. It is the "infidel lecturer" who gets the audiences, after all.

The Southend preacher made a curious reference to the sixpenny edition of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*. We quote from the *Standard* :—

"Mr. White caused some amusement by quoting from a rationalist journal an article stating that modern science had thrown such an intense light on the Scriptures that no theological or other book written twenty years ago about the Scriptures would be worth reading at the present time, because it would be out of date. In the same number there was an advertisement of a book called *Bible Romances* by G. W. Foote, which was practically reprinted without alteration from an edition published more than twenty years ago."

We do not know what "rationalist" paper is referred to. What we do know is that *Bible Romances* has not yet been advertised in any other paper than the *Freethinker*. We also know that what Mr. White says—whether he relies upon the "rationalist" paper or otherwise—is not an accurate representation of the facts set forth in the Postscript to the new edition of Mr. Foote's book. What is really true is that the chief mass of the arguments and illustrations of *Bible Romances* is twenty years old. Any scholar will see that some of the works referred to in the footnotes are of later date. But this does not alter the fact that twenty years ago, in the "Virgin Mother" chapter, for instance, Mr. Foote put all the essence of the mythological criticism of the Incarnation story with perfect clearness. And anybody who says that this chapter, for instance, is out of date, simply does not know what he is talking about. Mr. Foote's work was that of a pioneer. Competent scholars all knew the facts. Mr. Foote's originality was that he had the courage to state them to the people. He paid the penalty of his courage, and will have to go on paying it as long as he lives; for Christianity never forgives, and "respectable" rationalists have very little gratitude. But the party that Mr. Foote has always fought for—the real Freethought party of Great Britain—understand it all, and he is perfectly satisfied with their verdict.

The dear *Daily News* should really look after its reviewers. They are not all as pious as they should be, and the Old Adam peeps out now and then. The reviewer of Mr. Swinburne's new volume of poems refers to the "beauty and dignity" of "The Altar of Righteousness," and even quotes some riotously Atheistic lines as a "noble passage." How this must have shocked the Nonconformist men of God who take the *Daily News* for breakfast. "Perhaps," a friend of ours says, "they didn't understand it." In mercy let us hope so.

Professor A. H. Sayce contributed a bamboozling article to that brilliant organ of light and leading, the *Daily Mail*, on "The Critics versus the Bible." No attention was paid to the natural explanation of the Mosaic Law which is afforded by recent archaeological discoveries; which, of course, is the all-important aspect of the matter. Professor Sayce tells the readers that certain historical and local statements in the Bible, some of which were doubted, are now shown to be true; therefore the Bible is accurate; and *argal*, we suppose, it is the Word of God. But how on earth does the occasional accuracy of a book prove its inspiration? These devices of Bibliolatry are an insult to common intelligence, and a disgrace to the orthodox defenders. Were such tricks attempted before a jury in a court of justice they would meet with general reprobation and contempt. But anything seems good enough in support of the old religion.

Nothing but religion is able to support a man in adversity. That is why Charles Jones, a chartered accountant, living at Nunhead, drowned himself in the Grand Surrey Canal near Peckham Basin. The poor man had been out of work, and could not stand the strain any longer. In a letter, found in one of his pockets, addressed to his wife and children, he said: "I have prayed to Almighty God on your behalf for his assistance." Also "I have asked forgiveness from the One Above."

William Shannon, who arrived in America recently with Old Dowie, has been found unconscious in a New York hotel. The gas was escaping in his room, and he was apparently going to glory. Being roused and asked for an explanation, he replied: "I know Dowie; that's enough." "Have you any money?" was the next question. His

answer was, "Ask Dowie; he has got it all." The same old game!

At Southampton, William Andrews, a local preacher, was fined £25 or three months' imprisonment for neglecting his children. Only a few days before he had been preaching at a Church Army home in Winchester.

The editor of the "Religious World" column in the *Daily News* goes on puffing the Rev. A. J. Waldron—the man who did his best the other day to send a Hyde Park Freethinker to gaol for asking him embarrassing questions. It is stated that Mr. Waldron lectures in Brockwell Park; that the Atheist speakers, who invite discussion, will not let him oppose them at their platforms; and that they lose their audiences when he mounts his rostrum. It is also stated that he was once a likely candidate for parliamentary honors at Northampton. We presume that all this true information was supplied by Mr. Waldron himself.

Archdeacon Diggle, in a recent short sermon in *Lloyd's Newspaper*, made a very striking admission. "It is a matter of common knowledge," he said, "that multitudes of Christian people do not deal with religious doubt in the temper either of justice, or courtesy, or courage." What, then is the real value of Christianity? A religion which, after all these centuries of unlimited power, has left its devotees with such a plentiful lack of the elementary virtues, ought to be ashamed of itself, and to make room for something better.

The following paragraph appeared in last Saturday's (Sept. 3) *Daily News* :—

"An International Congress of Freethinkers will be held in Rome from the 20th to the 22nd of this month. Amongst those who will be present and give addresses are Professor Ernst Haeckel, Senor Nicholas Salmeron, former President of the Spanish Republic, and Mr. G. J. Holyoake." Those who know how such paragraphs are engineered will smile. Those who do not will wonder. Fortunately the real Freethought movement in this country—which will be well represented at Rome—does not depend upon engineered press paragraphs, or upon anything else except its own vitality.

Disinterested travellers have often said that the difference between the Mohammedans and Christians in the south-east of Europe is rather in favor of the former. When it comes to cruelty on the war-path it is generally six on the one side and half-a-dozen on the other. We hear most about "Turkish atrocities," but that is due to religious bigotry in our newspaper offices. A recent Reuter telegram, however, lets a bit of the cat out of the bag. The Greeks and Bulgarians, both Christians, hate each other most cordially. Reuter's Salonika correspondent gives an account of something he saw at Gradobor, which had just been the scene of a revolting crime by a Bulgarian band. He found women wailing over two shapeless masses. On lifting a corner of one of the wretched coverlets which sheltered the body of one of the victims from the hot sun, it was evident that his eyes had been gouged out, and his ears, nose, and lips cut off. The other, whose body had been burned, had been mutilated in a similar manner. A sturdy young villager was asked whether the murdered men were Bulgarians or Greeks. "They were Greeks," he replied with a triumphant smile. The Bulgarian village priest was asked by the Greek Metropolitan of Salonika whether the Bulgarians had a gospel which taught them to commit such acts. The Bulgarian stuck to his guns. "No," said he, "our gospel does not teach us to do these things, but, still, these things are divinely appointed." How they love one another!

While the Japanese, with irresistible strategy and courage, are steadily overwhelming the Russians in Manchuria, it is curious to see what steps the pious Czar and his Ministers are taking to keep up the spirit of the Russian Army. According to confidential circulars to the Russian Army staff, divisional officers are to act as inquisitors rather than as soldiers. They are to make "sudden nocturnal inspections for the purpose of checking the numbers of these privates, and searching their trunks and their clothes." The object of this disgusting manoeuvre is to find traces of what are called "revolutionary ideas." How can an army like that stand against the Japanese? We have plenty of pity for the poor Russian soldiers, and measureless contempt for the scoundrels who exploit them. Of course the latter are all good Christians.

"Providence" continues its activity in Persia. The cholera has carried off more than 200,000 victims there already, and is still going strong. The slaughter in the Russian-Japanese war is nothing to that of "Providence."

**Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.**

Sunday, September 11, Stratford Town Hall, 7.30, "What Do We Know of God?" All seats free.  
 September 18 to 25, International Freethought Congress, Rome.  
 October 2, Queen's Hall, London; 9, Queen's Hall; 16, Glasgow; 23, Leicester; 30, Birmingham.  
 November 6, Coventry; 20, Manchester; 27, Liverpool.

**To Correspondents.**

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—September 18, morning, Ridley-road, Dalston; afternoon, Victoria Park; October 2, Manchester; 30, Queen's Hall; November 6, Glasgow; 20, Coventry.

C. D. STEPHENS.—Yes, our improvement in health is maintained. We believe the Rome Congress is sure to be a great success. Thanks for all your good wishes.

G. SCOTT.—Received with thanks.

S. MCGOWAN.—The Father O'Leary pamphlet may be of use some day—so thanks. As you say, it is ridiculous in itself, but it shows how the faithful are gulled and terrorised, first out of their wits and then out of their money. Whether your own writing will be good enough for publication is more than we can say. We must judge when it is submitted to us. You certainly write with more fluency and force than most men in your position.

MRS. TURNBULL.—We are quite sure you wished it pounds instead of shillings.

J. HAMMOND (Liverpool) writes: "Enclosed please find a small contribution towards the Rome Congress Fund. Freethought nowhere sends a more worthy representative than yourself, and as for English militant Freethought, you are its very embodiment."

A. MILLAR.—Thanks for your good wishes. We like to have them, whether you can give anything else or not.

GEORGE ARMSTRONG.—Your letter is an encouragement. We hope as you do (poetically, of course) that the spirits of the tortured Galileo and the murdered Bruno may move amidst the Rome Congress.

ROME CONGRESS FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £78 15s. 4d. Received this week:—James Baker 2s. 6d., A. Webber 2s. 6d., David Watt 2s. 6d., J. Warwick 5s., R. Lewis 1s. 6d., C. D. Stephens 5s., Mrs. Turnbull and Family 5s., J. Hammond 5s., George Armstrong 10s., J. W. de Caux £1, Mrs. J. Houston 5s. 8d., W. W. Kensett 2s. 6d., Henry Spence 5s., Tom Saxon 1s., R. Green £1, George Dixon 10s., John Green 2s. 6d., C. Bowman £1, T. S. 2s. 6d., Touzeau Parris £1, G. Davey 1s., E. Chapman 1s., J. Chapman 1s., P. Fitzpatrick 1s., S. P. 1s., W. Bowie 1s., P. K. S. 5s., John Hume 2s. 6d., W. Langstaff 2s. 6d.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Your letter says "September 30," but of course you mean October 30, and that date is booked.

J. KELSEY.—Sorry it did not reach us.

E. PURCHES.—We have handed your letter to Mr. Cohen, to whom it relates.

E. D. FORD.—Thanks for the *Reynolds'* cutting, but is it really worth notice?

E. CHAPMAN.—Thanks. See List. Have you hung up the South Shields lecture project altogether? We hope not.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

ALCHEM.—Too great a press of matter this week.

J. HALLDAY (Edinburgh).—Thanks for the information. The old fox was checkmated. Less cunning, and more sense, would have enabled him to see that your Branch could only return one answer to his request, namely, that "the only person who could really represent us at Rome is the President of the National Secular Society."

F. S. writes: "Your article in the current issue of the *Freethinker* [Sept. 4] on Japan is not only true in all its various statements, but is also very instructive reading just now, when so much attention is directed to that fascinating and romantic country. I wish it could be read by hundreds of thousands of people in this country, who would, I feel sure, by so doing, have a much better idea of things as they are in Japan than they receive from reading the religious and general press accounts furnished them from day to day."

W. LLOYD.—We do not know of any such person as "Tom Payne." We presume you refer to Thomas Paine, the author of the *Age of Reason*. Your questions about him may be answered briefly. He was not an Atheist, but a Deist. He did not send for a Christian minister when he was dying. He did not live in a castle. The house he lived in is not now used for the printing of Christian literature. The facts about Thomas Paine's last days may be found in our *Infidel Death-Beds*, price eightpence; and, more summarily, in our *Biographical Introduction to the Twentieth Century Edition of the Age of Reason*, price sixpence.

A. W. STIRLING.—Yes, there are Freethinkers in Edinburgh, and you might get into touch with them by communicating with Mr. J. Dewar, 48 Hanover-street.

JAMES BAKER.—We dare say "bad trade" prevents a good many from subscribing, or from subscribing as much as they would like to. But the £100 asked for is not a vast sum to make up, is it?

HARROLD ELLIOT.—President Roosevelt's libel on Thomas Paine as a "filthy little Atheist"—three words forming a perfect

trinity of falsehood—appeared in his *Life of Gouverneur Morris*, published by Putnam's Sons. Not having the book by us we cannot give you the page.

A. W.—We do not print your name in full, for obvious reasons. It is amusing to read that you bottled up a copy of the *Freethinker*, and placed it in a cavity of a wall in a new church, where it now reposes "under the organ and close to the holy chancel."

DAVID WATT.—Glad to have your glowing report of the successful Freethought open-air propaganda at Paisley. We note your opinion of Mr. McNulty as "a splendid speaker."

H. P. W.—Thanks. See paragraph.

T. DIXON.—(1) Your report of Mr. Gilshespy's death took us by surprise. He had been associated with Secularism longer than you seem to imagine. We met him quite twenty-five years ago at Newcastle-on-Tyne. He was a thorough-going Freethinker, and burying him with Church of England rites was a ghastly mockery. There is no limit to the ill taste, and even treachery, of Christians on these occasions. (2) We hope to be favored with particulars of the presentation that is to be made to Mr. Martin Weatherburn on his leaving Cramlington. Freethought and the cause of Humanity never had a more loyal servant.

M. E. PEGG.—The date is booked; see list. Thanks for all your good wishes.

TOM SAXON.—An excellent letter, and should do good. Pleased to hear you regard *Bible Romances* as "extra." We should much like to see an active Freethought propaganda, such as you suggest, in Wales.

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*.

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

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

**Sugar Plums.**

The Rome Congress Fund is still short of the £100 asked for—and necessary. We hope it will be made up to the last penny before the National Secular Society's delegates leave London for "the Eternal City." The date of their departure is Saturday, September 18, and there is only one more *Freethinker* to be published before then. So the laggards had better hurry up.

Mr. Foote delivers his first lecture for some months at the Stratford Town Hall this evening (Sept. 11). His subject is "What Do We Know of God?" It should attract a crowded meeting. We are glad to hear that Mr. Cohen had a capital audience at Stratford Town Hall last Sunday evening, with a good collection towards the considerable expenses.

Mr. Cohen delivered what was meant to be his last lecture in Victoria Park, for this season, last Sunday, but owing to the illness of Mr. Marshall he has agreed to re-appear in the Park to-day. East London "saints" will please note.

A blunder crept into our last week's paragraph on the Birmingham's Branch's balance-sheet, which shows, not a balance in hand, but a deficit. The local "saints" will see, therefore, that the Branch is in need of financial assistance, and will act accordingly. We may add that the Mayor has kindly granted the Branch the use of the Town Hall on Sunday, October 30, and that Mr. Foote has undertaken to occupy the platform both afternoon and evening.

The Liverpool Branch opened its indoor season on Sunday, when Mr. H. Percy Ward addressed two audiences in the Alexandra Hall, which were even larger than last year's, and resulted in eight new members being enrolled. The Branch means business. Amongst other things it hopes to arrange for a Saturday night free lecture in the fine Picton Hall on the occasion of Mr. Foote's visit in November.

Mr. W. H. Thresh delivers his first Freethought lectures at

Liverpool to-day (Sept. 11). When last he publicly spoke in the North it was in defence of Christianity. We hope the local "saints" will give him a hearing. They can then judge for themselves.

The Trade Union Congress meets this year at Leeds. On Sunday evening a great crowd packed the Assembly Rooms to hear Lady Warwick, Sir John Gorst, and Mrs. Bridges Adams. The subject was Education, and the following resolution was carried: "That the religious difficulty, which has proved so serious an obstacle to educational progress, which the welfare of the nation demands, can only be solved by the policy laid down at the Trade Union Congress in September last—namely, that the Education of all State-supported schools shall be secular." Lady Warwick, in a bright speech, ridiculed the policy of Dr. Clifford. "Although a woman," she said, "I am sufficiently logical to be amazed at the illogical position of the Nonconformists, who claim, *par excellence*, to be upholders of religious liberty. They tell us that State-supported religion for adults is wrong, but that the teaching of 'undenominationalism' to children at the expense of the State is right."

Mr. F. J. Gould stands for the Castle Ward at the Leicester-municipal elections, under the auspices of the Labor Representation Committee and the Independent Labor Party, his special program being that of Secular Education and Moral Instruction. We wish him a triumphant success, and every good Freethinker in Leicester will help to bring it about.

Civil marriage is becoming more and more popular in England. In 1853 no less than 839 out of every 1,000 marriages were solemnised by the Church of England, and only 46 were celebrated before a registrar—the balance being accounted for by non-established places of worship. Since then the Church of England has been steadily losing in this respect, and the other Churches have been steadily gaining; but civil marriage has also been steadily gaining, and this is necessarily at the expense of *all* the Churches. The figures per 1,000 for 1898—1902 were as follows: 148, 150, 153, 158, 163. Note the increasing speed of this tendency to patronise the registrar. In 1898 there was an increase of 2 per 1,000; in 1899 it was 2 again; in 1900 it was 3; in 1901 it was 5; and in 1902 five again. At this rate the complete triumph of civil marriage is only a question of time, and the time may be much shorter than many people fancy.

M. Combes, the French Premier, speaking at a banquet at Auxerre on Sunday, read the statistics of the municipal elections, which showed a victory for the Government, and sarcastically asked, "Where is the celestial protection invoked by the Catholic committees in favor of their party?" With regard to the immediate future, and the separation of Church and State, which the Government is resolved to proceed with as early as possible, M. Combes said: "The Republic means to free France from all dependence as regards religious power. For thirty years ecclesiastical power has audaciously violated the Concordat, and has used it for its own purposes. The Bishops have played with the Government, and have received the approval of Rome, who arrogates to herself the right of dismissing from the episcopacy whom she thinks fit—in fact, caprice replaces the legality of the Concordat. As the Vatican refused to respect all the obligations of the Concordat, the Government broke off diplomatic relations." M. Combes added that the continuance of the Concordat was impossible. The only solution of the question was a separation by mutual consent, not in a sentiment of hostility to Christian consciences, but in a sentiment of social peace and religious liberty. He was disposed to make all reasonable concessions in order that the separation of Church and State might open a new era of social concord.

Last week's *Athenæum* contained accounts of the past year's progress of literature in all the principal countries of Europe. The Russian section was written by Valerii Briusov. We gather from it that a fine new Russian translation of Shakespeare has just been published. The edition is said to be a splendid one. Such a fact is very gratifying both to the lovers of Shakespeare and to those who wish well to the Russian nation in spite of the terrible crimes of its government. We have pleasure in noting, too, that the second volume has appeared of a "model translation" of Shelley; also that the first translation into Russian of the great Atheistic poem of Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, has made its appearance. These are hopeful signs in such a country.

Professor Percy Gardner, in the *Independent Review*, deals with "The Abbé Loisy and Mr. Beeby." The latter, it will be remembered, was jockeyed out of his Birmingham benefice

by Bishop Gore, on account of his apparent shakiness on the subject of the Virgin Birth of Christ. Professor Gardner points out that such action as Bishop Gore's is likely to split up the Church of England, and if it is successfully continued it will enlarge the cleft between the clergy and the educated laity, which is "deep enough at present." Professor Gardner declares that the miraculous birth and corporeal resurrection of Christ will have to be given up. With regard to the former, he says: "I think the time has come when we must find some substitute for it." Clearly the Higher Critics see the danger ahead, and do not mean to take orthodox assaults lying down. They will go on with their work, which is throwing Christian doctrines one by one to the wolves, in order to stave off a general massacre. In other words, they are doing the work of Freethought inside the Church, and we wish them (to that extent) good speed.

The September number of the *Humanitarian*, the little penny organ of the Humanitarian League, may be recommended to all who take a practical interest in the war against the cruelties that still darken our boasted civilisation. Amongst the contents we would draw particular attention to a long letter from Mr. Sydney Holland, Director of the London Hospital, in reply to one from Mr. H. S. Salt, the League's honorary secretary, protesting against public money, given for the relief of the sick, being spent upon a medical school disgraced by the practice of vivisection. Mr. Sydney Holland, of course, defends the London Hospital; he also defends vivisection; and his arguments should be read by all who wish to know the best (or worst) that can be said for this abominable practice.

Shakespeare has found a glowing panegyrist in Madame Sarah Bernhardt, the great French actress, who has written an eloquent letter to the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* in reference to the proposed memorial to Shakespeare. "It is not too late," she says, "to pay universal homage to the greatest poet who has ever lived on this earth. The intellectual brotherhood of all civilised minds will give to that homage colossal proportions. This monument must, in truth, be more beautiful than all the monuments raised to emperors, to kings, to great men, for this Poet is King over Kings and Elect among the Elect."

## The Rome Congress.

As this is the last opportunity of addressing our country friends who are going to Rome, the following items will be useful to them:—The special train for Rome will leave Paris on Sunday, September 18, at 2 p.m. from the Gare de Lyons. It will be advisable to get there early as there will probably be something like a thousand French delegates going by that train. The return journey will commence on Saturday, September 24, in the morning, arriving in Paris early Sunday evening.

Those of our friends who wish to remain in Italy for a longer period will be able to do so, and the sum of £3 will be returned to them by the Agency du Chemin, which is undertaking the arrangements. This represents the value of the return journey and meals *en route*.

Each of our friends will receive a personal pass entitling them to a reduction of from forty to sixty per cent. on their fares, according to distance, and will permit them to travel over the whole railway systems of Italy and break their journeys as they please. I have sent for these, and Miss Vance will forward them if they arrive in time. If not, they will be delivered before departure at the Gare de Lyons. As most of the foreign Congressists will be wearing a small badge, I suggest that we should provide ourselves with a small rosette of the "Bradlaugh" colors.

At Rome, the opening meeting will take place in the Argentina Theatre. The business meeting of the Congress will be held in the Collegio Romano. A small committee has been appointed in Rome to advise and render every assistance possible to foreign delegates, in order to make their sojourn a pleasant one. The secretary is M. Carlo Berlanda, Engineer, 42 Via Principe Amedeo, Rome.

The Agenda for the Congress has already been published in these columns.

The French Circular advises Congressists to limit their luggage to the smallest limits possible, owing to the Italian railway regulations, which limit the size of luggage which may be carried in the carriages to valises eighteen inches long by about twelve inches or so each way.

The return railway tickets from Rome will be available up to September 30, midnight.

V. ROGER  
(N. S. S. Correspondent).

### Darkest England.

NO one ever accused "General" William Booth of being a fool; and the way he is utilising the present Silly Season is a fresh proof of his astuteness. Now that sub-editors are short of "copy" they are only too glad to devote columns to the "General's" motor-car pilgrimage; and they struggle to be enthusiastic over the carefully-arranged, cut-and-dried demonstrations of local mayors, borough councillors, ex-convicts, paupers, and the other riffraff of bumbledom, which punctuate his progress. The Salvation Army is a big thing now, and its head has been clever enough to obtain a Royal Audience—for kings are compelled to endure bores patiently: it is one of the trials of the profession, as Umberto said. Besides, there is something quite aristocratic in patronising the Army and its work. "Salvation" is entirely a matter for the lower orders. No one ever heard of a Duke, or an Earl, or a Marquis being "saved." We all know that "God would never be so wanting in politeness as to damn a person of quality." The late Professor Huxley was a somewhat shabby-looking individual; and the consequence was that a Salvation Army lassie handed him a tract one day, and inquired about his soul; and the Professor was so indignant at the outrage that he wrote to the *Times* about it. When you see a mission-hall, or a Salvation barracks, or a little bethel, you know at once that you are in a poverty-stricken neighborhood; and the number of churches, chapels, and meeting-places is usually in inverse proportion to the wealth of its inhabitants. Some years ago I happened to reside in a very poor part of London. The locality will probably be recognised when I say that it has the reputation of being the chosen home of the burglars of the metropolis. At any rate, we used to hear occasionally that some celebrated house-breaker had just been arrested across the way or down the street. The amount of religion in the neighborhood was something extraordinary. The places of worship were so thick that in one thoroughfare there were three chapels next door to one another. Public-houses were equally frequent, and it was a matter of local discussion as to which held the majority. My own view was that there were more meeting-houses than beershops; but in the absence of exact statistics it was difficult to tell. Every Sunday three regular relays of tracts were left at the door, and we were expected to peruse them during the week, and exchange them for the fresh ones left the following week. Besides these there was an avalanche of other tracts and leaflets that were not asked for again. The curates from the parish church called at stated intervals, averaging about once a fortnight. Scripture-readers of various denominations also came round at all hours of the day, and held a miniature service, winding up with prayer. We even had small parties of officiously pious people who obtruded themselves into the houses, sang hymns out of tune, and mumbled chapters from the Bible. The inhabitants, being mostly poor, were not in a position to resent such trespasses on their privacy; some thought they were doing something meritorious in listening to "religion," and others had a keen eye for the main chance; for, by a studied deference to the missionaries, they stood in for being remembered when soup tickets, coal, blankets, and second-hand clothing were distributed, while a plausible tale of affliction would very often bring out a shilling or half-a-crown. Out in the streets religious services were held at corners most evenings of the week, and on Sundays amateur tub-thumpers swarmed all over the place. While, in order to reach those who stayed at home, the local Salvation Army band perambulated the streets with a powerful big drum, to the favorite rousing air—

We'll all get blind drunk  
When Johnny comes marching home.

In fact, the spiritual needs of the population were catered for in the most thorough manner, and there

were religions to suit all tastes, from Puseyites to Plymouth Brethren.

I afterwards had to remove to another part of London which prides itself—quite unnecessarily—upon its gentility. The taverns and the gospel-shops nearly balance one another; but there are very few of either. No tracts are left at our doors, and the local clergy never trouble to call upon us. We used at one time to hear the sound of the Salvation drum; but the Army has not dared to march through our respectable neighborhood since a Salvationist captain was sentenced to a month's imprisonment for annoying a local publican. The only reminder of religion that we receive is an occasional shower of postal circulars making appeals for subscriptions to the Rev. Mr. Somebody's Mission to the Working Classes.

Such experiences are sufficient to convince everybody that religion is only intended for paupers, and that is why the authorities are always so careful to provide chaplains for prisons and workhouses. In some circles of society it is thought to be an act of great and peculiar merit to force religion upon poor people; and fastidious gentlemen hand round bread-and-butter at tea-meetings, and dainty ladies gracefully walk through Sunday-schools, and fancy they have conferred a great benefit upon the lower orders.

Consequently "General" Booth and his Army are concerned with the poorer classes. That goes without saying. The wealthy are only milch cows, to provide funds for the work. We might, therefore, expect that the boasted success of the Salvationist movement would have led to a great extension of piety in the humbler ranks of society. But everybody is agreed that there has been no such extension. Indeed, on the whole it is admitted that religion is in a rapid state of decline. The fact is that the Salvation Army has been recruited at the expense of the other religious bodies by a perfectly intelligible law. If a cheese merchant grows rich it does not mean that more cheese has been eaten. The amount of cheese people can eat is a limited quantity. It only means that this merchant has proved a better man of business than the others, and so he has absorbed their trade. In the same way the "General" has captured the religious trade. Not a single one of his methods displays the slightest originality. He has been astute enough to copy and combine, and his ability has been proved by the failure of those who have tried to imitate him. In the early days of Salvation Army revivalism Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians, and other Ranters were attracted in large numbers, and the sects affected were alarmed at their dwindled ranks, and were loud in their complaints that the Army only attracted church members, and did not direct itself to the masses of the unconverted. When in due course Salvationism took up Foreign Missions there were fresh laments, for the religious bodies lost their converts, who deserted their old confessions to join the more attractive Salvation Army. Converts are few in the mission field, and there is a vital competition for them; so that when the rival sects joined in denouncing the Army for drawing away the native Christians, instead of making an impression on the heathen, it was plain what the success of the Army really meant. Both at home and abroad the number of people inclined to religion was a limited quantity. The Salvation Army had not increased that quantity, but had merely drawn a large proportion around a fresh nucleus. It was the old story of the successful cheesemonger.

When the flood of religious revivalism began to ebb, the cunning General shifted the ground to "Social" work, the great field of the charlatan and the doctrinaire. Religion and politics have one great nostrum for curing poverty—that is, to take from the rich to give to the poor. If giving to the poor was of any avail, then the avalanches of gold that have been poured out in charity and almsgiving would have sufficed long ago to have banished pauperism from the earth, and left nothing but mil-

lionaires. Piety, however, declines to be disillusioned by any such mundane things as facts. The office of almoner gives power and influence, and is too profitable to be abandoned; and therefore all the old fallacies are carefully fostered, and the experience of centuries is carefully ignored. "General" Booth's "Social Scheme" of 1890 was merely a threadbare collection of all the old commonplaces that had been tried times without number, and had failed; but all the same it was loudly reiterated that the "rich" had only to subscribe a million sterling, or some such trifle, and crime and pauperism would disappear from the universe. It will be remembered that subscriptions for the "Scheme" were canvassed for in Booth's masterly style. We were assured that it was being received with the utmost enthusiasm, not only by the supporters of religion, but also by its opponents, for even well-known Agnostics had sent their cheques. It was remarkable, however, that these particular Agnostics had never been known to send cheques to any Freethought fund; and for the next year or two all kinds of charities in the country deplored the enormous falling-off in their receipts, which they attributed to the superior attractiveness of the "Salvation Army Scheme." Consequently it is unnecessary to add that "General" Booth had not tapped any fresh source of almsgiving; he had not convinced any new set of men that Christian charity was going to make any difference in the world; but he had merely exercised his old talent of poaching on other people's preserves, and had succeeded in attracting into his own pocket the money which usually went to competing organisations. At any rate, money was raised, and the different branches of the scheme were inaugurated with much beating of drums, actual and metaphoric. The "General's" second-hand plans for the salvation of society have now been in operation for many years since 1890, and it is time to see what result they have had. The tables in *Whitaker's Almanac* only come down to 1902, but they will serve.

The number of criminal convictions in the United Kingdom were as follows:—

1890	...	...	...	...	12,260
1902	...	...	...	...	12,490

The number of persons in England and Wales in receipt of pauper relief were:—

1890	...	...	...	...	787,545
1902	...	...	...	...	811,449

It is therefore obvious that neither pauperism nor crime have been diminished since the inception of the Salvation Army Scheme.

Well-meaning people have a very mechanical method of regarding crime. They say there are so many thousand criminals; therefore, if you reform so many thousand, there will be no crime left. They forget that criminals are continually growing up as well as dropping out. They forget that there are as many people in every trade as can get a living at it—and a few over. A century ago English law had a very short, cheap, and simple method of disposing of criminals. They were all hanged; they were not carefully preserved in convict prisons at the expense of the honest, the virtuous, and the industrious. The hanging prevented the individual from repeating the offence; but it had no effect whatever upon the volume of crime. The penal methods were so uncertain that any rascal with ordinary luck and ability could look forward to a considerable career before gracing the gallows; and so the trade was always full.

The profession of highwayman was one of great antiquity, and we cannot conceive nowadays how thoroughly the highways were once infested with these gentry. But the roads of this country are now watched and patrolled by a fairly active police, and the electric telegraph can outrun any horse. Consequently, no bold highwayman would be likely to escape arrest for a week. Highway robbery has become a lost art; not because people have become more honest, but simply because the highwayman has no chance of earning a livelihood. When crime

ceases to pay it will be abandoned, just the same as any other trade.

The Salvation Army claims to be reforming criminals. We have no proof of this beyond Salvationist assertion; but if it were true it would have no effect on the total volume of crime in the country. Other things being equal, a hundred men withdrawn from crime would leave room for a hundred other men to develop into criminals. Thus the person who takes credit for leading thieves into the paths of virtue should also reflect that he is the indirect means of drawing a similar number of previously honest persons into the paths of vice.

If the ordinary man struggles to lead a life of industry and virtue, no one offers to help or encourage him; no one condescends to notice his existence except the tax-gatherer. But if he has the good fortune to be a criminal, a loafer, a drunkard, or a wastrel, he immediately becomes the object of tender solicitude to every pseudo-philanthropist. There is one person in this land who leads a free, untroubled life, with no anxiety for the present and no care for the future. That man is the tramp. *He* has no tailor's bills, for his wardrobe is renewed gratuitously. *He* needs no bank, for he receives from every purse. *His* belly is filled by innumerable agencies in town and country. House-rent and taxes trouble him not, for if he turn up his nose at the friendly haystack, every parish contains an ample shelter that he can enjoy free of charge. *And "General" Booth proposes to persuade this happy individual to WORK!* According to his own account, the tramp has been looking for work all his life—and never finding it. Why should he work? All his simple wants are satisfied; and he himself will tell you in a burst of confidence, "It is only fools and horses who work." According to Haydn, the Poor Law expenditure of Great Britain in 1901 was £12,119,554. In other words, the sober, industrious, virtuous members of society (who pay all the taxes) are annually robbed of twelve millions sterling for the encouragement of lazy, useless paupers. So long as these funds are available there will be no lack of indigence to supply the demand.

"General" Booth proposes to catch ne'er-do-wells, run them through the Salvation mill, and then export the finished article. In other words, he proposes to resuscitate that exploded fraud, Emigration! In the first half of the last century they had a patent, infallible cure for undesirables. They were to be shipped to another land, where the sun always shines, and where there is bread and work for all. Thousands of human refuse were dumped down into America and Australia, until the Americans and Australians refused to take any more. But the advocates of emigration found that the exportation caused not the slightest diminution in the ranks of the pauper classes here. They had the same experience as the early settlers in America, who put bounties on the destruction of noxious animals, and then found to their amazement that the more vermin were destroyed, the more there were. The natural concupiscence of the pauper classes is perfectly capable of keeping pace with any emigration scheme. It is a commonplace that the lowest strata of society are the most prolific. Those who desire to live with credit and comfort soon find the necessity of keeping their bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity; but every encouragement is given to the lasciviousness of wastrels and loafers. If a respectable family has a baby, the expense of nurse and doctor is a serious item: the female undesirable has every attendance for nothing at the workhouse. The parent of the lower middle class finds it a perpetual struggle to feed, clothe, and educate his children in a creditable manner: the pauper has all these things without the slightest exertion on his part. The "poor but honest" father may be worried into his grave by his family cares: the list of names on the nearest police-station shows how the "poor but dishonest" father solves the problem by leaving his wife and children on the parish. It is absolutely certain that no amount of

emigration will avail to diminish poverty and crime so long as paupers and criminals are artificially encouraged to increase and multiply and replenish the earth.

The "Social Work" of the Salvation Army is equivalent to making ropes of sand, or emptying the ocean with a bucket, so far as dealing with crime and poverty is concerned; but it is no doubt a valuable asset in keeping up the Salvation Army. The great aim of the "General"—like that of all religionists—is to get his petty sect subsidised out of the taxes; and that is where the real danger lies. So long as he depends on voluntary subscriptions, it is merely a question of the natural divorce between fools and their money; but if, directly or indirectly, he can tap public funds, there will be no limit to the plunder. Religion, *per se*, has little chance of public subsidy in this country; but, under pretence of philanthropy, the "General," or a similar charlatan, may yet place a further burden on industry and morality.

CHILPERIC.

Correspondence.

MR. LLOYD AND PESSIMISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Why should Mr. Lloyd write in his article of September 4 that "Pessimism is a crime"? I thought it was an adverse summing up of the value of human life, or, indeed, of conscious existence.

I never would have come, had I been asked;  
I would as lief not go, if I were asked;  
And, to be brief, I would annihilate  
All coming, being, going, were I asked.

Was the man that wrote the above lines a criminal? And are we to exercise our judgment on the value of life *only on condition that we bring in a favorable verdict*? No doubt if we all brought an equal intelligence and earnestness to bear on the same experience, we might all come to the same conclusion; but to *what* conclusion? Now do not these three factors vary in quantity and quality in all men, so that we are driven to accept Montaigne's opinion that diversity, and not sameness, is what we should expect of men always and everywhere, both in their lives and in their views on life? Although a Pessimist, I neither call Optimists stupid nor criminal. Yet I think Mr. Lloyd might profitably re-read his *Candide*, and he may then see that the ever-green Panglosses of our race may be as amusing as they appear to be incorrigible. Pangloss of the Missing Nose had a fine lofty contempt for ugly facts!

SIGVATSON.

P.S.—If we adopt Edouard von Hartmann's theory (which is also the theory of Spinoza and of all Necessitarians), that this is *the only possible world*—or universe—then it is at once not only the worst of all possible worlds, but the best also. But that world which is of necessity cannot properly be described by either "best" or "worst," since there is, and can be, no other!

God's in his heaven,  
All's right with the world;  
Millions are slaughtered,  
The war-flag's unfurled.

Or, as Alfred de Musset asks:—

A quoi bon le crime, et la peste?  
O Dieu juste! Pourquoi la mort?

S.

The Rome Congress and the Italian Government.

A FEW journals make a singular announcement, which has not been confirmed up to the time of our going to press.

The Pope has protested against the offence which the Freethought Congress held in Rome will be to him. It is within his right, and it is a reason the more why Freethinkers should appreciate the importance of the Congress.

But *l'Européen* and various other sheets say that, following an interview he has had with the King (and on the intervention of the Pope, we may well guess), M. Giolitti has decided not to associate the Italian Government with the grand manifestation of Freethought.

M. Orlando, Minister of Public Instruction, will not deliver

the discourse already announced for the opening meeting in the Theatre Argentina, nor take part in that meeting.

Shall we even have the Aula Magna in the Roman College?

The Organisation Commission of the Congress has not as yet been notified of this strange retreat of the Italian Ministers.

—*La Raison* (Sunday, August 28).

THE MEANING OF DEATH.

Long life and short, are by death made all one; for there is no long, nor short, to things that are no more. Aristotle tells us, that there are certain little beasts upon the banks of the river Hypanis, that never live above a day: they which die at eight of the clock in the morning, die in their youth, and those that die at five in the evening, in their extremest age. Which of us would not laugh to see this moment of continuance put into the consideration of weal or woe? The most, and the least of ours in comparison of eternity, or yet to the duration of mountains, rivers, trees, or even of some animals, is no less ridiculous. But nature compels us to it; Go out of this world, says she, as you entered into it; the same pass you made from death to life, without passion or fear, the same, after the same manner, repeat from life to death. Your death is a part of the order of the universe, 'tis a part of the life of the world.—*Montaigne*.

THE GHOST OF GIBBON QUERIES.

How fares the Truth now?—Ill?  
—Do pens but slyly further her advance?  
May not one speed her but in phrase askance?  
Do scribes aver the Comic to be Reverend still?

Still rule those minds on earth  
At whom sage Milton's wormwood words were hurled:  
"Truth like a bastard comes into the world  
Never without ill-fame to him who gives her birth"?

—*Thomas Hardy*, "Lausanne."

A POET'S PHILOSOPHY.

For what has he whose will sees clear  
To do with doubt and faith and fear,  
Swift hopes and slow despondencies?  
His heart is equal with the sea's  
And with the sea-wind's, and his ear  
Is level to the speech of these,  
And his soul communes and takes cheer  
With the actual earth's equalities,  
Air, light, and night, hills, winds, and streams,  
And seeks not strength from strengthless dreams.

—*A. C. Swinburne*.

NOT PIETY BUT PORK.

The following bit of dialogue, taken from a popular romance, contains more sense than one often finds in works of a more directly instructive character. The speakers, Mrs. Bateson and Mrs. Hankey, are discussing the ways of their husbands.

"They've no sense, men haven't," said Mrs. Hankey, "that's what's the matter with them."

"You never spoke a truer word, Mrs. Hankey," replied Mrs. Bateson. "The very best of them don't properly know the difference between their souls and their stomachs, and they fancy that they are a-wrestling with their doubts when really it is their dinners that are a-wrestling with them. Now take Bateson himself," continued Mrs. Bateson. "A kinder husband or better Methodist never drew breath, yet so sure as he touches a bit of pork, he begins to worry himself about the doctrine of election till there's no living with him."

As a Scotch train was going northwards to Aberdeen, it stopped at a small station called Marykirk. The station-master, who is somewhat of a character, saw a Salvation Army officer with his head out of the window. The Salvationist, being in uniform, was asked what he was; he replied that he was a soldier, and was going to Aberdeen to fight; that the enemy he was going to attack was the Devil, and that he would drive him out of Aberdeen. Just then the train began slowly to move from the station, and the station-master called out in response to the young man's last words, "Keep him north! Keep him north! Don't drive him this way!"

**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.**

STRATFORD TOWN HALL: 7, G. W. Foote, "What do We Know of God?"

**OUTDOOR.**

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.30, W. J. Ramsey.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, C. Cohen.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. A. Davies; Hammersmith, 7.30, F. A. Davies.

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Coffee House, Bull Ring): Thursday, September 15, at 8, J. C. Whitwell, "London."

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Coffee Tavern, Fleet-street): 7.30, A. G. Lye, "The Secularist Movement in Great Britain."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): H. Percy Ward, 12 noon, "Has Man a Free Will?" 6.30, "Theism Confuted and Atheism Vindicated."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): W. H. Thresh, 3, "Freed from the Fetters of Faith"; 7, "What Are We to Believe?" Monday, 8, Rationalist Debating Society: T. E. Rhodes, "International Arbitration."

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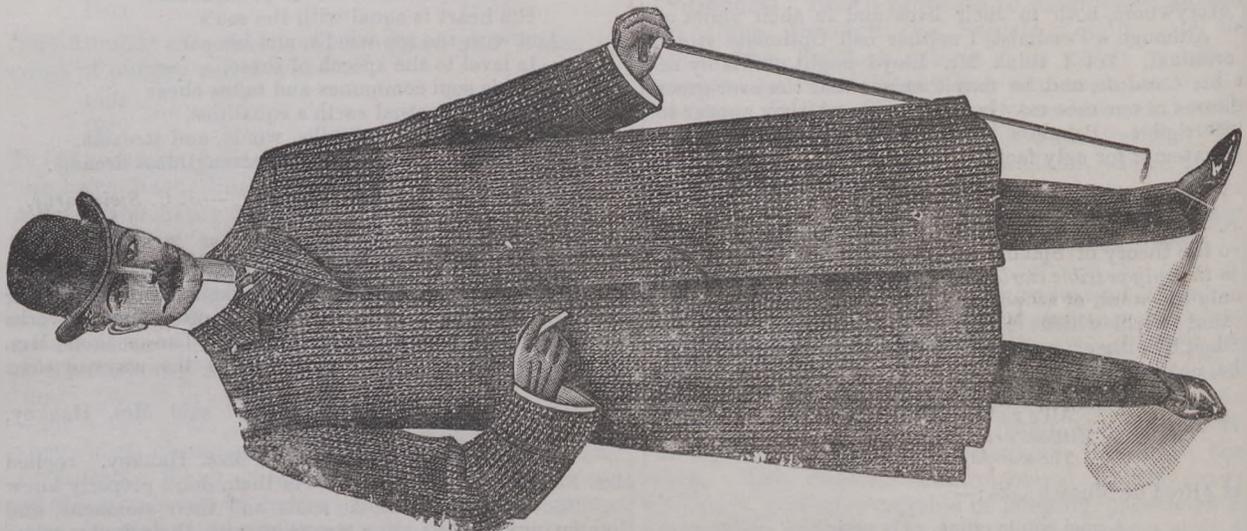
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