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## Some Defenders of the Faith.—VI.

## A UNITARIAN COUNTERBLAST.

MR. H. R. ALLENSON, publisher, of 2 Ivy-lane, Paternoster-row, London, E.C., has favored us with a copy of "an entirely new work." This "entirely new work" is further announced as "never before published." We were prepared, therefore, to find something *very* original; but we regret to say that it has not realised our expectations. Its title is *Anti-Nunquam*, it is a reply to Mr. Blatchford, and its price is sixpence. Its author is Mr. J. Warschauer, M.A. of Oxford and Doctor of Philosophy of Jena. These learned titles will probably make a profound impression on some readers. They make no impression whatever upon us. A man's capacity for getting up subjects, and passing examinations, is no criterion of his active powers of reasoning. We have read the writings of some very learned asses in our time; not as a matter of pleasure, of course, but in the sad way of duty. We could not say that much learning had made them mad, for they were not lively enough to go insane; all it did was to make them stupid, or rather to fortify their natural stupidity with the most ponderous self-conceit.

Mr. Warschauer, we believe, is a Unitarian. His book opens with a "prefatory note" by Professor J. Estlin Carpenter, who was one of his "old tutors" at Manchester College, Oxford. Professor Carpenter is well-known to us already. He has learning, intellect, candor, and courtesy. What he says is always worthy of consideration. We shall therefore spend a few minutes over his Introduction.

Professor Carpenter says that the disputants on "the great themes of religion" should possess "dignity of temper, and sufficiency of knowledge, and soundness of judgment." He does not tell us, however, that his pupil possesses either of these qualifications. We gather, indeed, from the final paragraph that he has not even read Mr. Warschauer's volume. Be that as it may, we are not disposed to quarrel with the three conditions laid down by Professor Carpenter. The second and third are beyond question. The first is open to different interpretations. What is dignity to one man may be dullness to another. It is even possible to defend dignity in a very undignified manner. Mr. Warschauer seems to us to be extremely prone to this failing.

The next statement of Professor Carpenter's is that "the reasonings of half a century ago, whether for attack or defence, are no longer valid." We believe this is far too sweeping. Is the Higher Criticism anything more than a line of skilful retreat? Is it not a temporary means of checking the advance of hostile forces that had delivered a long, fierce, and overwhelming frontal attack? And was not the principal part of the Higher Criticism derived from the "traffics and discoveries" of Freethinkers, from Spinoza to Strauss, and from Voltaire and Paine to Ingersoll and Bradlaugh? As far as "the man in the street" is concerned, the frontal attack against the Bible is still necessary, and still efficacious. Professor Carpenter may not be aware of the fact that Paine's *Age of Reason* circulates in thousands of copies every year, and that Ingersoll's lectures and essays continue to find a wide public. It follows, then, that the reasonings of half a century ago are not played out yet. This was admitted by the Archdeacon of Canterbury at the recent Church Congress. He said that the views assailed by Mr. Blatchford prevailed to-day amongst the majority of the Christian congregations of England. But as far as scholars and highly-educated people are concerned, it may be allowed that Professor Carpenter is right. The ground of controversy has shifted for them. They cannot discuss the Bible any longer "on the older basis of its infallibility and verbal inspiration." Professor Carpenter well says that—

"The discovery of the method of the compilation of many of its books out of previous documents, and the no less important discovery of the slow processes by which its several collections were gradually formed into

the Old and New Testaments of our Canon, have completely destroyed the claims that were sometimes so unwisely raised around it. The older conception of revelation, as a divine communication of particular facts, as well as of special moral and religious truths, has disappeared in the wider studies of science, philosophy, and history; and its place is taken by the idea of education, which is as old as the Apostle Paul, and harmonises with the modern views of evolution. In this vast process, which cannot be limited to any one special national development, the Bible occupies no place apart."

This last sentence is worth repeating. *The Bible occupies no place apart.* That is the conclusion of modern scientific criticism. Yet all the Churches refuse to recognise it. Whatever they may admit theoretically, and on special occasions, their settled policy is to keep the Bible, and the Bible only, as the Word of God. Not only in the Sunday-schools, but also in the day-schools of England, the Bible is thus upheld. And as far as the rising generation is concerned the Higher Criticism is simply a dead letter. "The student," as Professor Carpenter says, "finds again that his idea of revelation must be widened; he cannot seclude one literature in a sacred enclosure, and declare all the rest profane. He must frankly treat all by the same methods, apply to all the same tests, and judge all on the same principles." Yes, this is the attitude of the student; but it is not yet the attitude of the general public; and this fact is the justification of those who carry on a destructive criticism which reclude scholars like Professor Carpenter regard as no longer necessary.

Professor Carpenter's last word about Christianity's "Book of God" is this. "The Bible," he says, "no longer *commands* our faith; but it aids and sustains it by the testimonies of some of the most exalted spirits of our race." But what is the meaning of "our faith"? Professor Carpenter appears to mean Theism. The Bible, therefore, is no longer the sovereign voice of unchallengeable inspiration; it does not command, it merely assists; it is simply an aid to Theistic religion. Far be it from us to dispute this conclusion. What we wish to say is this: that the Bible as a book of authoritative religion, and the Bible as a more or less effective aid to piety, are two totally different volumes. The first position is of transcendent importance; the second is not worth attack or defence.

## II.

Let us now turn from the master to the pupil. Mr. Warschauer pays Mr. Blatchford a compliment as the wielder of a homely yet vigorous style, and in this sense as "a powerful and attractive writer." That compliment is on the first page. On every other page he treats Mr. Blatchford as a mixture in which he is at a loss to say whether the rogue or the fool predominates. Mr. Warschauer is not quite as nakedly ill-conditioned as Mr. Spurr. The orthodox critic is brutally insolent. The Unitarian critic is superciliously insolent. He talks to Mr. Blatchford as an irate pedagogue might talk to a fractious schoolboy. Somehow or other, they *all* do it—these Christians who answer "infidels." Their bad manners are proverbial, and it is high time that the "cheek" were taken out of them. This is what we aim at doing for Mr. Warschauer. He has lately referred to the *Freethinker* as "very low," and he may think it "awfully low" before we have done with him. In other words, he will not be grateful. But it is not in mortals to command his gratitude; we may do more—we may deserve it.

Mr. Warschauer declares that the only reason for answering Mr. Blatchford is that he has a great many readers. This is what his critics all say, and it is a most shameful declaration. They would not be troubled by his scholarship, or his power of argument; the only thing that troubles them is his wide circulation.

The Unitarian critic's opinion of Mr. Blatchford need not occupy our attention. We prefer to deal with the substance of his reply.

Certain "sins of unbelief" are paraded by Mr.

Warschauer in his opening chapter. One is "irreverence." This is "the especial sin of unbelief." "One always asks oneself, with a kind of marvelling despair," Mr. Warschauer says, "Why does the popular variety of agnosticism deprive a certain type of mind of the elementary sense of decency?" He cannot abide "jests" and "paltry witticisms." He likes everything to be as grave as possible. He wishes to dictate how his own opinions shall be discussed. Which is one of the finest pieces of impudence it is possible to imagine.

This talk about the *gravity* with which religion should be discussed is becoming quite nauseous. Christians have a right to their own style, and the same right belongs to Freethinkers. Advice from one side to the other is ridiculous. And it can never be sincere. The enemy's most effective weapon is naturally the one that is most objected to. This is why Freethinkers are always asked to be solemn. They are begged to write in the style described by Crabbe:—

No idle wit, no trifling verse can lurk  
In the deep bosom of that weighty work;  
No playful thoughts degrade the solemn style,  
Nor one light sentence claims a transient smile.

Admirable gravity! But what is the result?

Hence in these times untouched the pages lie  
And slumber out their immortality.

But we do not want to slumber—with the pen in our hand. We do not want our readers to slumber either.

Another "sin of unbelief" is "slipshod thinking and writing." Christians, of course, are never guilty of *this* sin. It is only committed by "infidels." Yet the instances given by Mr. Warschauer are not striking. The first is that Mr. Blatchford says on one page that he does not believe that David ever existed, and on another page that "it is now acknowledged that David wrote few, if any, of the Psalms." The second is that Mr. Blatchford ascribes "the Epistle to the Hebrews" to Paul, when "every schoolboy knows" (a very large order!) that Paul had nothing to do with its composition.

Could any criticism be more absurd? In the first statement about David, Mr. Blatchford gives his own opinion; in the second statement, he gives the opinion of others. Why are these bound to agree? In referring casually to Hebrews—not arguing the question of its authorship—Mr. Blatchford takes the ordinary Christian belief as to who wrote it. The heading in the Authorised Version is "The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews." Of course Paul did not write it. But then what *did* Paul write? Surely a difficult problem like this cannot be broached every time a Freethinker refers a Christian to Hebrews.

Probably my readers will, by this time, have their own opinion as to who is guilty of "slipshod thinking and writing."

### III.

Mr. Warschauer devotes a chapter to the Bible. He starts by saying that Mr. Blatchford combats "a position which no Christian scholar of the present day holds." Very likely; but it is nothing to the point. Mr. Blatchford does not write for Christian scholars, nor for scholars at all. He writes for the general public. And they *do* believe what he attacks. At least they profess to—which is *his* justification.

Mr. Blatchford says, as hundreds of Freethinkers said before him, that "We should expect God to reveal truths of which mankind were ignorant." Mr. Warschauer replies:—

"Certainly: and one needs to be hopelessly biassed in order not to see that in just that respect the Bible proves itself unmistakably to be a revelation of God—the greatest of all agents for the enlightenment and civilisation of the race, itself the record of the growth of light, law and love."

This impudent dogmatism is supposed to be reasoning. The reply it invites is that the writer must be "hopelessly biassed" to believe anything of the sort.

Mr. Blatchford also says that "We should expect God to make no errors of fact in his revelation."

Further, that it should "reach all men directly and quickly," and that its statement of the relations existing between God and man "should be true." Mr. Warschauer parries these thrusts by arguing that there could not be a *perfect* revelation, that revelation must be *gradual*. This is because of man's weakness. Yes, but what about God's omnipotence? It is Mr. Warschauer that seeks to limit the power of the Almighty. It is he who declares what God could and could not do in given circumstances.

The only point at which Mr. Warschauer really joins issue with Mr. Blatchford relates to the question of inspiration. He denies that, because the Bible is not literally inspired, it is not inspired at all. But he does not attempt to define "inspiration" in the new light. The old theory of inspiration was plain enough—"God said it." But if God did *not* say it, where does the inspiration come in? Merely saying that it is there is not sufficient. We are entitled to know how to recognise it. But we get no help in this respect from Mr. Warschauer. He thinks it is enough to show that Mr. Blatchford has something to learn about Ezra, or to quote a tribute to the Bible from Heine. But all this is very wide of the mark. The question remains, What do you mean by "inspiration"? Mr. Warschauer does not attempt to answer it. He simply goes on repeating that the Bible is inspired.

Mr. Warschauer's idea of argument is to revel in extravagant assertions. He declares that when criticism has done its best and worst, the Bible "emerges from the test as incomparably the greatest literature of the world." Well, we recall what Mr. John Morley said about prophets. The way to answer a prophet is to prophesy the opposite. Similarly, the way to answer Mr. Warschauer's assertion is to assert the contrary. The Bible is *not* incomparably the greatest literature of the world. Christians assert that it *is* simply because they have been trained to believe so. The Mohammedans speak in the same way of the Koran. Christians say that the Koran is immensely overrated, and Freethinkers say the same of the Bible.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

## Infidelity at the Church Congress.

AMONG the subjects discussed at the Church Congress held at Liverpool were those of "Infidelity" and the "Decline in Church Attendance." Both are subjects that might be fairly expected to interest an audience largely composed of clergymen, and, indeed, judging from the report, there does appear to have been more animation in their consideration than in others that came before the meeting. The discussion was made the more interesting by the part played in it by two laymen, Mr. G. F. G. Masterman and Mr. G. K. Chesterton, the latter of whom was as usual painfully paradoxical where no legitimate room for paradox existed.

The decline in Church attendance and the growth of "infidelity" are obviously two aspects of the one subject, although the Congress saw fit to take them separately. All of those who believe in Christianity may not, at any time, attend Church or Chapel, but it is certain that any falling off in Church attendance points to a decrease in the number of actual believers. One can agree with the Rev. A. R. Buckland that destructive criticism is not limited in its influence to the drawing room, but filters through all classes of society. No one can limit the influence of criticism once it is set going, and no one can place any limitations to the diffusion of knowledge once it exists for dispersion. The dull witted and the conventional will continue their attendance at church and chapel in the absence of any very lively belief, but in a growing number of cases the absurdity of the proceeding is realised and

acted on. Custom and law combine to prohibit laughing and discussion in church, so that there is no alternative to staying away.

The Rev. John Wakeford, who introduced the discussion on "Infidelity," commenced with the customary clerical ascription of unbelief to moral laxity. "The increased luxury and wantonness of life amongst the richer—I do not say the higher—classes, makes a miasma which is fatal to true morality and spiritual character." One gets nearly tired of pointing out how ridiculous it is to associate looseness or luxuriousness of living with unbelief. It is a statement that is repeatedly met with in one form or another, and yet one that is without the slightest evidence or proof. Mistaken the unbeliever may be, but a very little study would show that the ranks of unbelief have always included an abnormal proportion of men and women filled with lofty ambitions and unselfish aims. And historically the evidence is quite conclusive. The Rev. John Wakeford might have reflected that in Old Rome it was during the period of decline that religion ran riot and Christianity came to power. While Rome remained strong, religious beliefs were subordinated to social and domestic virtues. And even in decline the sceptical element was strongest among those who were striving to restore to the nation its pristine vigor. A readiness to face social ostracism, to proclaim an unpopular opinion, to think with whatever power one possesses on accepted beliefs, are certainly not the accompaniments of either luxurious habits or loose living. What these breed is not unbelief, but indifference, sluggishness, and both are ultimately more favorable to religion than the reverse. Mr. Wakeford's cry is but a bugbear to frighten the timid off further inquiry.

Mr. Wakeford also remarks, in dealing with the National Secular Society, that "anyone who knows his fellow-men is in no danger of deifying humanity; and anyone who tries to serve his fellow-men will find a religious foundation is necessary for moral progress." In some quite obscure manner this is meant for a criticism of Secularism. But Secularism never suggested any deification of humanity—although if one *has* to worship something there is decidedly more commonsense in worshiping that humanity from which we derive our whole being, physical, moral, and mental, than in worshiping such an utterly unintelligible and impotent abstraction as the modern Christian God. All that Secularism claims is that there is an adequate human basis for all our actions and feelings, and that properly cultivated this also supplies us with an adequate incentive for right action.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton's contribution to the discussion was not of a very helpful or illuminating description, although it seems to have given rise to much laughter and applause. His speech was almost wholly concerned with Mr. Blatchford's *Clarion* articles, and showed a surprising obliviousness of the fact that these articles were symptomatic rather than causal. The real significance of the *Clarion* crusade is that the N. S. S. has done its work so thoroughly that it is possible for writers and speakers in the social and political world to ventilate their Freethought without sacrificing their positions. Less than a hundred years ago the avowal of Atheistic opinions seriously crippled a man of such world-wide fame as Robert Owen. That a paper like the *Clarion*, and a writer like Mr. Blatchford, can retain their position, and even improve it, *after* an avowal of unbelief, is certainly some measure of the success of popular Freethought propaganda during the past sixty or seventy years.

Mr. Wakeford indicated one of the conditions of the success of the *Clarion* crusade in calling it "an irregular and separate incident." In an avowedly Freethought paper Christians expected to get heresy, and from avowedly Freethought speakers they expected to hear it. But here was a *Socialist* paper, subscribed to by many Christians, and which, it was thought, confined itself to social and economic heresies. For this paper to fill its columns, week

after week, with attacks on Christianity, was more than surprising—it was staggering! And just as the clergy were congratulating themselves on being in a fair way towards capturing the Socialistic movement in England! It was heartrending! Especially after being assured so often that Secularism had lost its influence, was quite dead, etc., etc.!

Mr. Chesterton said that Mr. Blatchford, "while reviving the whole of the exploded trumpery and nonsense which Bradlaugh and others used to talk, had not revived its coarse blasphemy." One need not, of course, be particular about the truth in addressing a religious meeting—at least, where Freethinkers are concerned—but it would certainly have reflected greater credit on Mr. Chesterton had such a reflection on Bradlaugh been left unsaid, or some proof given to justify the saying. What was Mr. Bradlaugh's "coarse blasphemy"? Blasphemy, from a Christian standpoint, Bradlaugh undoubtedly uttered, but why call it coarse? Probably Mr. Chesterton meant that it was intelligible, only "coarse" sounded better at a Church Congress. Besides, as Mr. Chesterton went on to say that Bradlaugh had always seemed to him "one of the best religious men that had lived in this country," the point seems rather flat. Bradlaugh was "coarse," but most "religious," and both at once! Which shows the danger of a Church Congress trusting a man whose greatest claim to ability lies in a straining after paradox.

Mr. Chesterton, in common with other religious apologists, also imagines that when he labels an argument as an old one, or says it has been used before, that he has disposed of it. Nothing could be further from the truth. Of course, all that can be said against fundamental religious ideas is old; but this does not prove the arguments to be worthless. It is far more likely to be a testimony to their value. What has shaken people's faith years ago is likely to shake other people's faith to-day. All that is needed is a change in the form of the attack to bring it into line with more recent knowledge and developments. But the attack necessarily remains substantially unaltered so long as it has to combat substantially the same ideas and beliefs.

The phenomenon fronting the religious world in relation to "Infidelity" is this. Thousands of people have given up, and many thousands more are outgrowing, religious beliefs. And this is transpiring in spite of the existence of numerous churches and chapels, and of the existence of thousands of professional preachers and apologists. The number of avowed unbelievers is comparatively small; their social influence and wealth is nothing compared to that of religionists; and yet the growth is all on one side. Relatively to the growth of population, the religious world becomes smaller year by year. What is the significance of such a phenomenon? Some answer ought to be found, and is to be found, if people will only look long enough and deep enough. To me it seems simple enough. A great deal of the growth of unbelief is, as I have said, due to actual propaganda. But propaganda is both a cause and an effect. It is a cause in so far as it forces upon people's attention certain aspects of religion that might otherwise pass unnoticed. But it is an effect in so far as it embodies the fact that the religious theory no longer harmonises with our modern social and intellectual environment. The success of a propaganda must always be dependent upon how far it puts into actual words what a number of people are dumbly feeling; and that Freethought writing and speaking finds so ready a hearing and so general an acceptance is a strong proof that it is in the line of tendency, and so far represents an adjustment to the intellectual and social environment superior to that of religion.

This seems to me the real significance of the phenomenon of unbelief. And the work of the religious world is to overcome the thousand and one insidious influences of modern civilisation that so steadily undermine and discredit all forms of super-

naturalism. This is the whole of the task before the religionist, and it is one not likely to be consummated by a paradox.

C. COHEN.

### Significant Admissions.

It would be excessively foolish to deny that there are still many people who sincerely believe in the Christian Religion. Nothing would be gained by ignoring such a fact. But it is equally undeniable that the number of believers is steadily decreasing. Why is there such an alarming falling off in church-attendance all over Christendom? One session of the recent Church Congress was devoted to a serious discussion of the reasons which prevent such vast multitudes from joining in the worship of the sanctuary. Various reasons were mentioned by the speakers; but there was the utmost unanimity as to the fact that churches generally are being deserted. Some laid the materialism and infidelity of the age, some laid the responsibility upon the shoulders of the preachers who were said to have lost the art of attracting congregations, while others complained of the undue length and the archaic character of the services; but all sorrowfully admitted that the masses of the people are no longer to be seen at the house of God. The fact is that the Gospel, as such, has ceased to draw. Born orators will always have their overflowing crowds; but it is the magnetism of their personality and the charm of their eloquence that bring and hold their hearers, and not the message they deliver. A popular preacher may say: "See, the gospel is still the power of God." But the gospel is preached with equal fidelity in thousands of other churches all through the land, and it exercises no drawing power whatever. This is a feature of the situation well worth considering. One or two speakers at the Church Congress referred to it, but did not, of course, point out its real significance.

The true reason, however, why church-attendance is falling off is that the people are gradually losing their faith in religion. We are sometimes told that there are thousands of genuine Christians outside all the Churches; but that statement comes from within the Churches themselves, and is made by those who labor under the delusion that every good man must of necessity be a Christian. It may be true that all believers do not attend church; but it is also true that all who go to church are not believers. The natural inference is, however, that non-church-goers are unbelievers. If they believe, their belief is absolutely impotent. There are those who will say, when asked, that they *think* they believe in God, and Christ, and a future life; but they never go to church, they never pray, they never think of the objects of their faith. They send their children to the Sunday-school and to the services, but never talk to them about religion. In reality, such people should be classed with unbelievers; and it is almost a certainty that their children, when grown up, will be known as sceptics. Fervent believers will always identify themselves with the Church, while unbelievers, fervent or otherwise, will stay outside. It follows, therefore, that to admit the fact of the enormous decline of church attendance is equivalent to admitting the rapid spread of Secularism.

Christian apologists are hopelessly inconsistent. When arguing with their opponents they are triumphantly optimistic, but while conferring with their friends they assume a different tone. In his reply to Mr. Blatchford, Mr. Frank Ballard contended that Christianity is, at present, "at all events larger in quantity and better in quality than ever before, and has a brighter promise than in any previous period of its history"; but when interviewed by Mr. Raymond Blathway this is what he said: "The outlook is a serious one; I am not a pessimist, although too many of my colleagues regard me as such. I am only sensitive to the danger of the day. What they call pessimism I call open-eyed honesty.

We are entering on a very grave and probably prolonged struggle, as Dr. Flint has recently stated. The modern atmosphere is in general tending away from rather than toward all that is distinctive of Christianity." That is to say, as a controversialist Mr. Ballard makes an assertion which, as an honest man, he is bound two months later to flatly contradict. Everybody knows that the admissions he made in the interview are entirely true. The same admissions were made at the Church Congress. "Aggressive Infidelity" was spoken of as a rapidly growing evil, and as an antagonist that must be reckoned with. And yet, in spite of such admissions, made at Christian Conferences and through the press, there are those among us who still maintain that the Christian outlook is in the highest degree encouraging, that the forces of scepticism are losing ground, and that science is at last becoming profoundly religious. We were assured of all this in the *Christian Commonwealth* for October 13. In the leading article we read thus:—

"The devout spirit of Cuvier, Leibnitz, Linnæus, Sir Isaac Newton, Pascal, Agassiz, Owen, Faraday, and Humboldt has triumphed over the scientific Agnosticism of Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, Draper, and Nansen. Modern science seemed to turn its back towards heaven, but in its early morning it lifted its face Godward, and was baptised in celestial dew."

That is worse than nonsense, in that it is wholly untrue. When did science "lift its face Godward and was baptised in celestial dew"? Let us have all the particulars concerning so momentous an event. Who witnessed the august performance? The writer continues:—

"The reverence of Sir Oliver Lodge and Lord Kelvin is not an innovation, but a reversion to the original attitude of scientific thinkers—a fact which seems to be largely overlooked. The alliance between science and faith had weakened, but is rapidly strengthening again, and our great philosophers are turning anew from gross materialism to the intent consideration of the unseen and the spiritual."

As one swallow does not make a summer, so Sir Oliver Lodge and Lord Kelvin do not impart a deeply religious tone to the science of the day. We hold those two great men in highest esteem; but their religious views are shared by very few of their fellow scientists. This is a fact that cannot be gainsaid. They fully admit it themselves. Does not the editor of the *Christian Commonwealth* remember the report of an interview with Dr. Russel Wallace which appeared in his journal not many months ago, in which that brilliant thinker contended that present-day science is not more, but much less sympathetic towards religion than the science of forty and fifty years ago? Has he forgotten that Dr. Wallace expressed his own inability to subscribe to any existing creed, or even to believe in a personal God? And Sir Oliver Lodge himself believes neither in the Virgin Birth nor in the resurrection of Christ, and scarcely on any other doctrine is he in harmony with the teaching of the Church. His religious views are vague and uncertain, and he writes and talks about them in the most ambiguous language.

The *Christian Commonwealth's* loyalty to Sir Oliver Lodge is simply amazing:—

"Sir Oliver Lodge, by his sympathy with the spiritual element in the system of human knowledge, is commanding wider attention than any master of physical science since Faraday in Britain and Pascal in France."

As a scientist, Sir Oliver Lodge is in the first rank; but not because of his "sympathy with the spiritual element in the system of human knowledge," but rather in spite of it. As a scientist, he has nothing to do with theology and the Church. It was as a philosopher that he delivered a religious lecture at Liverpool under the auspices of the Christian Conference; and it is in the same capacity that he is so affectionately and gratefully welcomed by Christian apologists everywhere. It is as a philosopher that he contributes essays on theology to the *Hibbert Journal* and other magazines, and engages in controversy with prelates of the Church. But surely, even as a philosopher, as a dabbler in

divinity, he has never furnished justification for the following description of him in the *Christian Commonwealth* :—

"The great scientist, like a little child, falls back on the central thought of the Lord's Prayer, 'How does Christ ask God to forgive sins? As we forgive others.' Out of the intricate labyrinth of theological polemics the colossal thinker thus comes to rest heart and intellect alike in that simplicity of Christ where myriads, high and low, have found the only refuge."

Now, we have before us the two admissions, namely, that Church attendance is seriously falling off, and that a spirit of scepticism is leading the world into captivity, in conjunction with the claim that "the best and strongest tendencies of our times" are decidedly religious. But, unfortunately, the claim contradicts the admissions, and the admissions give the lie to the claim. If the scientific spirit is deeply religious, so of necessity is the spirit of the world; but if the spirit of the world is essentially religious, how can you account for the enormous falling-off in church attendance, and the fearful prevalence of infidelity? The fact is that the two admissions are perfectly true, while the claim made for science is false. As Mr. Ballard says, the prevailing tendency in science, in art, in literature, and in society at large, is away from all that is distinctive of Christianity, and towards all that is distinctive of Naturalism or Secularism. Even among ignorant and naturally superstitious people such a tendency is perceptible. The other day a woman lost her husband. She watched and nursed him, with beautiful tenderness, during many weary months of ebbing strength. She stood beside him wistfully gazing on his dear face as he breathed his last; and this is the cry that escaped her: "They speak of a spirit or soul, but where is it? The breathing has ceased, and that is the end of my poor husband." "Mother," said one, "do you really believe that?" "Yes," she answered, "and I have never believed anything else, though this is the first time I have ever expressed it." She would allow no clergyman to approach him during his illness, and she was annoyed and irritated whenever anybody attempted to comfort her by speaking of God and heaven and the happiness of ascended saints. Well, such an attitude of quiet Atheism is marvellously common. Even the late Dr. Parker said that after his wife's decease he was a raving Atheist for several days. Yes, Atheism is silently but surely spreading throughout Christendom, and not seldom you may find it nestling beneath the shadow of the altar.

Science is essentially atheistical. It deals with phenomena in which there is no sign of a God. It traces developments which know nothing of a deity. A scientist may be a believer; but it was not science that gave him his belief. The theologian says "God is visible in his works"; but the scientist replies, "Where? Show him to me and I will believe in him." The fact is that to see God in Nature you must first artificially insert him there, and, after all, what you see is only a reflection of yourself. Etymologically, an Atheist is a person who is without God; not a formal denier of God, but one whose whole existence is *minus* the God-consciousness. Atheism denotes the position or state of a man who is without God, or the creed according to which human life is conducted without any reference to any supernatural being or beings. But we will not quarrel about words. Some prefer to be known as Agnostics; but the difference between the two words is one of sound, not of meaning. To be without knowledge of God is precisely the same thing as to be without God. Atheism is not one whit more dogmatic than Agnosticism. If a man declares that it is impossible to know whether there is a God or not, wherein does he differ from the man who proclaims that he is without God? Personally, I prefer the older term, although, in reality, I do not like any label at all. I am an Atheist, but I mean the same thing as the man who calls himself an Agnostic. The mistake which many

people make is to regard Atheism as a purely negative creed. As a matter of fact, it is the most positive creed in existence—a creed that makes for highest and noblest manhood.

Well, such is the creed towards which, according to the admission of the Church itself, the world is steadily drifting. In a second article I shall endeavor to show that it is a creed pre-eminently worth cherishing.

JOHN T. LLOYD.

## Acid Drops.

Rev. R. J. Campbell's case came before a meeting of the London Trades Council. Mr. A. E. Tucker had a fussy sort of resolution on the agenda. It was also illogical, for it proposed to invite the reverend gentleman to discuss the matter, and also demanded "a withdrawal and apology." Mr. White (Pianoforte Makers) moved an amendment to the effect that what Mr. Campbell wrote about the working man did not matter. This was carried. And the storm in a teapot ended. Yes, a little satire is better than a lot of pompous rhetoric on such occasions.

According to the *Aberdeen Evening Express*, the Rev. Murdo Macqueen, Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, has been thanking God for the death of Lord Shand. Speaking in connection with the Sacramental services at Uig, Skye, and in Gaelic, the chief of the "Wee Kirkers," who have just got hold of all the Church property as against the "Free Kirkers," delivered himself thusly: "Be thankful, friends, for the death of Lord Shand. If it had not been that God had taken him away, the decision would have gone against us, and we should have lost everything. But God, in his Providence, removed him ere he succeeded in giving forth the infamous decision. Be thankful, friends, for his death. Again, friends, I ask you to pray for the Lord-Chancellor, that the Lord would bless him."

Our Aberdeen contemporary has a leaderette on Moderator Macqueen's utterance. It evidently thinks he is a bad man and a bad theologian. But he simply speaks in the tone and temper of the "swagger" Psalms. And, after all, if there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow, there can hardly be an utter absence of it in the death of a man. The doctrine of "Providence" does not leave room for exceptions. Nothing is providential, or everything is providential. There is really no middle course. According to the Bible in general, and Jesus Christ in particular, everything is providential—including the very number of the hairs on our heads. Now if this doctrine be true, the death of Lord Shand *must* have been due to an act of Providence. Moderator Macqueen, therefore, is not a bad theologian, but a good one. He is logical and straightforward. That is all.

Lady Florence Dixie contributed her share to the *Daily Telegraph* discussion on "Do We Believe?" "There is only one true God," she wrote, "and that God is Nature. Why, then, teach and enforce a lie stating the contrary? Those who, like myself, will not surrender their thought into the hands of others, do not believe the falsehoods of superstition. Only those who rest on faith do. The remainder are humbugs, who, for pelf or convenience, preach or accept a religious curriculum which they know to be a fraud." This is pretty plain speaking. Had it appeared editorially in the *Freethinker* it would have been regarded as "very low." But it is really neither low nor high, but just the simple truth.

"Can We Disbelieve?" is the title of a leading article in the *Church Times* on the *Daily Telegraph* correspondence. The *C. T.* gets quite jubilant in the course of three columns. "Let the truth of Christianity be assailed," it cries, "as it has been in the *Daily Telegraph*.....What is the result? The vaunted arguments prove to be time-worn fallacies, produced and refuted years ago; the scientist gives evidence which only damages the Materialist's case; and our timorous Christian looks closely at the spectre he has dreaded so long, to find it no spectre at all, but a mere turnip with a tallow dip inside it."

This is no doubt very brave writing, and comforting to Christians. But the truth is that in a discussion like that now running through the *D. T.*, the letters are very carefully selected, and the serious attacks on Christianity excluded. We have noticed, for instance, one letter from "An Agnostic," who says he still prays to God to once more convince him of the truth of religion; another from

"Freethinker," who writes that he would be only too happy to believe in Christianity if he could; with many others of a similar kind. We will not do the *Church Times* the injustice of supposing it not to know that attacks on Christianity, of the kind printed in the *Telegraph*, hardly represent the Freethought side of the case. If either the *Telegraph* or the *Church Times* really desire a statement of the Freethought case from those who can speak with some degree of authority, they have only to ask. We have no doubt we could provide them with all—and more—than they wish for in this direction.

The *Church Times* also makes the remarkable discovery that "Not a hundredth part of it (unbelief) is due to 'doubts and difficulties; its root is the love of self,' and goes on to point out that people hate Christianity because it is a check upon their baser passions. On this, all that one need say is, first, that no religion or no philosophy could engender a deeper selfishness than does Christianity. A religion that can see nothing in human nature adequate to secure the performance of normal human virtues, and which, through its teachers, insists that there is no reason for decency apart from supernatural rewards and punishments, is the last that should charge others with inculcating love of self. And, secondly, we should much like to know when and where Christianity has ever prevented men indulging their pet passions? Whether the predominant passion happened to be the love of gold, the hatred of heretics, the thirst for more territory, or a military mania, no Christian, that we know of, has ever found his religion in the way. On the contrary, he has usually succeeded in cloaking his greed with religious phrases, and raising his passions to the dignity of principles. We have never heard of Rockefeller's Christianity, for instance, preventing his selling oil at a flash point that is responsible for the sacrifice of numerous lives, nor have landowners or employers in this country found their religion any obstacle to their squeezing the last shilling out of their tenants and workpeople. The real truth is that Christianity is never any more than a social barometer. At best it indicates the social condition prevailing, and at worst it aggravates its worst features.

Finally, the *Church Times* discovers that "Darwinism, in the proper sense of the word, has no longer one supporter of note; even the laws of the conservation of energy and the indestructibility of matter have proved unsafe." For the pretentious ignorance one may safely be commended to a religious paper. What we should like to know is the scientist of note who does not believe in the essential principles of Darwinism. To question whether Natural Selection alone can explain all the phenomena of the development of species is surely a different thing to throwing it overboard altogether. Even a religious writer might be expected to see this. And we expect that the writer of the article is under the impression that recent physical researches and discoveries have destroyed the principle of the conservation of energy. This, again, shows how terribly ignorant of the facts of the case our religious contemporary is. The principle of the conservation of energy is quite unaffected either by radium or by the electric theory of matter. Indeed, the latter theory is not intelligible without it. We would advise the *Church Times* to stick to discussions on church millinery and altar lights. The peculiar abilities of its staff are much better adapted to these subjects than the discussion of scientific questions.

What are some of the "influential" East-end Jews frightened about? Or is their alarm an invention of the editor of the "Religious World" column in the *Daily News*? According to a paragraph in that column a Jewish committee has been formed to oppose the Christian missionaries, who are becoming too successful. Indeed! One has heard of the success of these Christian missionaries for any number of years. They have plenty of success, but very few converts. They are chiefly successful in spending money.

Stepney Borough Council has considered a protest from the Rev. J. St. John Corbett, rector of St. George's-in-the-East, against the opening of the St. George's Baths on a recent Sunday. It appears that the Baths were opened in order to let the Jews clean up for the Day of Atonement, and the Bath attendants volunteered to accommodate their Jewish fellow-citizens. The Council sent Parson Corbett a civil reply, but gave his Sabbatarianism no encouragement. He will have to appeal to "the one above."

A man at Ramsgate has had to be put under restraint. He went about distributing money amongst the inhabitants whom he encountered in the streets. The only condition made was that they should be Christians. He found that persuasion in an overwhelming majority. Of course. It is the centre of Mr. Harry Marks's constituency.

A recent number of the *Sunday Circle* tells a romantic story of "a casual visitor"—nameless, of course—who talked with "an old Christian lady" in a cottage among some "lonely Welsh hills." Being asked if she did not find it very lonesome there, she replied: "Oh, no! I read my Bible, and every night I place a seat for Jesus on that side of the fire and talk to him, and some nights I draw my chair close up to that of Jesus, and we are very happy together." Had the old lady been a young one it would have been more intelligible.

"God has permitted us to repulse the enemy. Praise to God." Thus exclaimed General Stössel after driving back another Japanese assault on Fort Arthur. When the fortress falls we suppose that will also be by the permission of God.

There never was any real goodness in the world outside Christianity. We all know that. Yet we are always hearing reports to the contrary; and it looks as though there were something wrong somewhere. A Russian correspondent, for instance, writing on the horrible state of things in Manchuria, where the country has been devastated by the opposing armies of Russia and Japan, gives first an awful description of what he saw there.

"I saw the most harrowing sights. For a mile along the road there were hungry, almost naked Chinese women, mostly carrying babies, all starved, filthy, hideous, and clamorous for food. The crying of the wizened children rang in our ears for days afterwards."

Yet in the midst of such awful scenes human goodness shone out victoriously. In one ruined village, from which all but the cripples and old people had fled, some ancient wrecks threw themselves at the soldiers' feet and whined for food. And this is what happened:—

"A crust dropped by one soldier was seized by a living skeleton. We expected to see him bolting it voraciously, but, to our astonishment and shame, the old man broke it into three tiny portions, and handed two to fellow-sufferers."

That "living skeleton" was only a "heathen Chinese." Yet his noble act—and how noble it was in such extremity!—astonished and even shamed the Christians who witnessed it.

Mrs. Craigie ("John Oliver Hobbes") has been denouncing the neurotic novels which so many women read nowadays, and which, if we may be allowed to say so, reduce human life pretty much to the level of canine sniffings in the public streets. It would be far better, Mrs. Craigie thinks, if English girls read Fielding, who is, at any rate, always healthy; and then, as George Eliot said, though Mrs. Craigie does not, he writes such "lusty English." Not only *Amelia*, but even *Tom Jones*, would be a vast improvement on a lot of the stuff that is now in great demand at the circulating libraries. So thinks Mrs. Craigie, and the *Daily News* gives her a column in the shape of an interview. But it is very particular to dissociate itself from her advice. It would never do for the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience—that most delicate (some would say sickly) thing—to recommend Fielding. The Rev. Silvester Horne, of Whitefield's Tabernacle, goes one better. "Zola talk—absurd!" he says. But the reforming lady novelist gives him a stinging back-lander. "As to the Rev. Mr. Horne's remark," she replies, "I can only say that he has probably read Zola, and knows Fielding only by repute." A hit, a hit, a palpable hit!

Mrs. Craigie mentions Lowell, Scott, Ruskin, and Thackeray, as admirers of Fielding. She might have mentioned dozens more—including most of the great names in English literature for a hundred and fifty years. Perhaps the following from Coleridge, one of the best of judges, may be of service to "John Oliver Hobbes" in her crusade:—"What a master of composition Fielding was! Upon my word, I think the *Edipus Tyrannus*, the *Alchemist*, and *Tom Jones*, the three most perfect plots ever planned. And how charming, how wholesome, Fielding always is! To take him after Richardson, is like emerging from a sick room heated with stoves, into an open lawn, on a breezy day in May."

"Mr. Balfour's Sophistry" was the *Daily News* heading over a letter from the Prime Minister to one of the Passive Resistance fraternity. Here is the Premier's letter, in full—written by his secretary:—

"Mr. Balfour desires me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter upon the subject of the Education Act of 1902, and in reply to say that no suggestion has yet been made for dealing with the religious side of education which will not hurt the conscience of some members of the community. There can be no doubt, however, that the present Act is far more favorable to Nonconformists than the Act of 1870, in which for over thirty years they acquiesced."

After reading this letter very carefully, and twice over, we are at a loss to discover the "sophistry." The organ of the Nonconformist Conscience should have pointed it out. There

is certainly no sophistry in Mr. Balfour's statement that "no suggestion has yet been made for dealing with the religious side of education which will not hurt the conscience of some members of the community." This is plain, matter-of-fact truth. The Church policy hurts the Nonconformists, the Nonconformist policy hurts the Churchmen, the policy of both of them hurts the Catholics, and the policy of all of them hurts the Secularists. Mr. Balfour is right; profoundly right. It is the *Daily News* and the *Passive Resisters* that indulge in "sophistry." They want to make their plan of religious education obligatory on the rest of their fellow citizens, and they advocate it in the name of civil and religious liberty. That is where the "sophistry" comes in.

Whether the present Act is more favorable to the Nonconformists than the Act of 1870, is a question on which there are differences of opinion. Dr. Clifford holds one opinion, Mr. Balfour holds another; but there cannot be "sophistry" in a difference of opinion on what is at bottom a matter of fact.

"Providence" did not protect a crowd at the new Roman Catholic Church at Adams, Massachusetts. The floor collapsed, and 185 people fell into the basement. The injured included one bishop and several priests.

Canon Jessopp has been saying some warm things about his own profession. It was in an after-dinner speech at the annual gathering of the Norwich Medico-Chirurgical Society. After calling the medical profession "the grandest in the world," he said that his own was becoming "contemptible." "You," he said, "proceed on Free Trade. We are Protectionists." Then came the following:—

"You are still going on, you believe in the future. And the weakness of my profession is that we do not believe in the future. We tremble at the notion of reforming our beliefs. We count any man heretic who disputes any question which was once answered, say, a thousand years ago. We look back upon the past as the standard of truth, and into the future we gaze with a certain timid terror lest that future should contradict some conclusions of the past made by those who were very much less wise than ourselves. It is no exaggeration to say we need reform even in our very beliefs.

"And that reform will be forced upon us, whether we will or no, and in great measure by the discoveries of such gentlemen as you, the heroes of the medical profession.

"I wish that amongst ourselves there was a little more of free thought—of forward movement—of anxiety about this question and that question. I wish there was more liberality of spirit, and I wish there was more of that spirit of pushing progress on and on, regardless of consequences."

"Reform will be forced upon us," says Canon Jessopp. Quite so. That is what we have always said in the *Freethinker*. Even at the recent Church Congress, a speaker who suggested that the Evangelists incorporated "some" legendary matter, was visited with what the newspapers called "episcopal rebuke." Of course the Bishops *know* better, but they mean to keep up the lie as long as it will hold together. And what then? "Well, after us the deluge!"

By a large majority the Dijon Municipal Council has decided on suppressing all the saints' names which have been given to various streets, and replacing them with names of a quite different character. Some twenty streets will have to be re-named, and among the names selected are those of Zola, Danton, Comte, and Renan.

The Rev. Samuel Vincent, of Plymouth, laments the tendency of people nowadays to "throw the task of doing God's work on God." Well now, what is there to lament in this? Who should do God's work but God himself? We are not quite sure what is God's work, but it is very evident that whatever it is he doesn't do it. Probably Mr. Vincent believes that God's object in creating man was to give himself a good long rest.

According to a newspaper report, Sir Oliver Lodge regards it as his "present mission" to reconcile Religion and Science. Well, greater men than Sir Oliver Lodge have tried the same thing. We are not aware that any of them have ever converted an unbeliever into a believer, although many of them have produced a contrary result.

Discussing the question of "The Church and the Children," Archdeacon Emery consoles himself by the reflection that the "law of the kingdom" is "Many are called, but few are chosen." Quite so; but in this case it is "Many are called, but few will come"; and there is a whole world of meaning in the difference.

The Rev. Dr. Hunter, of Glasgow, in drawing up an outline of lectures he intends to give, announces one on Bishop

Colenso, "the pioneer and protomartyr of Biblical criticism." Colenso is worthy of all credit for the work he did, but it is absurd to speak of him as *the* pioneer of Biblical criticism. From the seventeenth century onward the stream of criticism had never ceased, while the beginnings of Colenso's work is to be found in many of the Deistic writings, particularly in the writings of Voltaire. What Colenso really did was to make a breach in the wall of stupidity and ignorance behind which the clergy had entrenched themselves, and compel them to make admissions and concessions. This was, of course, a valuable work, but we question whether even this would have been effective but for the Freethought propaganda that preceded and accompanied Colenso. It is like a Christian preacher, however, to ignore the work of all those men and women who for a century and a half had braved imprisonment and social ostracism, and fix upon another preacher as the beginner of a movement.

The latest religious sect in America—the land of sects—is that of the Gnostics. The members claim to have discovered the real secret of the Christian faith. They have formed a limited liability company, with a capital of £40,000 in shares of £2 each. Their intention is to form "an empire of peace" by the seaside at Hermosa, California. We wish them success. It is time that some Christian society took a little stock in "peace" somewhere.

The Mormon Church is not done for yet. It has fifteen hundred missionaries in foreign parts. These gentlemen rake in shekels and converts—mostly females. Where there is a surplus of the fair sex there are sure to be some who are tired of singing "Safe in the arms of Jesus." They sigh for something more solid, and fancy a fraction of a man is better than a ghost; so they go off to Utah and polygamy.

The English Church Union, under the presidency of Lord Halifax, held a meeting at Liverpool, independently of the Church Congress, and unanimously passed the following resolution: "That this meeting earnestly deprecates, as fraught with danger to the preservation of Christian truth throughout the world, any mutilation of the Athanasian Creed or any alteration of its status in the Book of Common Prayer." Canon MacColl said that if the Athanasian Creed were meddled with "the Apostles' Creed itself might be impugned." *Might be impugned!* Why, it is impugned already. Historically, it is certain that the Apostles had as much to do with the Apostles' Creed as Athanasius had to do with the Athanasian Creed. The very names of these Creeds are falsehoods. And the clergy know it. But many of them want to work the falsehood for all it is worth as long as it will hold together. Others see that some change will have to be made. And the two sections will soon be engaged in a fine fight, which will be meat and drink to the Freethinkers who look on. They will feel very much as Iago did about the result, one way or the other, of the fight between Cassio and Roderigo.

Rev. J. P. Wilson, speaking at Blackburn, rebuked the church-building fever. He said it was time to cry halt. A lot of money was being wasted. There were already churches and chapels enough in the country to provide a seat once each Sunday to every man, woman, and child—even including babies. The seats numbered 16,000,000 and the population 32,000,000. The Anglican Church provides 7,000,000, the Nonconformists 8,000,000, and the Roman Catholics 1,000,000. Yet the Nonconformists, with their 8,000,000 sittings, have only 2,000,000 members or communicants, and there are 4,000,000 seats unoccupied. Mr. Wilson says that these ought to be filled before new ones are provided.

Mr. Wilson drew attention to another startling fact. Only 10 per cent. of Sunday-school scholars remain permanently attached to the Churches. The 90 per cent are lost. Why? This opens up the problem of the "lapsed masses"—which is like that

Serbian bog  
Betwixt Damiana and mount Casius old,  
Where armies whole have sunk.

The voice of truth was heard at the recent Church Congress, but it was soon stifled. The Rev. Professor Kirsopp Lake, of the University of Leyden—described as a German professor made in England—asserted that the first three chapters of Matthew were almost entirely legendary. Murmurs of dissent greeted the shocking announcement. The meeting, indeed, had to be reassured by the Bishop of Liverpool, who treated Professor Lake's statement as a youthful indiscretion, and hoped that when he was twenty years older he would take more orthodox views on the subject of the Gospels. Just as though the orthodox theory would last that time!



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, October 23, Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, Leicester, at 6.30 p.m., "Holy Russia and Heathen Japan."

October 30, Birmingham.

November 6, Coventry; 20, Manchester; 27, Liverpool.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—October 23 and 30, Queen's Hall, London. November 6, Glasgow; 13, Birmingham; 20, Coventry; 27, Birmingham. December 4, Leicester; 11, Liverpool.

W. A. HILL.—Always glad to receive useful cuttings. Thanks.

G. F. DUPLAY.—Sorry we cannot oblige. Not being inserted, the manuscript went into the waste-basket. This is the usual practice in newspaper offices. You should have asked at the time to have your letter returned.

JOSEPH CLOSE.—Pleased to hear that you were so "highly delighted" with our Rome articles; also that you find our criticism of "these mad men of God," as you call them, both "highly interesting and instructive." We rejoice to read your praise of Ingersoll. You cannot praise him too much for our taste.

INCOG.—Your criticism is just. We thank you for drawing our attention to the matter. Instructions have been given for what you complain of to be discontinued.

H. C. SHACKLETON.—We are much obliged, but have to postpone dealing with the matter till next week.

G. SCOTT (Glasgow).—Yes, it was a splendid gathering on Sunday evening; but the press still keeps up the silly old conspiracy of silence. A wrangle in a half empty church is worth reporting; not so a crowded and enthusiastic meeting in a Secular Hall. But there will be a change some day—perhaps when we are dead; and it may come with a rush.

W. J. CAISEY.—We have already said that Mr. Gladstone was largely responsible for our twelve months' imprisonment, but this does not lead us to withdraw one word of our condemnation of Sir William Harcourt. He went out of his way to tell a dirty lie about us from his privileged position in the House of Commons.

W. BINDON.—Accept our thanks. The matter shall be dealt with carefully. With regard to Dr. Warschauer's statement at Clifton on Sunday, that he did not believe that Mr. Lloyd had ever been a Presbyterian minister, we will only say that his belief is a matter of no importance. Facts are facts.

C. KNOX.—Browning was not an Atheist. Neither was he a Christian in the common acceptation of the word. He was probably a Theist.

MRS. DOWLING, newsagent, 1 Queen's-row, Clifton, sells the *Freethinker* and keeps a stock of Secular literature. Bristol and district Freethinkers should please note.

W. DEY.—Sorry to learn that the Alex. Murray reprint of Gibbon has been emasculated by some pious editor. Such action is an impudent fraud. We will refer to the subject at greater length next week.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Pleased to hear that the Birmingham friends consider our Rome Congress articles to be "very fine indeed." The way to interest one's readers is to be interested oneself in what one is writing about. We note that you found Mr. Tresh's first lectures at Birmingham "very interesting."

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

A. K. D.—You ask for our definition of "Atheist." We advise you to turn to our pamphlet, *What is Agnosticism?* price three-pence. Meanwhile, we may say that "Atheist" means one without God, as "Theist" is one who has a God. The "a" before "Theist" is merely privative. An Atheist, therefore, is a person who knows nothing of God and believes other people are just as ignorant. Thanks for the cutting; as you say, the clergy are coming nearer to our point of view every day.

We regret as we are going to press to hear of the death of Mr. John Fagan. An obituary notice will appear in our next issue.

SEVERAL ANSWERS to correspondents, as well as other matter, stand over unavoidably till next week.

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### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had a very enthusiastic reception on Sunday at Glasgow. The midday audience was an exceptionally good one, and the lecture on "Wee Kirkers, Free Kirkers, and the Disputed Cash-Box" was much enjoyed. In the evening the hall was not large enough. Not only were the people close-packed in the seats, but every inch of standing room was occupied, and the very passage was crowded. Even then some late comers were unable to obtain admission. The lecture on "Holy Russia and Heathen Japan" was followed with profound attention and very warmly applauded. Several questions were asked and answered, but there was no direct opposition. Mr. Turnbull, who presided at both meetings, made an appeal on behalf of the "Endowment Fund" which the Branch has started with a view to purchasing a hall of its own some day. A collection for it was taken as the audience went out in the evening, and the bags seemed tolerably heavy. Altogether the officers and committee of the Branch expressed the view that they had had "a glorious day."

We were delighted to find Mr. T. Robertson, the corresponding secretary of the Glasgow Branch, in much improved health. Some time ago his condition was a source of anxiety to his many friends, but a good holiday gave him a turn for the better, and he is now "himself again." Only those behind the scenes, or very near them, know how valuable (or rather *invaluable*) are Mr. Robertson's services. He is a hard worker, and he has brains—a most excellent combination.

Mr. Foote delivers his lecture on "Holy Russia and Heathen Japan" this evening (Oct. 23) in the Secular Hall, Leicester. No doubt there will be a crowded attendance.

Mr. Lloyd had a very good meeting at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening, and his lecture was followed by questions and discussion. Many strangers were present again. We hope to hear of another excellent meeting this evening (Oct. 23) when Mr. Cohen occupies the platform. We also hope that Freethinkers, at any rate, will be as liberal as possible in the collection. The expenses of these meetings are naturally very heavy.

Mr. Lloyd delivers two lectures to-day (Oct. 23) in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow. The local "saints" will doubtless see that he has fine meetings and a hearty welcome.

Birmingham and district "saints" will please note that Mr. Foote delivers two lectures next Sunday (Oct. 30) in the magnificent Town Hall, which the Mayor has kindly granted the use of to the N. S. S. Branch on that occasion. Sir Oliver Lodge has just been discoursing on Haeckel's "Riddle of the Universe," and Mr. Foote will deal with that discourse in the afternoon. In the evening he will deal with the question, "What Do We Know of God?" The local "saints" should do their best to get the grand hall crowded at both lectures.

We have been asked by many friends why Mr. Lloyd's list of engagements is not appearing after Mr. Cohen's at the top of the first column on the ninth page of the *Freethinker*. Our reply is that Mr. Lloyd has forgotten to send it in. We have spoken to him on the subject, and there our responsibility ends. Some friends appear to imagine that we have dropped Mr. Lloyd's list out deliberately.

We print this week a photogravure of the group of N. S. S. delegates in front of the Bruno monument at Rome. The delegates in the picture are much smaller than the members of the Roman crowd who looked on and had to be kept out of the camera's line of fire by the police; but the laws of perspective, of course, cannot be overridden—not even by Freethinkers. Perhaps this picture will have a little historic value in future days. Copies of the original photograph, handsomely mounted, ready for framing, can be obtained at our publishing office for two shillings.

The Liverpool N. S. S. Branch invited both the Rev. John Wakeford and the Rev. C. F. Aked to debate publicly with Mr. G. W. Foote or Mr. J. M. Robertson. Neither of them accepted the invitation. This fact has been made public through the press, and the invitation has been extended to all the clergy of the diocese—with the same result. These gentlemen play the part of little Davids against the "infidel" Goliath, at their annual Congresses, but when the "infidel" Goliath comes along they keep indoors.

## Morality Without Religion.

"One beautiful starlight night Hegel stood with me at an open window. I, being a young man of twenty-two, and having just eaten well and drunk coffee, naturally spoke with enthusiasm of the stars, and called them abodes of the blest. But the master muttered to himself: 'The stars! H'm, h'm! The stars are only a brilliant eruption on the firmament.' 'What?' cried I; 'then there is no blissful spot above, where virtue is rewarded after death?' But he, glaring at me with his dim eyes, remarked, sneering: 'So you want a *pourboire* because you have supported your sick mother and not poisoned your brother?'"—HEINRICH HEINE, *Confessions*.

"He, likewise, who still needs the expectation of a future recompense as a spring of action stands in the outer court of morality, and let him take heed lest he fall. For supposing that in the course of his life this belief is overthrown by doubt, what then becomes of his morality? Nay, how will it fare with the latter, even in the case of the former remaining unshaken? He who does good in view of future beatitude, acts, after all, only from selfish motives."—STRAUSS, *The Old Faith and the New* (p. 145).

It is a common argument with Christians that if people lose their faith in a future life, in which they are to be rewarded or punished according to their actions in this life, they will rush to crime and immorality as swiftly as the be-devilled swine to the sea. The Christian poet, Young, declared:—

Virtue with Immortality expires.  
Who tells me he denies his soul immortal,  
Whate'er his boast, has told me he's a knave.

To which piece of ignorant fanaticism George Eliot made the crushing retort:—

"We can imagine the man who 'denies his soul immortal' replying: 'It is quite possible that *you* would be a knave, and love yourself alone, if it were not for your belief in immortality; but you are not to force upon me what would result from your own utter want of moral emotion. I am just and honest, not because I expect to live in another world, but because, having felt the pain of injustice and dishonesty towards myself, I have a fellow-feeling with other men, who would suffer the same pain if I were unjust or dishonest towards them. Why should I give my neighbor short weight in this world because there is not another world in which I should have nothing to weigh out to him? I am honest because I don't like to inflict evil on others in this life, not because I'm afraid of evil to myself in another. The fact is, I do not love myself alone, whatever logical necessity there may be for that conclusion in your mind.....It is possible that you might prefer to 'live the brute,' to sell your country, or to slay your father, if you were not afraid of some disagreeable consequences from the criminal laws of another world; but even if I could conceive no motive but my own worldly interest or the gratification of my animal desires, I have not observed that beastliness, treachery, and parricide are the direct way to happiness and comfort on earth."\*

George Eliot said that Young appeared to think that the better part of virtue consists "in contempt for mortal joys, in 'meditation of our own decease,' and in 'applause' of God in the style of a congratulatory address to her Majesty—all which has small relation to the wellbeing of mankind on this earth." And she declares that morality no more depends "on the belief in a future state than the interchange of gases in the lungs on the plurality of worlds." Continuing, in beautiful prose poetry, she says:—

"Nay, it is conceivable that in some minds the deep pathos lying in the thought of human mortality—that we are here for a little while and then vanish away, that this earthly life is all that is given to our loved ones and to our many suffering fellow-men—lies nearer the fountains of moral emotion than the conception of extended existence. And surely it ought to be a welcome fact, if the thought of *mortality* as well as of *immortality* be favorable to virtue. We can imagine that the proprietors of a patent water supply may have a dread of common springs; but for those who only share the general need there cannot be too great a security against a lack of fresh water—or of pure morality. It should be matter of unmixed rejoicing if this latter necessary of healthful life has its evolution ensured in the interaction of human souls as certainly

as the evolution of science or of art, with which, indeed, it is but a twin ray, melting into them with indefinable limits."

These words, ringing with the most piercing truth and sincerity, are among the noblest ever penned upon the subject. It has always seemed to me that women deal with this subject so much better than men, as indeed is but natural, seeing that men learn the alphabet of morality at their mother's knee. When men begin preaching morality they generally leave the impression that the practice of morality is something very distressing and painful, but that it pays a good dividend in the end. On the other hand, vice is depicted as very seductive and alluring, but a bad speculation in the long run. That is not the way a free-minded woman teaches her child.

Here is another extract from a woman writer—Miss Edith Simcox. She is answering the Christian taunt that people only want to get rid of their religion so that they may live in wickedness.

"But men who *wish* to disbelieve in the existence of a personal, more or less righteous, Deity, because they imagine that such an existence is the only obstacle to their finding happiness in an unprincipled self-indulgence, have not even taken the first step towards embracing the doctrines of scientific atheism;.....and if they were to develop their conceptions, would be more likely to arrive at some form or other of theistic superstition than at the recognition of the universe as a system of phenomena bound together by laws, or existing in constant intersecting relations."

"though we say that the God in whose name men have clung to an ideal of perfection is but a dream of the mind, a shadow of the will, giving them no real help in their endeavor, the fact remains that men have owned the infinity of duty, not as a dream or shadow, but in living truth, and if men have sought perfection before now without receiving superhuman help in their search, shall they in these latter days turn with open eyes to a less worthy goal? To say they must is, indeed, a godless—say, rather, a soulless—creed; to say they will is false and faithless" (*Natural Law*, pp. 270-257).

Moreover, the young man or woman who has sense enough to emancipate themselves from the toils of superstition will have sense enough to know that the practice of vice does not lead to happiness.

However, there is no necessity to discard religion in order to lead an immoral life. The first thing Mr. Jabez Balfour asked for when he was arrested was his Bible. Mr. De Cobain, who debauched his Sunday-school scholars, is another example. Mr. Suthers has been giving his experiences of Russia in the pages of the *Clarion*. He says:—

"There are 200 churches in Petersburg, supplemented by shrines and open chapels at nearly every street corner, and holy pictures lighted with lamps in every restaurant, railway refreshment room, and drinking shop; and, I am assured, even in places too infamous to be named. In the streets, before each church and holy picture, the passers-by make more or less devout obeisance, and the sign of the cross three times repeated" (*Clarion*, September 16).

The Russians saw no incongruity in placing holy pictures "in places too infamous to be named." Piety and vice flourished arm-in-arm in these places, naked and unashamed.

To take another instance, of which history gives many examples, see the recently-published *Life of the debauched and profligate George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham*, written by Lady Burghclere, who says: "Buckingham has undoubtedly given serious offence to all decent-minded people by his loose talk and ribald sermons, and it was the more inexcusable since he frequented meeting-houses and prayed as lustily as any Anabaptist or Leveller." This conduct was, by his contemporaries, ascribed to hypocrisy; but Lady Burghclere suggests that his conduct was "an unedifying instance of the unbridled emotional temperament," and that "a man so cursed with a dual nature is not always consciously insincere. Nothing is more communicable than religious fervor. And Buckingham was the last person to resist the infection of such an atmosphere."\* Just so. As Lord Shaftesbury wisely

\* "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness," *Westminster Review*, 1857. Reprinted with *Theophrastus Such and Essays*, vol. xii., George Elliot's Works (pp. 350-351). Warwick edition; Blackwood.

\* Cited in *Literary World*, January 8, 1904.

remarked: "If we are told a man is religious, we still ask, What are his morals? But if we hear at first that he has honest morals, and is a man of natural justice and good temper, we seldom think of the other question, whether he be religious or devout."

And why should Christians distress themselves so much over the supposed evil consequences of a rejection of Christianity? Have the Christian nations a monopoly of morality? How is it that the greatest curse of this country, drunkenness, is practically unknown among the Mohammedan populations of the East? How is it that heathen "India has not half as many homicides annually as England"?\* If Christianity is so superior to all other religions, why do heathens show a cleaner record in these matters than the Christian nations? "I have lived," says Mr. Russell Wallace, "with communities of savages in South America and in the East who have no laws or law courts, but the public opinion of the village freely expressed. Each man scrupulously respects the rights of his fellows, and any infraction of these rights rarely or never takes place."† These people had not, like Mr. Jabez Balfour, the advantage of a Christian education; they had no Bible to guide them in the path of virtue. They knew nothing of Noah and Lot, of David and Solomon; nothing of Christ and heavenly crowns for the good, and the Devil and flaming hell for the bad. Yet what an example they set to the Christian nations!

It costs about ten million pounds a year in police, prisons, judges, etc., to make the Christian "respect the rights of his fellows" in this country alone; in spite of which enormous sum there is an annual crop of "between 500,000 and 600,000 cases annually tried in the criminal courts of England alone."‡ And yet money is poured out like water to send missionaries to the heathen, to give them the benefits of Christianity! "It is a mad world, my masters," and a sad one too, when we think of the wasted energy and treasure which might be put to such good purpose in our own country.

Before trumpeting the superior morality of their religion, let Christians consider the sea of blood shed by its professors when it had the power. M. Paul Bert, in a famous speech, at which Gambetta took the chair, answering the priestly threat, "You have sent me from the school; I carry with me morality, its basis and sanction; I leave you to the abyss and the mud in which you will roll," replied:—

"We answer him, with the map of Europe and the world before our eyes, history in our memory, commencing with the opening of that sombre, bloody, and fanatical Middle Age, that modern societies march towards morality in proportion as they leave religion behind" (Speech at the Cirque d'Hiver, August, 1881).

The Middle Ages were the Dark Ages—the Ages of Faith. This is not an Age of Faith. The clergy of all denominations deplore the advancing tide of unbelief. Yet, as Professor Huxley pointed out, the sense of duty is more widely spread now than at any other period of the world's history. Replying to a Catholic apologist, he says:—

"Ah! but says Mr. Lilly, these are all products of our Christian inheritance; when Christian dogmas vanish virtue will disappear too, and the ancestral ape and tiger will have full play. But there are a good many people who think it obvious that Christianity also inherited a good deal from Paganism and Judaism, and that if the Stoics and the Jews revoked their bequest the moral property of Christianity would realise very little. And if morality has survived the stripping off of several sets of clothes which have been found to fit badly, why should it not be able to get on very well in the light and handy garments which Science is ready to provide?"§

Morality existed before Christ, and will continue to exist after he has been placed on the shelf along with all the other defunct gods of antiquity. Let

those timid Christians who think otherwise hear the words of the great Faraday, who was himself a believer. He says: "I have no intention of substituting anything for religion, but I wish to take that part of human nature which is independent of it. Morality, philosophy, commerce, the various institutions and habits of society, are independent of religion, and may exist either with or without it. They are always the same, and can dwell alike in the breast of those who, from opinion, are entirely opposed in the set of principles they include in the term 'religion,' or in those who have none."\*

W. MANN.

### A Romanist Criticism of Agnosticism.

SOME time back we dealt in these columns with one of a series of articles appearing in the *Glasgow Observer*—a well-known Roman Catholic organ. The series is still incomplete, and as we understand the articles are ultimately to be published in book form we are reluctant to criticise further until they have thus received the author's final revision. Our attention has, however, been specially called to a couple of the most recent articles, which deal with Atheism and Agnosticism and profess to give the Roman Catholic reply to the dicta of Huxley and Darwin.

As we previously explained, the entire series is being written by a Jesuit priest with the ostensible purpose of giving a clear statement of Roman Catholic doctrine for the benefit of the anxious—and non-catholic—inquirer. To the individual born and brought up within the fold of the "one true Church" no justification of the teaching of the Church of Rome is (presumably) needed. Its truth is taken for granted. To the average adherent of the Roman body "I believe in the Church" constitutes the Alpha and Omega of his creed. It is no exaggeration to say that ninety-nine out of every hundred Roman Catholics never make any examination whatever into the grounds of their faith. They remain in supine ignorance of the overwhelming mass of evidence that has accumulated against supernatural religion, and are content to anathematise Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, Darwin, Haeckel, and the rest, merely because "the Church" condemns their teaching, not because of any personal knowledge of their works. To such individuals—to those who are thoroughly satisfied of the infallible nature of the Church's authority in regard to all those matters which she claims as being within the sphere of her jurisdiction—the arguments of this Jesuit father may seem convincing enough, but sceptical and inquiring outsiders are scarcely likely to be affected by them.

It is currently understood amongst Roman Catholics that in training the budding Jesuit special attention is given to the development of the logical faculty. We cannot say that, as a logician, the writer of the articles under consideration reflects any particular credit upon his *Alma Mater*. There is rather too much of what is called begging the question in his method of reasoning. It has more than once been remarked that many Roman controversialists can produce a very elaborate and seemingly strong chain of reasoning if you are prepared to concede them one or two initial points. Given the idea of an intelligent deity who is actively governing the universe, and given the existence of an immortal soul in man, practically no limits can be set to the elaboration of a theological system. But these are just the points that remain eternally in dispute. Certainly no Freethinker would dream for a moment of yielding them to a religious opponent.

One of the articles referred to professes to give the Catholic view of Atheism. The writer, however, merely touches upon Atheism while dealing at great length with Agnosticism. It is but right to add that he evidently thinks the reader was supplied with ample evidence of the existence of God in an earlier

\* *Crime and its Causes*, by W. D. Morrison, p. 51.

† Cited in *Crime and its Causes*, p. 36.

‡ W. D. Morrison, cited in Gore's *Scientific Basis of Morality*, p. 512.

§ *Essays on Controverted Questions*, pp. 234-235.

\* Cited in Tyndall's *Fragments of Science*, vol. i., p. 471.

contribution to the series. We have read the earlier articles and feel bound to say that we have seen no argument relative to the existence of God adduced therein the value of which has not been discounted over and over again. But if we are to keep within reasonable limits we must for the present refrain from harking back to former articles in the series, and confine ourselves to those which have been pointedly commended to our notice.

In treating of Agnosticism the reverend vindicator of Roman Catholicism makes considerable play with the references of Spencer and Huxley to the *Unknown* and the *Unknowable*. He is by no means the first religious apologist who has done so, and we cannot but consider it most unfortunate that so many of our scientific and philosophical writers who affect Agnosticism should, by the occasional ambiguity of their language and the adoption of a semi-reverential tone, afford a handle to our religious friends which they are not slow to grasp.

Considerations of space necessarily forbid the examination in detail of this Jesuit father's arguments. We must perforce content ourselves by selecting two or three characteristic passages, making choice of such as can be separated from the context without injustice to the author's case. After some quotations from Huxley respecting the law of causation and a First Cause (which latter the Jesuit writer, of course, identifies with God) we come to the following passage:—

"If, then, the Agnostic doctrine be true, and the First Cause is unknown and unknowable, the conclusion is forced upon us that It produced this marvellous universe, including the earth on which we find ourselves, endowed man not only with life, but also with reason, set everything in motion, and having done so, retired within Itself and ceased to care for Its handiwork."

Well, for any evidence we have to the contrary, if we accept the idea of a Creator at all, this is just what has happened! But our author goes on to say: "This idea is unworthy in the highest degree of such a supreme intelligence." Here we have an assumption of the very question in dispute. Is there a supreme intelligence guiding affairs in this sublunary sphere of ours? What do we *know* of God? Obviously, until we know what God is, and what actually are his attributes and his potentialities, it is impossible for us to say what he might or might not do. He might have created us for his sport, for instance. It really looks like that as much as anything. But our Jesuit friend's reasoning on this point is simply an abuse of the *a priori* argument. He has a preconceived notion of what a God such as he loves and worships ought to *be* and *do*, and he straightway argues accordingly. Thus do men continue to make God in their own image and likeness.

Further on we are told that "if the Agnostic theory be correct it presents to us the First Cause—which, if the law of causation is to hold good, must contain every perfection to be found in the effects it has produced—in a state of vast and continued imperfection." Now we are not immediately concerned to extricate that rather anomalous personage the "reverential" Agnostic from the predicament in which his Jesuit critics seek to involve him, but the passage just quoted seems to call for some comment. As we have already pointed out, this Jesuit writer takes hold of the *First Cause* of the scientist and assumes that it is only another name for the God of Roman Catholic worship. But the God of Roman Catholic worship must be *Supreme Omnipotent Intelligence*. Obviously no other conception of Deity would suffice for purposes of adoration and invocation. It would be absurd for anyone to pray to the cold, abstract First Cause of scientific phraseology, or to simulate towards it any particular warmth of affection. This, of course, any Roman theologian would readily admit. The Deity essential to his system of religion is a Being at once omnipotent, omniscient, and beneficent. Belief in a Supreme Being who not only made all things, but still actively directs the course of events—who desires the eternal welfare of humanity—to whom we are ultimately

responsible, and who possesses and exercises the power to reward or punish—all this lies at the very root of the Christian religion. We are not aware that the idea of a First Cause entertained by even the most reverent Agnostic thinker would adequately fill the bill in this connection.

Passing this, however, and assuming that the First Cause is all that the Jesuitic imagination could desire, we are disposed to carry the logic a little farther than seems convenient for our critic. He says, "if the law of causation is to hold good, it must contain every perfection to be found in the effects it has produced." To this we would add that if the law of causation is to hold good it must contain not only every perfection, but also every imperfection to be found in the effects it has produced. In other words, this great First Cause which our Jesuit friend worships daily and styles the "Supreme Intelligence" is either responsible for everything (evil as well as good) or is responsible for nothing. We are aware that we are merely re-stating the ancient problem of the existence of evil, but while the existence of evil is not incompatible with the scientific law of causation no one has ever succeeded in reconciling the existence of evil with the conception of an All-wise, All-powerful, and All-merciful Supreme Intelligence. And if it be the case that the Agnostic theory "presents to us the First Cause in a state of vast and continued imperfection," is it so very certain that such a presentation is erroneous? Let any man or woman with a brain—and a heart—gaze upon the world around us and say candidly whether the visible results of the activity of this wonderful Supreme Intelligence can by any stretch of language be called perfect. And if not, what shadow of a reason is there for inferring that the *First Cause* is perfect? If we calmly regard the existing condition of affairs in our modern civilisation, the theory of the "vast and continued imperfection" of the First Cause seems quite as logical a deduction as the theory of its infinite perfection.

Like many good religious people, our Jesuit is much exercised over the fact (he admits the *fact*) that there are agnostic and non-religious individuals of blameless life and character—men and women who habitually abstain from wrong-doing and act according to their conscience without any reference to supernatural support or approval. Being a clergyman, of course he cannot understand how or why they do it. He apparently believes that if morality is not inseparable from religion, at any rate it *ought* to be, and he seems curious to know why those who recognise no personal deity or look forward to no future life should trouble about right and wrong at all. It seems hopeless to attempt to convince a priest that no greater disservice could be done to the cause of true morality than to persist in basing it on the decaying foundation of belief in the supernatural.

Pursuing his investigations into the causes of the morality of Atheists, we are treated to a fine passage from Huxley, in which the writer points to the duty incumbent on all of us to try and make the little corner we can influence somewhat less miserable and somewhat less ignorant than it was before we entered it. The Jesuit we are criticising asks, Why should an Atheist or Agnostic do anything of the sort? If (he says) they act from the promptings of natural knowledge, or because of the discoveries of physical science, what guarantee have they that their conduct is correct, for the same (*i.e.*, the aforesaid promptings of natural knowledge and discoveries of physical science) may suggest a different course of conduct next week. And, as if the foregoing sentences were not sufficiently ridiculous, he cites as an example a passage from Huxley's *Lay Sermons* to the effect that "only fifteen years ago Sir William Thomson entertained a totally different view of the origin of the sun's heat." Now we ask does any sane man imagine that a scientific change of opinion as to the origin of the sun's heat could "suggest" to anyone out of Bedlam a different course of moral conduct! What connection is there between a

theory of solar caloric and a human code of ethics? Is there any sense at all in citing Lord Kelvin's change of view as having the remotest bearing on the question of morality? We can perceive none.

And in so far as our reverend author brings forward the case of Lord Kelvin as illustrating the fact that there can be no finality in the deductions of Science, we consider this to be matter not for regret but for satisfaction. Science has no *dogmas* in the theological sense. She accepts nothing without evidence and asks us to accept nothing without demonstration, and she is ever ready to welcome new facts whether they agree with previous theories or not. It is her glory that, unlike religion, she is progressive. And although new theories regarding the sun's heat or other natural phenomena are scarcely likely (*pace* our Jesuit friend) to revolutionise our ethical code, we see no reason why we may not, from time to time, readjust our system of morals in the light of human experience and of such discoveries in natural science as may have a direct bearing on the subject. That, indeed, is just what the human race has been doing from time immemorial. For it is sheer balderdash for anyone to say that the law of right and wrong is "immutable," or that the laws of justice and charity "have come down to us unchanged through ages." Morality, like Science, is progressive. It has not been made to order, and it cannot stand still. Slowly and painfully, for thousands of years, man has toiled onward and upward—engendering a social instinct; evolving a moral consciousness; building up an ethical code; developing a sense of justice and a spirit of charity. And the end is not yet.

It is characteristic of the purblind conservatism of the Church of Rome that she should regard the last word on morality as having been spoken. That this is not the case a moment's reflection on such an important branch of morals as the sexual relationship will suffice to convince us. When we remember that from unrestricted promiscuity the civilised portion of humanity has mounted rung after rung of the ethical ladder until now a woman may live inviolate in the same house with a man for years simply because she is his sister, who would be so bold as to maintain we have reached the limit of our ascent?

G. SCOTT.

### Correspondence.

#### GHOSTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your article on "Ble Ghosts," in the issue of the *Freethinker* for September 25, you write as follows:—

"The belief in ghosts is rapidly dying out. They are scarcely ever heard of in towns, except in a forlorn condition at Spiritist *séances*, where they are at the beck and call of professional mediums, and reduced to playing tricks for their sport and profit."

Allow me, sir, as one you would doubtless term a Spiritist (though I prefer to be known as a Spiritualist), to take exception to your statement. If the growth of the Spiritualistic body is in any sense a guide, the belief in "ghosts" is considerably on the increase, and that among men and women of brains. Apart from the rapid growth of the movement mentioned, I would point out that the literature of the occult is largely on the increase, and that a great body of intelligent inquirers are constantly studying, and slowly being won over to the assurance of the existence of "ghosts"—not the gibbering, sheet-shrouded, churchyard-walkers of the past, but the living personalities of those who once inhabited this earth in fleshly form.

I have no doubt, sir, you speak as you find, and that your strictures upon "professional mediums" are the outcome of personal inquiry; but I would like to utter a protest against what appears to me to be a wholesale branding as frauds of a body of men and women who will bear comparison, morally, with any body of public workers in the country.

I may further indicate that the belief in "ghosts" is very much more frequently heard of in towns than in the country, even in the "Town" from which the *Freethinker* emanates. Judged by the standard which you have set up, sir, Free-thought is in an even more rapid state of decay than "the belief in Ghosts,"

WILL PHILLIPS  
(Editor "Two Worlds").

#### A HUMANITARIAN APPEAL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Will you kindly grant me the use of your columns to call attention to a sport which will soon recommence in some parts of the country? I refer to the hunting of park-deer. These animals are conveyed to the meet in a van. They are turned up in districts with which they are unacquainted. They are chased several times each season. Being practically domesticated, they do not know how to protect themselves from the pursuing pack. Though the hunters do not wish to kill them, the quarry runs with a fear of death pervading it. They seek refuge, when it is possible, in yards and sheds and sometimes in a cottage-scullery. If the hunt-staff are not up when the stag gives in, a mangling scene is enacted.

We think this sport is cruel and demoralising. What is the use, we would ask, of spending vast sums upon education, when such an example of inhumanity is set to the young by adults?

We would venture to suggest that persons who witness this kind of hunting should expose it in the press, and thus assist Mr. Corrie Grant to get the Spurious Sports Bill enacted, which would not only suppress tame-deer chasing, but also rabbit-coursing and shooting birds from traps.

J. STRATTON.

#### Sacred Soothsayers; or, The Post-Mortem-Fortune-Tellers.

PREDICTION by playing-cards, crystals, and palmistry,  
Leads to disgraceful punishment;  
Prediction by Biblical preaching, and psalmistry,  
Leads to an honored position.

The first is a fraud,  
The second's a sham;  
The latter we laud,  
The former we damn,  
Because we are humbugs and noodles.

The palmist's predictions are earthly and triable;  
*Here*, we can prove or deny them;  
To parsons' predictions, no tests are applicable;  
*Dead* we must be ere we try them.

The palmist's a fraud,  
The parson's a sham;  
The latter we laud,  
The former we damn,  
Because we are humbugs and noodles.

The palmist predicts what is frankly material;  
*All* can be tested, or mostly;  
The parson predicts the "divinely" ethereal,  
*Post-mortem*, shady, and ghostly.

The clerical cheat  
Your "fortune" will tell:  
The "fortune" you'll meet  
In heav'n or in hell;  
The clergyman cultivates noodles.

The parson tells after-death fortunes unblushingly,  
While, of your cash, he relieves you;  
And pictures the joys of "the other side" gushingly—  
Lord! how the rascal deceives you!

He fools you for gold,  
For place, and for bread,  
With forecasts that hold  
Until you are dead.  
The parson looks after the noodles.

Though parsons "tell fortunes," and rob with impunity,  
Fraud by a layman is "awful!"  
The sanctified soothsayers cheat the community;  
*Post-mortem* swindles are lawful.

The parson deceives,  
With Biblical lies,  
The man who believes  
He'll live when he dies;  
Yet, strange to relate,  
The Law lets it pass;  
The Law's out of date;  
"The Law is a Hass!"

G. L. MACKENZIE.

There are no arguments in favor of the supernatural. There are theories and fears, and mistakes and prejudices and guesses, but no arguments—plenty of faith, but no facts; plenty of divine revelation, but no demonstration. The supernatural, in my judgment, is a mistake. I believe in the natural.—*Ingersoll*.

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.**

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

**LONDON.**

QUEEN'S (Minor) HALL (Langham-place, W.): C. Cohen, "Some Old Problems, with Modern Answers." Doors open 7, Chair taken 7.30. Discussion invited. Admission free. Reserved front seat, 1s.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): Doors open 7 p.m., chair taken at 7.30 p.m., W. Gregory, "Jesus in Egypt."

**OUTDOOR.**

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Station-road): 11.30, Hampden Davis; Brockwell Park, 3.15, Hampden Davis. North Camberwell Hall (61 New Church-road): 3.15, Religious Free-thought Parliament. All seekers of truth invited. 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Is There a God?"

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Bull Ring Coffee House): Thursday, Oct. 27 at 8, J. Sketchley, "The Bible and Woman."

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Coffee Tavern, Fleet-street): 7, Readings by members. All who intend going to Mr. Foote's lectures at Birmingham, on Sunday, Oct. 30, are requested to give in their names.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): John Lloyd, 12 noon, "The House that Jack Built"; 6.30, "The Way to Heaven."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, L. Small, B.Sc., "The Philosophy of Science.—II."; 7, H. Percy Ward, "Science and Religion: a reply to Sir Oliver Lodge." Monday, 8, Social (tickets 6d. each).

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, Mrs. Eddie, "Health for the Worker."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Lecture arrangements.

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