

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*Nothing else can sufficiently inure and steel a man against the prevailing prejudices of the world but that habit of mind which arises from nonconformity to its decisions in matters of religion.—HAZLITT.*

## Wicked Freethought Poets.

WE have been favored with a copy of the *Consett Chronicle*, in which Mr. James Davidson opens a course of articles on "Poets for the Workers," beginning with Robert Burns. The writer is apparently a Christian and a Socialist. He even defines Burns as a Christian Socialist. From which we infer that he has only a superficial acquaintance with both Burns and Christianity. What acquaintance he has with Socialism we are not called upon to discuss.

Robert Burns was not a Christian in any honest sense of the word. It is ridiculous to represent "Holy Willie's Prayer" as simply a roasting of Calvinism. It is a brilliant and terrible satire on the fundamental dogmas of every Christian Church. The poet who wrote the "Address to the Deil" was no believer in the central thread of the Christian fabric. No wonder the castrated editions of Burns—which Mr. T. P. O'Connor had the impertinence to quote from in his Edinburgh address—omit four lines from "Tam O' Shanter" in which Burns introduces "priests' hearts, rotten, black as muck" by way of climax to the inventory of horrors laid upon the holy table in Kirk-Alloway. Burns's letters show that he was a thorough sceptic. He had no assurance even of a future life. His doubt in this direction is embalmed in the epitaph "On a Friend":—

If there's another world, he lives in bliss;  
If there is none, he made the best of this.

Believers do not say "If." Doubtters and unbelievers use that expression. Indeed, this epitaph is pure Secularism.

Mr. Davidson thinks it necessary to defend the personal character of Robert Burns. It is perfectly true that Burns was "a man." It is equally true that he was not a saint. There were only two amusements left by the Kirk to the people of Scotland; one was drink, and the other was fornication; and Burns appears to have stood in for his share of both. It was natural, it was inevitable, with the blood he had in him, and in such an environment. But this was only a minor part of the real Robert Burns. His indulgences were the fashion of his time; his candor, his honesty, his sympathy, his magnanimity, his genius, were all his own.

Little half-hearted people should leave Robert Burns alone. He is not for them, and they will get no good of him. And they are simply offensive when they think to "defend" him (heaven save the mark!) by slurring over the plain facts. When, for instance, Mr. Davidson says that "Robert Burns was a great admirer of the fair sex," and stops there, as though the poet looked upon them as fine portraits in a picture-gallery, he is guilty of hypocritical trifling or sheer silliness.

Not only does Mr. Davidson think it necessary to "defend" the magnificent Robert Burns; he thinks it also necessary to libel "Keats, Shelley, and Swinburne"—apparently because no stretch of imagination can bring them under the heading of Christian

Socialists. He refers in particular to Shelley's "loose vicious notions, especially in regard to women." Could anything be more absurd? Shelley, of all English poets, deals perhaps least with the sensual side of love. His most magnificent love-poem is a sublime spiritual rapture. In his personal relations with women, too, he was the very soul of delicacy. He made an unfortunate marriage when he was little more than a boy, because he was too high-minded and unselfish to act like other young fellows belonging to aristocratic families. He made a wife, instead of a mistress, of a handsome girl who threw herself at him. His subsequent relations with Mary Godwin, his second wife, complete the chapter of his sexual enormities. Beyond the one pure-hearted mistake and tragic calamity of his life there was nothing that even the breath of scandal could dim in the lucent sincerity and nobility of his career. Shelley was an Atheist, but James Thomson justly called him, not only "poet of poets," but "purest of men."

Keats, who was also a Freethinker, died young; too young for his genius, though not too young for his fame. His finest poetry, the work of three or four years, gives him one of the loftiest places in English literature. And where are his "loose" lines? We invite Mr. Davidson to produce them.

Mr. Swinburne lives to "defend" himself if need be. We will not commit the impertinence of undertaking the task on his behalf. We will assume that Shelley and Keats are to bear the whole brunt of Mr. Davidson's rabid attack. They, forsooth, are accused of teaching that "there is no love without lust," and that "there is no friendship without self-interest." They are represented as "prurient" and "lascivious," and as singing "brute passions and ethical impossibilities." Well, one can only stare in astonishment at such mad-dog criticism, and wonder if the man has ever read Shelley and Keats. The most charitable thing is to assume that he speaks from a plentiful lack of knowledge.

We take it that Mr. Davidson is a Christian. Now we have often advised our readers never to trust a Christian where an "infidel" is concerned. A Christian, in such circumstances, will shuffle, and lie, and slander, often without the slightest suspicion that he is doing anything of the kind. He follows the tradition of his faith almost unconsciously. And he generally feels quite hurt when you suggest that he should tell the truth and shame the Devil. In a muddle-headed way he combines two mutually destructive ideas; first, that he *has* told the truth, and secondly, that in lying for the glory of God he is performing an act of the highest virtue.

Mr. Davidson is in a muddle all round. He talks about Robert Burns as a working-class poet. But poetry has little to do with work, and nothing to do with classes. Poetry is simply human. It depends upon intelligence, sympathy, and passion. Experience is not its cause, but its occasion. Adventures are to the adventurous, and poetry is to the poetical. Shelley sings in solitude, and Burns in the busy haunts of men; but each has his keen brain, and quivering heart, and melodious voice, direct from Mother Nature; and nothing short of the universal in thought and emotion—universal in the sense of conforming to no sectional distinctions—is the proper theme of their song.

G. W. FOOTE.

## A Struggling Bishop.

THERE are, it seems, some "extraordinary superstitions and absurd misstatements" concerning the income of the Bishop of London. There is a popular superstition, supported by official figures, that the Bishopric carries with it an income of £10,000. Technically this is correct; but the Bishop, who has just taken the public into his confidence, and produced a balance-sheet, explains that the £10,000 is not really his own. He has to spend a lot of it on the cost of living. The balance-sheet, as given by Bishop Ingram, deserves to be reprinted in full, and here it is:—

	£	s.	d.
Fulham Palace and London house rates and taxes ... ..	848	12	6
Queen Anne's Bounty ... ..	422	4	7
Income-tax ... ..	500	0	0
Household expenses, including the keeping up of a house with 44 bed-rooms and the entertainment of candidates for ordination ... ..	1,678	9	5
Repair of houses ... ..	1,190	7	3
Coal, gas, and electric lighting ... ..	379	9	5
Stabling account ... ..	895	0	4
Garden and farm ... ..	723	9	6
Stationery, printing, and postage ... ..	388	9	4
	7,026	2	4

Which leaves a balance of £2,973 17s. 8d. In the words of Mantalini, Dem the demnition 17s. 8d., ditto the odd £73, and call it a level £2,900 per year.

The Bishop's balance-sheet is a most ingenuous document. He deducts the cost of rent, rates, taxes, firing, lighting, garden, coachmen, food—even stationery and postage is not omitted—and discovers, as a result, that all he really gets as being Bishop of London is just under £60 per week. And yet people have the impudence to talk about the fatal opulence of Bishops! Poor Dr. Ingram! What rigid economy he must practise in order to clothe himself and find himself in pocket money on a paltry £60 per week! How he must envy the comparatively wealthy "docker," with his clear sixpence per hour—when he is at work. Yet I could, and will, show a more wonderful thing still. The Bishop is a Christian; I am not. He believes in miracles; I do not. And yet, were I to draw up an annual balance-sheet on the same plan, and deduct all I spend on rent and rates and household expenses, and adding a trifle in the shape of clothing, I could show that year after year I live on *nothing at all*. I do not know how it is done; I only know that I do it. The Bishop may, perhaps, care to quote this as an instance of miracles occurring even to an avowed Freethinker.

The picture of the Bishop of London struggling along on a pitiful £60 per week pocket money is a touching sight. In these degenerate and luxury-loving days it is a rare picture of abstinence and mortification. One would not be surprised to hear at any moment that Dr. Ingram had decided to cast off the burden and had resigned his post. But the Church is a rare breeding-ground for men who display a keen sense of duty and an abnormal capacity for bearing the uncomfortable without complaint; and even though such an unlikely thing were to happen, we should not be at all surprised to find hundreds of clergymen willing—nay, anxious—to occupy the empty post. The spirit which induced the early Christians to beg for martyrdom at the hands of their Pagan judges is not yet extinct in the Church.

But ridiculous as is the Bishop's balance-sheet, with its deduction from income of the whole cost of living, it is worthy of a serious word of criticism. Under ordinary conditions it would be out of place to publicly criticise either what an individual is paid by those who employ him or his mode of spending what he receives. But the Bishop of London is a public man, he is paid by the State, every member of the State contributes something towards his salary, he is bishop of a Church of which I am a member—by no choice of my own—and in addition he has made a public statement on the matter.

There is, consequently, nothing out of place in considering the subject from the point of view of service and payment.

On his own showing Dr. Ingram is the holder of a post which brings him in £60 per week and "everything found." From the point of view of the public it does not matter whether F. W. Ingram or someone else holds the post; it is not likely to be vacant for want of a candidate, so that one can drop a particular personality and ask, What service does a Bishop of London render the State that such a payment can be said to be honestly earned? So far as the present incumbent is concerned, all that can be said of him is what can be said of Dr. Clifford. He has energy. When that is said, all is said. Of culture, in the widest sense, he shows but scanty traces; of intellectual ability there is no evidence of anything above mediocrity. In all the numerous reports of his addresses, sermons, speeches, one never comes across a striking phrase, an expression that evidences the thinker or betrays the scholar. Created Bishop by a Prime Minister with religious beliefs of an extremely dubious character, it might almost be that his elevation was intended as an object lesson in the intellectual decay of the Christian faith.

What does a Bishop of London give the State in return for the colossal sum of £200 per week? He overlooks the affairs of the Church, which is an affair of the Church alone, and can be put on one side. He preaches sermons, which nowadays largely consist in saying in the pulpit things which he would not dare to say on an open public platform or in journals where a reply was permitted. In such places as these latter he will admit the profound changes modern thought and investigation have brought about in religious beliefs; in the pulpit he continues to preach as though the Bible contained nothing but literal history, and as though no breath of criticism had ever been raised against Christian doctrines. To ask the question whether we are doing well in maintaining men who thus perpetuate intellectual insincerity is to answer it. The present Bishop prides himself on being instrumental in the building of many new churches. London, he says, "would become quite a pagan place" but for the efforts of himself and his predecessors. Well and good—for a clergyman; but, so far as a layman is concerned, it is the housing question, not the churching question, that is all-important. What the people need is not more churches, where they can meet once a week, and be burdened with the support of more parsons, but more and better houses, where human life can be lived with a fair regard to decency and comfort. The Bishop of London's Fund, we are told, has saved East London from becoming pagan. That, again, is important—for parsons. But will someone inform the world what effect has this fund, or clerical efforts, had in saving East London from the curse of excessive rents and slum dwellings? Here and there a solitary clergyman may have said a word in season, but what effect has the general body of the clergy had on these questions? The elevation of a district has meant to them better attendance at church; and, often enough, a deeper degradation has been a condition of better attendance, poverty driving many there in the hope of benefiting by church charities. It is the simple truth that all the real good done in this direction has been achieved by an ignoring of religious methods, and that this would have been accomplished had the clerical element been eliminated altogether.

The Bishop of London has said much on various occasions concerning the great moral influence of his "self-sacrificing" band of East-end clergymen. We need not discuss their "self-sacrifice," nor need it be denied that any person who leads a decent life is, so far, a good example to all around. But the idea that the morality of a people is altered for the better by parish visitors or courses of sermons is one of those superstitions that has a wide vogue, and, it must be confessed, extends much beyond the ranks

of the clergy. But in this matter the clergy have, by their persistence in a wrong method, hindered, rather than promoted, the development of morality. Ultimately, morality is a matter of organisation, of instinct, rather than of ratiocination. A knowledge of moral precepts, whether culled from works on ethics or heard in sermons, never made people moral, and never will. It is the ever-present forces of life, heredity, surroundings, that determine conduct, and the only way of affecting conduct for the better is by modifying the influence on human nature of those forces that are persistent and inescapable.

Presumably a Bishop is paid because he is a leader of the people. But in what does he lead? Is there any subject under the sun on which we should be content to take the bench of Bishops as leaders? Do they lead in science, in art, in literature? Have they any authoritative voice in politics or sociology? Why, to find them on one side is a signal for every reformer to take the other. Do they even lead in religion? Is it not indisputable that of all the developments in our better knowledge of Christianity not one has originated with these men who have drawn huge sums from the State on the ground of their being our guides and instructors. A hardworking scientist or literary man, should he fall on evil days, may receive a dole of something under £200 a year. To a Bishop of London, with the ability of an average penny-a-liner, we pay £200 *per week*. Do we get our money's worth?

The Bishop's balance-sheet deserves to be printed and sent round to every member of the working-classes as a Christmas card. The follower of a man who had not where to lay his head, he maintains forty-four bedrooms. The follower of one who commanded his disciples to take neither scrip nor purse with them, he spends £723 a year on a garden and farm. A believer in visiting the poor, he does it in a carriage at a cost of £895 annually. Believing that it is easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven, the Bishop pockets his annual £10,000, bravely takes the risk, and with tongue in cheek explains that it is only by the most rigid economy that he makes ends meet. One hardly knows which to admire most, the Bishop's self-sacrifice, his unending struggle with poverty, or his confidence in the gullibility of the average believer.

C. COHEN.

### "Can a Man Sin against God?"

THE subject of sin cannot possibly be evaded by thoughtful people. It forces itself upon their attention at every turn. During the last two years it has been discussed with unusual vehemence by Christians and Freethinkers alike. Both in the pulpit and on the secular platform, both in religious and non-religious journals, it has been the chief topic of discourse and debate. All Christians are agreed that man both can and does sin against God, while Secularists are equally unanimous in the opposite conviction. To the latter the actuality of sin against God is unthinkable, while the former are bound to regard it as wholly undeniable. Christianity, as a scheme of redemption, stands or falls with the alleged fact of sin against God. Christianity is a special contrivance for setting guilty sinners right with Heaven. No wonder, then, that Christian apologists are so enthusiastically eager to establish the actuality of sin against God, or to prove that man not only can but does sin against his Maker. The latest attempt to defend this position was made, a few weeks ago, by the Rev. R. Waddy Moss, D.D., Tutor in Systematic Theology at Didsbury College, in the third lecture of the present series at the Central Hall, Manchester. But a feebler attempt to bolster up a falling cause was never made. The title of the lecture, "Can a Man Sin against God?" would lead one to infer that Dr.

Moss had Mr. Robert Blatchford's famous chapter in *God and My Neighbor* in his mind; but the lecture itself evinces no acquaintance whatever with the powerful arguments of that chapter. In Dr. Moss's opinion, no argument is required in order to prove that man can sin against God, and so he contents himself, for the most part, with quoting Scripture and dogmatizing.

This lecture opens with a glaring falsehood, which at once excites a strong prejudice against the lecturer. Dr. Moss observes: "Someone has said with wisdom that a real Atheist is not to be found in the world." Well, if he believes such a ridiculous assertion, Dr. Moss's knowledge of the world must be extremely limited. If he only looked for them he would find thousands of very real Atheists within a hundred miles of Didsbury College. In every large city and town they form a great host. And yet this is how Dr. Moss proceeds:—

"If a man ventures to deny the existence of God as conceived by the Christian, or as conceived in any system at all, he still cleaves to some conception of God for himself, something that he recognises as superior in power to himself, something that in many of his moods, superstitious moods if you like, he considers as determining his destiny. The consequence is that a strict and complete Atheist, a non-Theist, a man who does not believe in any kind of God whatever, is probably not to be found amongst us."

A more outrageous misrepresentation of facts than is the above extract cannot be conceived. The writer of it must be either foolishly disingenuous or culpably ignorant. It would be much more accurate to affirm that at present a large proportion of people believe in no kind of God whatever. There are myriads of our fellow-beings to whom the term Nature represents all that is. Of any realm or power beyond or above Nature they have absolutely no knowledge. Of course, the sum-total of things is "superior in power" to any single part thereof; but we must not lose sight of the fact that the smallest portion is indissolubly connected with the grand whole. It is true that Atheists look upon the forces of Nature as impersonal or mechanical; but it is not true that they "conceive or represent them as God."

Although Dr. Moss thus denies the existence of "strict and complete Atheists," he yet finds it necessary to take two things for granted. "On the one hand," he says, "we must assume, I think, the existence of God, and, on the other, we must assume man's responsibility for his acts and omissions." But if these two assumptions are adopted, nothing remains to be proved. As a matter of course, Atheists hotly repudiate all such gratuitous assumptions, because they fail to explain the facts of life as we know them.

Dr. Moss assumes the existence of a remarkably well-defined Deity. He assumes his existence, and then describes him with as much familiarity as if he had been in actual residence at Didsbury College:—

"He is a God, who is not only almighty and wise, not only the Lord and Governor of all things, august and terrible in his lofty places, but a God of patience and grace, of compassion and loving-kindness, and, in Jesus Christ, God and Father of us all, supreme and patient and merciful to all men."

It needs some courage to assume the existence of such a God, and Dr. Moss's courage is quite equal to the task. Such is the God in the personal existence of whom our lecturer so firmly believes—a God in the image and after the likeness of men, though clothed with infinitude.

Well, on the assumption that God, as thus defined, exists, is it reasonable to hold that man can sin against him? God is infinite, all-wise, all-good, all-loving, and all-powerful—an infinitely perfect being. He does according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. He sits on his great White Throne and reigns supreme. Man is the work of the hands of this absolutely perfect being. Can the work of a positively perfect worker show any signs of imperfection? Dr. Moss asserts that "sin

must be possible to the subjects of a moral world," and that "if God invested man with power to choose between right and wrong, the possibility of doing wrong must be actual." Such an assertion is what Mr. G. Bernard Shaw would christen "a masterpiece of absurdity." If God made man in his own image and after his own likeness, as the Bible tells us, man must have started living a perfect being; but a perfect being cannot think imperfect thoughts nor be the author of imperfect deeds. The perfect God who made a perfect man could have invested his creature with power to choose nothing but good and right.

Dr. Moss advocates the freedom of the will; but what does he mean by "freedom" in such a connection? What is a perfect being free to do or not to do? Surely a pure nature cannot choose impure ways, any more than a noble nature can be base. It is difficult to know what Dr. Moss understands by "a moral world," or "a moral race." He says that "God seems to have chosen the method of permitting evil to exhibit and express itself in order that he might secure the worship of a moral race." But is not God himself a moral being? If he is, why must man be capable, if not actually guilty, of immorality, before he can worship a moral God? Did God win his morality as the result of a definite act of choice? Or is he not in possession of free-will? What about the angels also? Are they not moral beings, although they are supposed never to have sinned? Or what about Christ, who, according to orthodoxy, not only never sinned, but was incapable of sinning? Was he not a moral being?

Dr. Moss utters greater nonsense still, if possible, when he assures us that "there are familiar conceptions of the unity or solidarity of the race, which seem to imply the possibility of sin." Did not the race exist potentially in Adam, whom God is said to have made perfect? And out of perfection no imperfection can issue. Certainly the solidarity of a race whose head was created perfect implies neither the actuality nor the possibility of sin. It is true that "all men are in some sense members one of another and related to one another, with claims and reciprocal obligations," but it is not true that the possibility of sin is necessarily implied in any right conception of their unity. The perfect children of a perfect father would naturally be perfect brothers and sisters of one another.

The only true inference is that if God made man perfect man cannot sin against his Maker. Or, if God made man, and man sins, the responsibility of the sinning is God's, not man's. It was to relieve God of so tremendous a responsibility that the Devil was invented. God made man in his own image and after his own likeness; but the Devil stepped in and maliciously dulled the image and obscured the likeness, converting man into a hideous caricature. Or, to change the figure, man began life as a loyal son of the Highest; but ere long Satan, being the embodiment of all subtlety, wormed his way into man's heart and won his affection, from which date man has naturally ever preferred sin to holiness, and death to life. In due time God sent his only begotten Son into the earth, so that by living and dying here he might snatch the rebels of the fall from under the dominion of Satan, and restore them to the kingdom of his Father. Dr. Moss may repudiate this patristic theology as woefully crude; but he must admit that it was a fair inference from the teaching of the Bible.

We have now reached the end of Dr. Moss's argument, if argument it can be called. The remainder of the lecture is devoted to quotations from Scripture, which necessarily appeal only to believers in God. In no part of the discourse does the reasoning appeal, even remotely, to Atheists.

Now, as God's creature or child, is it not evident that man is a complete and colossal failure? The whole human race is a living witness to the bungling incompetence of the Creator. Who can say, studying the life of the world from the beginning of history until now, that humanity has been an eminent success? Taking it as a whole, it is glaringly un-

worthy of an infinitely good and just God. Let us now drop the assumption of the Divine Existence, and let us argue on the opposite assumption, the assumption that there is no God. What is man according to this assumption? He is the latest, most refined and complex product of Nature's evolutionary processes, which have been going on for hundreds of millions of years. He bears unmistakable marks of having been evolved from lower, even from the lowest, living forms. His upward journey has been long and slow and devious. While making the ascent of the hill of life he has had many serious tumbles and disastrous falls; but his prevailing tendency has ever been upwards. He has often slipped downwards; but his face has never looked backwards, but always towards the summit. Never before was he quite so high as he is to-day; and he is still rising. He is not perfect yet, and it is more than probable that he shall never reach perfection. His future is wrapped in impenetrable mystery. Nobody can tell what Nature may do next. All we can say is that man is still learning the high art of living among his fellows.

Sin is a purely theological or religious term, and always implies guilt, or the sense of blameworthiness. Men are not sinners in that sense at all. They make numerous mistakes, but they are mistakes that arise from their temperament or environment, and, consequently, mistakes that can be avoided only by improving the temperament and modifying the environment. In other words, they are mistakes which are incidental to growth and development. Under existing circumstances they are inevitable; but then the circumstances may be altered, and, as a matter of fact, are constantly in the process of changing. Natural Selection is the greatest force in the Universe, and it is perpetually at work. It is the struggle for life that develops mankind and gives them their distinctive stamp; and it is the struggle for life that blossoms into the struggle for the life of others. It is just at this point that the moral law looms into view as the law that regulates life in society. This law is a growth. It has developed in exact proportion to the development of society. There has never been, and there can never be, an immutable ethical standard, or code. Ethical codes are the altering adjuncts of ever-changing social conditions. What was considered right a hundred years ago is pronounced wrong to-day, while many of the things which were prohibited then are readily permitted now.

The conclusion of the whole matter, therefore, is that man cannot sin against God, because, if there be a God, he is the author of man's nature, and must be held responsible for the actions of that nature. For precisely the same reason man cannot sin against Nature. He is exactly what Nature has made him, and cannot help himself. His only hope of conquest over the weaknesses and diseases of his constitution lies in valiant struggle against them. In no other way is deliverance possible. To live is to struggle; but the act of struggling yields a rich harvest of joy. The persistent, honest struggler never goes without his reward.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Camberwell Dancers.

DANCING is the most catholic and the most primitive of human joys, apart, of course, from purely fundamental ones. Modern dancing in ball-rooms is rather a departure from the terpsichorean art properly so-called, since it is adulterated with extrinsic elements. It would be a poor pastime if confined to members of one sex. Your ball-room dancer, as such, has countenance to disport and gratify himself more than your even Christian. It is a fearful speculation to think what some of us would be capable of, if other delights were only made conventional.

The other day I saw a placard which was rather a curiosity. It announced a "Red-Hot Revival" to

be conducted at the Camberwell Baths by the "Pentecostal Dancers" from America. Two Scripture texts were well selected to arouse one's interest. These were "Let them praise his name in the dance," from the Old Testament, and "For these men are not drunken, as ye suppose," from the New. The affair was to be conducted by a number of American ladies and gentlemen, and was to last ten days. I resolved to be present at the opening, and this article is the result.

I had heard of religious dancing before. Did not David dance before the ark of the Lord, and that in a costume all his own? Perhaps these American ladies and gentlemen, in their enthusiasm for the exploits of the son of Jesse—well, I went to see them dance.

The audience was very scattered. The six women and two men who occupied the platform were engaged in singing one of those blood-and-fire salvation hymns which "General" Booth has made popular. With the chorus came the dance.

I have seen the dance of the Dervishes, the kangaroo dance, the cake-walk, the *can-can*, the serpentine dance, the *tarantelle*, the horn-pipe, and even the *danse du ventre*. But I had never seen anything so gross and meaningless, so inartistic and unprofitable as this. There was nothing voluptuous or entertaining about it. It was not a dance at all. It was a series of clumsy jumps, in comparison with which the antics of the foot-stamping Zulus are miracles of gracefulness. And a wretched harmonium eked out a pleuritic accompaniment.

While this "dancing" was in progress the performers uttered strident yells or piercing shrieks, according to their respective genders. Some small boys among the audience, no doubt animated by a strictly reverential desire to participate in the spiritual life of the revivalists, assisted materially in this part of the proceedings by divers war-whoops and cat-calls "on their own."

After which a frenzied prayer from an unpardonable atrocity in whiskers. He addressed the Lord in the drawing *patois* of the States. My own linguistic knowledge being confined to European tongues, much of his discourse escaped me—or perhaps it was I who escaped.

I gathered, however, that he wanted to say right here that he guessed the seven millions of people in this yer city wud jist be tumblin' over won another ter git inter this yer meetin' ef they cud only size up the great and glo-rious prospect of eternal salvation for sinners. He said other things which *Freethinker* readers have heard before.

The small audience was more amused than shocked. It is true one gentleman declared the proceedings to be "red-hot blasphemy," and looked almost as much offended as a Plymouth Brother at a Freethought meeting. But most of those present seemed to regard it as a foretaste of the Christmas pantomimes. For myself, having passed the stage when anything in the shape of religious folly could astonish me, I contented myself with taking a few notes, with an eye to possible "copy."

E. R. WOODWARD.

### The Fall of Man.

THE foundation of the Christian Church is the double doctrine that man was created perfect and that he wilfully fell into sin. If man was made imperfect, there could be no fall; and without a fall there would have been no need for a Savior and an atonement, and no need for a priest and a Church. The whole Bible is written on the supposed fall, so that there is no need for any elaborate quotations and arguments to prove the position. But two verses may be cited as an illustration of the doctrine: "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them" (Gen. i. 27); "Lo, this only have

I found, that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccl. vii. 29). There is no room to dispute or doubt that the fall of man from a state of perfection is the foundation on which the Church is built.

It is true that some Christian teachers fight shy of the doctrine at the present time, as recent discussions prove. The more enlightened are getting ashamed of the doctrine, and say that it is only an allegory with a spiritual meaning. But does such teaching not take away the only foundation of the Church? And does not such teaching show more anxiety to save the Church than to teach the truth? I fear that the Higher Criticism and putting new meanings into old, obsolete terms is nothing better than a new development of priestcraft to preserve the Church and its emoluments for the priestly class.

The more I think of it the more convinced I am that all the Churches and all the religions of the world are the creations of priestcraft allied with kingcraft. That all the theologies are nothing but superstitious myths and errors no intelligent man can doubt; they are too absurd for even an intelligent savage to believe. And the most advanced and refined of religions, when you analyse them, are found to be as false and preposterous as the lowest in the scale. How have they arisen? Is it at all likely that the ignorant masses conceived and invented the myths and rituals of all the religions? Such a thing is not only improbable, but impossible. It seems to me a certainty that the men of superior intelligence, who made themselves into kings and priests, invented the stories and myths to influence the masses and keep them in subjection. The priestly mark is palpable on all of them. It is the priests that made the people so superstitious, by example, teaching, and compulsion, and it is the priests that keep credulity alive everywhere. And I see no great probability of emancipating mankind until the influence of all priests is broken.

Every Church and religion in the world is founded on errors, falsehoods, and superstitions, invented by priests and rulers, and taught to the people from the cradle to the grave, that they might serve and support the altar and the throne. The priests were ignorant, brutal, and debased; and that is the reason why the religions of the world are so absurd and full of errors. The people were more ignorant than the priests, and had less intelligence, and they readily believed all that was told them. A child will believe anything told him, and so will ignorant, unintelligent men. Had the people been taught, and intelligent, they never would have believed the absurdities in their religions; and as soon as the people are educated they will abandon their faith in supernaturalism, as well as in the priest and the Church. It cannot be too often repeated that the real founders of all religions were the priests, and they told the people it was God, to give importance to their own inventions.

The story of the creation of man perfect in the image of God has been given up even by all Christian leaders of any culture and intelligence. Only ignorant and superstitious believers ever attempt to defend the absurd doctrine. The inventor of the story thought, or pretended to think, that God was a person with a body like a man, or otherwise man could not be created in his image—that is, being made like him. The primitive God was a material being like man, limited and localised, but greater and stronger. Early man had no idea of a spiritual and an infinite God. Had he an idea that God was an infinite Spirit, he would have known that it was impossible to create man in his image. To think that a finite atom can be made in the image of an infinite God is an infinite absurdity. It is claimed that the idea of God held by Deists and Christians at the present time is very superior to the primitive conception of him. But I think that is a debatable point, to say the least of it. To the primitive man God was a person something like himself, but greater, nobler, and more majestic. His God was a being he could make an image of, to place in his

temple and his house. However absurd, it was a clear and definite conception. But Christians and Deists have no objective idea whatever of their God, as far as I have been able to learn; or, if they have, they never reveal what it is to others in understandable language. All I have read and heard about the modern Deity is a misty nebosity, indefinite and without form, which no man can explain or understand. I defy all the Deists of the world to make an objective image or portrait of the God they so loudly profess to believe in. The superiority of such a God it is impossible to see.

Some apologists, especially scientific and professional ones, seem to be trying to make or evolve a new God, a limited and an imperfect one; a God that does all he can, but requires the assistance of man to help him to do more and better. Being imperfect himself he made man as perfect as he could at the time, and he keeps pegging at it to improve him, and through his great prophet Lodge calls on all mankind to help him. Of all the Gods created by man in his own image, and all of them are created by him, the last new one seems to be the acme of imbecility and absurdity. And the churches rejoice greatly in their new allies, although the support they give is more damaging to the faith than the attacks of Rationalists.

The only shade of truth that can be seen in the new God of some scientist is its similitude to nature. If their God is nature, under a new name, there may be some semblance of truth in their conception of deity. Nature is the Universe, and it includes everything. And from a human point of view nature is very imperfect, and does very imperfect work. In nature there is conscious intelligence, for man is in nature. But whether nature as a whole is intelligent, no man can say. As nature includes all, it is stupid nonsense to talk about anything outside of it. There cannot be anything behind, above, or under universal nature. Whatever there is, is in nature, not outside of it. To talk of a purpose in nature is nothing better than dreaming, guessing, or imagining, as it is beyond the intelligence of man to know. Judging from results, we might say if nature has any purpose whatever, she is controlled by cross purposes, for she works one day to build up and another day to pull down. But, as a matter of fact, we are all in utter ignorance on the point, as nature has not yet revealed the secret to any man.

But we know that everything is the work of nature, and that man as well as animals began to be in a very imperfect state. And if we take nature as a God, we know that man can alter, check, improve, and help on his work. He has done so in the past, and is doing so more than ever in the present. And what has been done, and is being done, is a ground for hoping and trusting that more still will be done to secure more perfection, and to remedy more imperfections, in the future. That is the very thing that scientists, doctors, teachers, builders, inventors, engineers, and all industrial workers are doing over all the world.

All the facts of science demonstrate the truth that man was not created perfect in the image of God. There is not a scientist, or an educated and an intelligent man that believes in the creation myth, or will venture to defend it. The lowest savage at the present day is an angel compared to his primitive ancestor. Man has been gradually rising from his beginning. At first he was no more a man than an ape is a man—he was an animal. For countless ages he lived with the animals, fighting with them for food and shelter. He lived mostly on his victims, as other wild beasts did, and, like them, sheltered in caves and holes. He had no tools, no clothing, no language. He had no fire, no arts, no agriculture. And naturally he had no more morality than the beasts have to-day. It was by slow degrees he learned to speak, to make fire, clothing, tools, huts, and all other things that he enjoys to-day. His first tools were made of stone, then bronze, then iron. His first clothing was of leaves and skins of animals.

His first house was a mud cabin. All that constitutes civilisation has been painfully acquired during untold ages of continuous misery.

Man was not created perfect in the image of God. He was not created at all, but evolved like other animals and plants. Therefore he never fell, but rose from his low beginning, and his rising has not yet ended. The doctrine of the fall from a state of perfection is not true; and, as all the churches are founded on this doctrine, it is clear that they are founded on the sands of delusion, and cannot long stand. As man never fell, there is no original sin, no need for an atoning Savior, and certainly no need for a priest and a church. The leading priests are conscious of the danger, and are trying to put layers of new doctrines as a foundation under the building. But it will not succeed; the process will complete its destruction. The attempt to put the wine of new doctrines into the old bottles of myths and falsehoods will only burst the bottles, and bottles and contents will be lost, to the gain of all but the priests, who run the old and the new delusions as a craft.

R. J. DERFEL.

### Acid Drops.

From the *Athenæum* review of Dr. Conway's *Autobiography* we see that he refers to "the vigorous freethinker and reformer George Jacob Holyoake, the last man imprisoned for atheism." Now it is not true that Mr. Holyoake was imprisoned for atheism. No man ever was imprisoned for atheism in this country. Atheism is not a crime known to the English law. Mr. Holyoake was imprisoned for *blasphemy*, under the common law; the same law under which Carlile, Hetherington, Southwell, Paterson, and other Freethinkers were imprisoned in the first half of the nineteenth century. Mr. Holyoake, after a Socialist lecture (we believe) at Cheltenham in 1842, in answer to a question, said that he would put the Deity on half-pay. It was a very sensible observation; and it would have been still more sensible if he had said that he would superannuate the Deity without a pension; for the priests would be the only sufferers. For that sensible observation Mr. Holyoake was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. His offence was *blasphemy*, he was tried and sentenced under the *blasphemy* laws, and he was imprisoned as a *blasphemer*. He and his friends may not like the word. But that is not our affair. We are simply concerned with the truth. And facts are facts.

Forty years afterwards the editor of the *Freethinker* was charged with blasphemy, tried and sentenced for blasphemy, and imprisoned for twelve months as a blasphemer. Mr. Foote was released on February 25, 1884. Since then no man has ever suffered under the blasphemy laws in England. How then was Mr. Holyoake "the last man imprisoned" for an offence against religion?

The Bishop of London has been explaining how poor he is, in spite of his £10,000 a year. His bishopric looks a well-paid job, but, bless you, he loses on it. There are some cavilling sceptics, however, who hint that the Bishop's financial statement needs careful auditing. We don't say it, but they say it, that the item of £895 a year for "Stable account: Three men, four horses" is extremely liberal. It means (say) £150 a year for each man, and £100 a year for each horse, with £45 over for a Christmas treat or a summer holiday. These cavilling sceptics ask, with a vicious air, whether it is usual to maintain stables at this rate.

Just fancy the Lord and Master of the Bishop of London—Jesus Christ, to wit—spending £895 on his stable account! Is it not simply unthinkable? No doubt Bishop Ingram "follows Christ," but he follows him at a very respectful distance.

While the Bishop of London is explaining how he loses a thousand pounds a year on a ten thousand pounds job, it is instructive (in its way) to hear what the leader of the Camberwell Jumpers, *alias* the Pentecostal Dancers, has to say on the question of finance. Mr. Obadiah Kent-White tells a *Daily Chronicle* interviewer: "Money never comes in ahead of our needs. When we are in need we pray, and our prayers are sometimes answered to the extent of three thousand dollars at a time." Delightful! We wish Freethought societies had the same simple recipe for raising the wind.

It was to be foreseen that the men of God who see that Christianity is getting a good deal played out should welcome the new Welsh revival as likely to make things hum a bit and give a fillip to their languishing business. The Rev. F. B. Meyer, a leading player (after Dr. Clifford, you know, after Dr. Clifford) in the comedy of Passive Resistance, says that "Evidently it is impossible to account for this movement on any human or natural grounds." He wishes that "it may spread, not only through the Principality, but throughout the entire kingdom." He thinks it is the only thing that will put down "irreligion, drunkenness, and impurity." That is how the reverend gentlemen permits himself to speak of those who do not believe *his* religion. He classes them with drunkards and profligates. After this exhibition who will cry

Alas for the rarity  
Of Christian charity  
Under the sun?

The less there is of it the better. It is the sourest thing in the world.

Here is a passage in Monday's *Daily News* from a letter by its "own correspondent" at Pontypridd:—

"A description of one meeting is practically a description of well nigh all the meetings. The service is introduced in the ordinary way, and then one becomes conscious of some remarkable "influence." It sways the whole congregation, and without any apparent cause all rise to their feet. Then follows a scene which cannot be described except as "indescribable." Some leap, others walk about holding up their arms, some shout Welsh words of praise and prayer. At one meeting in the valley women swooned away and others nursed them in the fashion of a mother nursing her child."

The correspondent goes on to relate how "a young collier stood up to pray" and "two or three of his friends clung to him, weeping, laughing, shouting." Yet the *Daily News* rather rejoices at this pious mafficking.

According to a paragraph in the *Leeds Mercury*, the Welsh revivalist was staggered by an interrupter at Cilywdd. While he was speaking in the middle of a service someone in the gallery cried out "There is no God." The revivalist "staggered as from a blow." Then he replied, "No God! No God! He shall realise that there is a God—and to-night. Presently we shall pray for him." But the praying does not seem to have been successful. At any rate, the interrupter, whoever he was, did not "find Christ" Not that night, anyhow.

Dr. Claude Taylor, speaking recently on behalf of Total Abstinence, deplored the amount of liquor consumed at Christmas. He remarked that the mortality rate always went up at that time. The amount of alcohol, he said, drunk in memory of the birth of Christ was something which true Christians ought to lay to heart. Apparently a good many true Christians, if they don't lay it to their hearts, lay it as near as they can get to that organ, namely, in their Little Marias. Some of them, too, might reply to Dr. Taylor that what was good enough for Jesus Christ is good enough for them. The Prophet of Nazareth, if we are to believe the New Testament, was a fairly free drinker. He was taunted with consorting with winebibbers. On one occasion he manufactured (or hocus-pocussed) a lot of water into wine in order to prolong a drinking bout. To represent him as a friend of Teetotalism, or the Bible as a text-book of it, is simply playing fast and loose with the facts.

Mr. Frederic Harrison, the eminent Positivist, is one of the old men who have been telling the readers of the Rev. R. J. Campbell's *Young Man* the secrets of health and long life. Mr. Harrison gives some very sensible rules of living, and ends with "Be content with what you have." This is easy enough to Mr. Harrison, who is wealthy. It is more difficult to the poor and distressed.

"More Bishops" is the great want of the Church of England. So says the Rev. W. Howard Stables. This gentleman's plan is to distribute the incomes of the existing Bishops amongst a much larger number. All prelates who sit in the House of Lords should have £3,000 a year, and all the others £1,000 a year. Even these salaries are pretty large for apostles of the religion of poverty and renunciation. Yet it is safe to say that the Bishops will never submit quietly to such a reduction. Mr. Stables' project is sure to be resisted tooth and nail.

There's a terrible lot of money still in the religion of "Blessed be ye poor." The late Mr. Gladstone's son, the Rev. Stephen E. Gladstone, has accepted the Duke of Devonshire's offer of the living of Barrowby, Lincolnshire, which is worth about a thousand a year. The Rev. S. E. G. is recruiting in Italy before beginning the duties of this "humble" situation.

Simple Christians may now sleep in peace. The miracles of the New Testament *did* happen. The Bishop of Worcester says so. He has looked into the matter, and commits himself to the statement with perfect confidence. It would be absurd to suggest that he has any personal interest at stake. To the mind of a Bishop both position and salary are lighter than a feather in the scales of judgment. Every sensible man would take an oath on that.

We were listening (for a change) to a parliamentary candidate the other evening. He was a Liberal in politics, and we imagine a lawyer by training; and, from his platform style, we judged that his hobby was amateur preaching. All he said (with one exception) was quite irreproachable, and he wound up with a nice, sentimental—but vague and worthless—reference to the equality and brotherhood which would be realised in some remote ages by our unborn posterity. The exception we have alluded to was distinctly comical, although it was not meant to be so. The Liberal candidate approached very gingerly the Education question. Amongst other things he said that they might be driven, however reluctantly, to accept the only logical policy, namely, that of Secular Education. Whereat a few auditors started enthusiastic applause, but they were not backed up by the rest, who were probably Chapel people for the most part, and sat still in freezing silence. Whereupon the candidate expressed a pious hope that they might *not* be driven to accept the only logical policy. The bulk of the meeting, being Nonconformists, did not want logic in that matter, and it would have been very illogical on the part of the candidate (whose object was the seat) to run counter to their wishes. He therefore trusted that religious people of all denominations might find a common agreement, by which religious teaching might be retained in the nation's schools. Both the candidate and his Chapel friends evidently thought it was quite right to use the money of Non-Christians to pay for the cost of Christian teaching in public schools. It was a first-rate object lesson in religious hypocrisy.

Here is a sample of the "agreement" we may expect amongst religious men of all denominations. The Flintshire Education Committee is considering the recommendation of a sub-committee that the Apostles' Creed (with which the apostles had absolutely nothing to do) be included in the syllabus of religious instruction for the Council schools. There has been one inconclusive discussion already, and the matter is to come up again, when we shall see what happens. Meanwhile we wish to draw attention to the fact that three Nonconformists supported the Bishop of St. Asaph in moving that the sub-committee's recommendation be adopted. The Rev. Richard Jones, Dr. Humphrey Williams, and Mr. James Price, all Nonconformists, are quite willing to have the Apostles' Creed taught in the ratepayers' schools. "When they do agree their unanimity is wonderful."

There are Baptists and Particular Baptists—and Baptists, we believe, who are not at all particular. The Rev. John Chadwick, of Stratford, seems a Particular Baptist. Appearing at the local Police Court to explain why he had not paid his rates, he said that "If he was told he must help to teach a child that bread became a body, that man had power to absolve from sin, and that there was only one true Church, he would sooner suffer death than do it." Well now, that *is* particular. Mr. Chadwick believes many things quite as absurd as those he is prepared to resist to the point of martyrdom. Bread becoming a body is really no more absurd than water becoming wine—or a boy being born without a father. It is astonishing what a fuss some people will make about other people's superstitions.

"Rot!" cried the Rev. W. J. Sommerville, representing Southwark on the Central London School District Committee, when Mr. John Akers, one of the managers of the Cuckoo Schools, Hanwell (the schools for the pauper children of the City and Southwark) protested against the frequency of punishments, including caning, solitary confinement, and reduced food. Mr. Sommerville is a Christian, but "Suffer little children to come unto me" seems a good deal out of his line.

Father Fenelly, parish priest, stood up for a school-teacher's right to give children "a good slashing." The Lucan magistrates could not agree with him. They fined Miss Annie F. McDonnell £1. This makes the pleasures of malignity expensive.

The Walpurgis festival on the Brocken has been prohibited by the police. It appears that the clergy are opposed to the "heathen orgies" celebrated there, and also to the ridicule which the performers cast on certain "Biblical personages." But there is only one such "personage" involved, and that is the Devil. Evidently the clergy look upon him as a

friend—and not without reason. He has been the making of their business.

A single man-eating tigress in the Sambalpur district has dined on forty-eight human beings during the past year. God made the tigress, and God made the people she has eaten. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

The total number of human deaths from wild beasts in India during the past year was 2,749. No less than 21,827 died from snake bite. The number of cattle destroyed by wild beasts was 86,232, and by snakes 9,994. These figures enable us to follow Mr. Gladstone's argument as to how Providence had fitted up the earth for man's habitation.

Reaction still scores its victories in France—in spite of the Republican government's overwhelming majority. M. Chaumié, the Minister of Public Instruction, has removed Professor Thalamas from the Lycée Condorcet, for having spoken critically, from his own point of view, of Joan of Arc. Joan is to be made a saint by the very Church which helped to burn her at the stake. For it is nonsense to talk of her having been murdered by the English. The English did, indeed, hand her over to a French tribunal; which was a bad enough crime, we admit; but they did not sentence her to death themselves; that was done by the French tribunal, which principally consisted of Bishops. And now the Clericals who killed her are howling down everybody who does not consider her to be something almost super-human.

For our own part, we think it impossible to praise that heroic girl too highly. Fervid and deluded she was, from a religious point of view; but that was the common fault of her age; her clear perception of the patriotic problem of her time, and her lofty simplicity and force of character, were all her own. And we are proud of the fact that it was David Hume, the great Freethinker, who first said a bold vindictory word for her. In his *History of England* he paid her a beautiful tribute, which showed how much his "cold sceptical" heart was in the right place. "This admirable heroine," he said, "to whom the more generous superstition of the ancients would have erected altars, was, on pretence of heresy and magic, delivered over alive to the flames, and expiated, by that dreadful punishment, the signal services which she had rendered to her prince and to her native country."

Mr. Edgar Speyer, the American-British millionaire, who wrote out cheques for £5,700 to compensate the sufferers from the Penny Bank failure at Needham Market, was justly cheered to the echo, and he received a truly splendid compliment at a local bazaar, where the company, headed by the Mayor of Ipswich, welcomed the popular benefactor by singing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Mr. Speyer and the Almighty changed places for once—much to the satisfaction of a number of Needham Market inhabitants. We presume, in common decency, that they did not mean to suggest that Mr. Speyer's donation was to be credited to God.

One of the witnesses in the Hooley-Lawson case was the Rev. James Harlick, of Biggleswade, who became a Director of one of Lawson's companies at £13 a month. His duties were "helping Mr. Lawson." That was all he knew. Being asked, "As a director, can't you tell us anything at all about these companies?" he replied "Not the slightest." If we imitated orthodox manners towards "infidels" we should call Mr. Harlick a very good Christian.

Jabez Balfour will be "out" again in a year or so. He was pious before his imprisonment, and we dare he will be as pious after it. His chief joy in the "stone jug" is singing in the choir.

Holy Russia has characteristic ideas of "awful crimes." One of these offences has been committed at Kazan, and it is so awful that lawyers refuse to defend the culprit, who is in irons under a strong guard. He is accused of stealing the miraculous Ikon of the Madonna of Kazan. It does not occur to the prosecutors that the Ikon could not be very "miraculous" if it could not protect itself against a common thief.

Rev. Silvester Horne, of Whitefield's Tabernacle, has made a startling discovery. According to the Lord's Prayer, we are to ask God for our daily bread. That is what Jesus Christ said. But what he meant was something very different. Two thousand years afterwards his real meaning comes to light—in Tottenham Court-road. Jesus Christ intended to say, only he hadn't time, that Christian men are

entitled to a fair day's work and a fair day's wage. Now we all know.

How they love one another! Two attempts have been made to blow up Springburn Church, Glasgow. The well-known affection between Catholics and Protestants is said to be the animating motive.

Scarborough Parish Church was visited lately by the Mayor and Corporation, and the sermon was preached, according to the local *Mercury*, by "the Bishop." We don't know which Bishop it was, so we shall have to call him simply "the Bishop" in the course of our observations. And now let it be said that a collection was taken up for the Scarborough Hospital, and that after a very earnest appeal by the preacher it realised the wonderful sum of £11 0s. 7d. We call this *wonderful*, and so it was in view of the Bishop's sermon. For he told his congregation that hospitals were purely Christian institutions; they were "the result of Christianity," and "people never cared for the sick and poor before Christianity came." Surely, then, in the face of such partisan boasting, the collection *was* wonderful.

Every bit of the Bishop's declaration was an absolute untruth. The first hospitals in the world were *not* Christian hospitals. Every ancient temple of Esculapius (the god of healing) was really a hospital. Hospitals were established in India, under the Buddhist King Asoka, before the Christian era. Public provision was made for the treatment of the sick poor in ancient Egypt. And the same is true of Pagan Rome. These facts, and others like them, the Bishop ought to know; but it appears that he does not, for we are loth to believe that he deliberately lied to his congregation.

The Bishop made one remark that gave his whole case away. He said that only a few years ago there was no hospital in Scarborough. Was it because there were no Christians in the town? Nothing of the kind. It was because—in spite of nearly two thousand years of the only religion that ever brought hospitals—the Scarborough Christians had never thought of having one. We believe they had a racecourse instead.

The Moody-Sankev revival combination was broken up several years ago. It was the act of God, of course—for, according to Christianity, everything is the act of God—in order to make room for the Torrey-Alexander combination. Mr. Moody went home to heaven, while Mr. Sankey lingered in this miserable vale of tears. We see by the newspapers that Mr. Sankey is still lingering. About two years ago he became partially blind; he is now completely so; and his health has become so precarious that his family have taken him down South, in order to escape the rigors of the Northern winter. From a human point of view, this is perfectly natural; from a religious point of view, it is calculated to raise a smile. Why should Mr. Sankey hesitate to join his old friend Mr. Moody? Why should he hold out as long as possible in the United States when he has a residence awaiting him in Paradise? Is it because, in his heart of hearts, he feels that the little bird in the hand is more valuable than the big bird in the bush?

In the *Freethinker* of November 20 we drew attention to a *War Cry* report of the conversion of a female infidel lecturer at Holloway. We sent a proof copy of our paragraph to the *War Cry* office by hand, and we have been waiting to see what would come of it. Nothing has come of it. The "Army" lies low and says nothing—after lying upright and saying too much. The female infidel lecturer, we may say, is a mythical personage. Lieutenant Black, who boasted of having converted her, is a reckless liar or a credulous fool; and the *War Cry* people, who traffic in exposed falsehood, are ten times worse than he is.

Another Salvation Army convert was reported in the *War Cry* of November 14. His conversion took place at the Clapton Congress Hall. He was an "Orchestral Leader," but he was convicted of sin and brought to God, and he announced his intention of resigning his theatrical engagement. Mr. W. Bindon, of Bristol, sent for the name and address of the convert. He received a reply, dated Dec. 3, from Joseph Harris, secretary, beginning with "Dear Comrade" and ending with "God bless you." Between these bits of blarney was a statement that the convert's name and address was (of course!) given "in confidence" and could not be disclosed. Well, if the identity of the convert was private, the case should have been kept private altogether. To advertise it as far as it plays your game, and to stop short at the point where investigation would become possible, looks a good deal more clever than honest.



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, December 11, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W., at 7.30, "Science and Immortality."

December 18, Queen's Hall, London.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—December 11, Liverpool.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 11, Manchester. January 22, Birmingham. February 12, Leicester.

J. JONES.—Shall be sent as requested. Glad to know you so cordially approve this way of advertising the *Freethinker*. Of course, as you say, copies should not be sent indiscriminately, but to thoughtful, likely people. Mr. Derfel will be pleased to learn that you "think very much" of his article on "Are There Any Christians?"

W. T. CARPENTER.—(1) In addition to Mr. Hilaire Belloc's book on Robespierre, there is a reprinted edition now obtainable of George Henry Lewes's *Life of Robespierre*, which was a bit of a potboiler, but, like all Lewes's work, of considerable merit. Mr. Belloc's companion volume on Danton should be read in company with Mr. A. H. Beesly's *Life of Danton*. Both are admirable studies, and were published almost simultaneously in 1899. (2) Mr. Bertram Dobell's volume of *Biographical and Critical Studies* by James Thomson ("B. V.") was reviewed at some length in the *Freethinker* at the time of its publication. We presume that the sale of the book during eight years has not justified Mr. Dobell in risking another volume of Thomson's prose. (3) Dr. Garnett's reference, some twenty years ago, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, to the "extraordinary felicity" of Thomson's translation of Leopardi's Dialogues, was the subject of comment by Walter Jerrold in last week's *Academy*. Mr. Jerrold wondered why Dr. Garnett's suggestion had not been acted upon; namely, that Thomson's translation should be "disinterred from the files of the *National Reformer* and made generally accessible." From a literary point of view, this ought to be done; from a commercial point of view, it is not likely to be done. Thomson's genius was too high and austere to be popular. There will never be "money in him."

HENRY GLASSE (Port Elizabeth).—(1) Yes, our Mr. Lloyd is probably the Johannesberg preacher you have in mind. He is not fond of blowing his own trumpet, but he appears to have enjoyed considerable popularity there. We can quite understand that the local Christians keep up a conspiracy of silence over his conversion to Freethought. When the Christians catch a minnow they let the whole universe know it; when they lose a whale they are as dumb as death. (2) We note what you say about the late Sir William Harcourt. We also fancy that there will be no more prosecutions in England for press rejoicings over the assassination of a crowned assassin. It can hardly be a crime to kill one man, and a virtue to kill thousands after enslaving millions.

WEST HAM BRANCH.—We must remind you that lecture notices which do not reach us by Tuesday morning are wasted. Your last week's postcard arrived on Thursday, and bore the postmark, "Forest Gate, November 30." We passed it over to Dr. Nichols for inspection.

IGNORANT.—We will see what can be done with your suggestion. Thanks. Copies of the *Freethinker* shall be posted to the addresses you supply. Send us the other addresses when convenient. We shall be glad to meet you and any of your friends at the Annual Dinner. There must be some merit in this journal if you have read it for fifteen years and still look forward to it every week.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

JOHN EASTON.—You have evidently come across a highly-imaginative liar. The man who told you that he saw Mr. Foote take out his watch in the Nelson-street Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and give God Almighty five minutes to strike him dead, ought to be writing for the Christmas numbers of religious journals, or doing foreign correspondence for the *Daily Mail*. Mr. Foote never did anything of the sort anywhere. That "watch" story is a very old one, and has done duty in respect to the leaders of Freethought for a century.

MADRICE ROGERS.—Kindly send us your address, so that we may return a legal document which you inadvertently enclosed in your envelope with the cutting.

E. R. WOODWARD.—Thanks for all your trouble in the matter. See paragraphs.

C. W. STYRING.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

F. DANIELS.—You ask us whether Atheism "can dispense with the belief in the existence of an eternal something." We reply that we dare say there is an eternal something, but we shall never live long enough to prove it. You ask what is meant by "unthinkable." We reply, anything that cannot be thought. What else could it mean? You ask us to "define time and space." We reply that we do not run either. Everybody knows what time and space are for all practical purposes. When you begin defining them metaphysically you start on an endless task. Metaphysicians have been discussing time and space for ages, and the amusement seems likely to continue.

OLD N.S.S.'ITE.—The affectation of an English Committee is now dropped, and it is officially admitted that Messrs. Robertson, McCabe, and Watts really represented the R.F.A. at Rome. The whole idea of an English Committee was fantastic.

There was nothing like it elsewhere. Existing organisations sent representatives to the Congress if they could. There was no collective representation of France, Belgium, Germany, or Spain; and the three delegates who came from America—Dr. Conway, Dr. Wilson, and Mr. Mangasarian—did not come in concert, but quite independently. This seems by far the best plan. It ensures *vital* representation.

A. G. LYE.—Glad to hear that Mr. Ward had good audiences at Coventry, and that his lectures were much appreciated.

J. G. DOBSON.—Thanks for circular. If you hear anything about the "reverent, intelligent, and fearless discussion," you might let us know.

J. BAXTER (Glasgow).—Miss Vance has handed us the 10s. you send from S. H., Cambuslang, who will probably see this acknowledgment.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges: Liverpool Branch, collection at Mr. Foote's lecture, £2 10s.

J. McK. B.—See "Acid Drops" for an answer to your question as to that Salvation Army convert at Holloway. Pleased to hear you enjoyed reading our *Book of God*.

W. BINDON.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

ALCHEM.—We have not seen the book you refer to. Bishop Gore is becoming quite a joker. Still, if science is becoming more modest, it is certainly not taking a leaf out of the Church's book.

HENRY SPENCE.—We have had three Liberal Hall lecture notices this week. There is a waste of effort somewhere.

G. SCOTT.—Received with thanks.

J. M. DAY.—Thanks. We shall be writing generally on the subject for the new year.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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### Sugar Plums.

The worst of dropping the Queen's Hall meetings for a time is that the audiences have to be worked up again on each occasion. It would be far preferable to keep the Freethought lectures going there continuously on Sunday evenings, but this means a greater outlay than can be afforded at present—unless that Freethought millionaire comes along and tells us to go on "regardless of expense." Considering these facts, and the wretched weather, Mr. Foote had a good audience on Sunday evening, and his lecture was certainly much appreciated. This evening (Dec. 11) we hope the hall will be crowded. By that time the advertising will have taken effect, and we may expect a large accession of strangers. Mr. Foote's subject is "Science and Immortality," and it will be treated in the light of recent works on the question.

Mr. Cohen had an excellent audience at Leicester on Sunday evening. To-day (Dec. 11) he visits Liverpool and delivers two lectures for the local N. S. S. Branch at the Alexandra Hall. No doubt he will have good meetings.

Sunday, December 18, will be devoted by the Liverpool Branch to "a benefit" for its able and hard-working, but we fear not too well paid, secretary and organiser, Mr. H. Percy Ward. There will be free admission to the afternoon lecture, with a collection; in the evening admission will be by ticket. The prices are sixpence and a shilling. There should be bumper audiences.

The Camberwell Branch of the National Secular Society, on the motion of Mr. Gallagher, an enthusiastic and able member who has lately joined, resolved to introduce the *Freethinker*, if possible, into the reading-room of the Camberwell Central Library. Mr. E. R. Woodward accordingly wrote to the Library Committee on behalf of the Branch. Soon afterwards he received a letter on the subject from Councillor A. B. Moss. Mr. Moss said that he had moved

that the Branch's request be acceded to. He pointed out that the *Freethinker* was a journal of advanced views, that it was of great literary merit, and that the views it expressed were worthy of the consideration of Freethinkers and Christians alike. Another member of the Council, with a view to shelving the application, moved the "previous question." After some vigorous speeches, a vote was taken. Seven voted for the previous question, and six against it. Mr. Moss advised Mr. Woodward to write to the Chairman of the Library Committee early in the new year, and added, "I think I shall then be able to induce the Committee to accede to your request." For which we beg to thank him. In the meanwhile Mr. Woodward has received a letter from the Town Clerk, which runs as follows:—"Your offer to supply a copy of the *Freethinker* for the Central Public Library weekly, has been submitted to my Public Libraries and Museums Committee. After careful consideration it was decided to take no action with regard to the matter." Which is not absolutely in agreement with Mr. Moss's report, though we have no doubt whatever that Mr. Moss's report is perfectly accurate. The explanation of the difference, we take it, is that bigots are fonder of doing acts of bigotry than of incurring the odium of a frank avowal of their miserable principles.

We beg our readers to bear in mind the fact that the boycott against the *Freethinker* is just as bad as ever. It is very convenient for other "advanced" people to have somebody in the field worse than themselves, and we are that somebody. We are the scapegoat for all the tribe. And we are sorry to say that this pleases a lot of "advanced" people as well as "the enemy." Not that we complain. We confine ourselves to regret. We took all the risks of our "thorough" policy with open eyes. Nevertheless we may appeal to our friends to do their utmost to counteract the boycott against us. We want, as we hope they want, to see the *Freethinker* widely circulated; and, on the material side, we don't want to die of starvation in the van of the attack upon the orthodox Port Arthur. When the end must come, toss our corpse into a ditch, or anywhere you please; but let us fight on as long as our natural strength lasts; that is the only boon we crave. And to this end our friends are desired to advertise and circulate the *Freethinker* all they can. One of the best ways is placing it judiciously in the hands of new readers. A considerable number of friends could easily take an extra copy (or more) for this purpose. Don't let them look upon the *Freethinker* as a weekly entertainment; let them look upon it as an apostolate—as a missionary effort to convert the real heathen, and rescue them from the hell of superstition. We have no hesitation in saying that a journal of the calibre and vigor of the *Freethinker*, if carried on in the interest of the opposite side, would be liberally supported by all sorts and conditions of Christians.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's little monthly magazine, the *Reformer*, used to be sent to us once upon a time, and it received notice in our columns. We are sorry to hear of its disappearance. Not even some of Mr. J. M. Robertson's best writing could save it from extinction. The fact is that it is a task of great difficulty to maintain a Freethought periodical. Only those who have tried it know what it means. We sometimes wonder how we have managed to keep the *Freethinker* going. And the *Freethinker*, after all, is the only Freethought journal in England that has really lived during the past fourteen years.

*Secular Thought* (Toronto) ceased to appear weekly some time ago, but we are glad to see that it comes out all right every fortnight. We should be very sorry to know that Canada was without a single Freethought organ. No doubt Mr. Ellis has a hard task to maintain his publication, and we trust he will find financial friends to make up for the loss he sustained by the death of Captain Adams. We note with pleasure that, in the last two numbers of *Secular Thought* to hand, the editor has introduced some of our "Rome Congress" notes to his readers.

The terrible, wicked, vulgar *Freethinker* is not favored with a review copy of Dr. Moncure D. Conway's *Autobiography*. This is no fault of his, of course; it is the publisher who sees to these matters; and Messrs. Cassell & Co. have rather a pious reputation. Still, we are unable to give our readers an account of Dr. Conway's new work, which we are sure must be very interesting; for we do not command a millionaire's purse, and when we give thirty shillings for a couple of volumes, it has to be something we *must* have—like the folio Beaumont and Fletcher that Charles Lamb knocked the bookseller up for at midnight, with the hard-earned price of it clutched in his quivering hand. Our readers, therefore, will miss what might not have been the worst review of Dr. Conway's book, and Messrs. Cassell & Co. may miss the sale of a few copies. But that is *their* business.

Dr. Conway played a manly part at the time of our own imprisonment, and we shall always be grateful to him for his bold attitude. Unfortunately we do not know whether he has said anything about the matter in his *Autobiography*.

We take the following from a letter by a correspondent in the *Daily Telegraph* "Do We Believe?" controversy:—

"I have a tolerably large acquaintance with the teaching profession, and I must say the great majority do not believe. Many live in terror lest their opinions should become known, but others openly and emphatically denounce Biblical instruction, while they still continue to give such lessons under compulsion."

It is good to see the truth leaking out in this way.

Mr. S. L. Hughes, who writes the "Sub Rosa" column in the *Morning Leader*, dealt racyly with the Bishop of London's distressful account of how he loses money on his present job, and concluded with an excellent suggestion. "The British public," Mr. Hughes said, "is not unsympathetic when a case of genuine distress is brought to its notice, and it seems to me that if the archbishops and bishops were to march to Hyde Park, or to explain their woes in Trafalgar-square, something might be done."

Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, in the November number of his *Liberal Review* (Chicago), which arrives very late at our office, notes our reproduction of his two articles on the "Conservatism of Woman" and on "Omar Khayyam," and refers to the *Freethinker* as a "splendid publication." We have another article of Mr. Mangasarian's in type and hope to introduce it to our readers next week.

Mr. Mangasarian mentions the new edition of 10,000 copies of the *New Catechism* which is just published in London. This is the publication which we spoke so highly of in our "Rome Congress" notes. It is in every way admirable, and we should be glad to hear of its circulation by myriads. Mr. Mangasarian has one complaint, however, of the new London edition. "We trust," he says, "that the picture of the author on the title-page will not prejudice the public against the work, although it will require some heroism, after seeing the picture, to buy the book."

Many years ago we made the same mistake that Mr. Mangasarian makes now with respect to the Bruno monument at Rome. When we saw Rome with our own eyes, and indirectly by the aid of a map of the Eternal City, we perceived that the Compo dei Fiori is *not* "under command of the windows of the Vatican." It is a considerable distance from the palace of the poor Papal prisoner. But a pardonable blunder in Roman topography does not detract from the fine eloquence of Mr. Mangasarian's account of his visit to the monument of the martyr of martyrs.

Mr. George Macdonald's pen is active again on "Observations" in the New York *Truthseeker*, and we are glad to see it, for he is a writer of humor and originality. In the last number to hand Mr. Macdonald writes characteristically on the Rome Congress and the irrepressible eloquence of the Latin delegates. Incidentally he remarks that "there could have been present no man with a better title to be heard in a Freethought Congress than the successor of Bradlaugh, the president of the National Secular Society, Mr. Foote."

We beg to call attention again to the remarkably cheap edition of David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* which is advertised on our last page. As we stated last week, it is one of the finest, subtlest, and most daring works of one whom Huxley called the greatest thinker of the eighteenth century. The *pros* and *cons* are advanced with extraordinary power and impartiality. Hume holds the balance so evenly that it is only by reading between the lines that one sees how he himself inclines to Agnosticism. The work is characterised, too, by all the charm of Hume's philosophical style. In short, the book is one that every Freethinker should keep by him, and read again and again; as, of course, it is one that a Freethinker might lend without apprehension to his most tender-minded acquaintances. And the price of this book of more than a hundred pages is only *fourpence!*

Friends of the *Freethinker* are once more reminded of the fact that we are willing to post a weekly copy to any addresses they will kindly send us of persons who are likely to be interested in such a journal. A great many persons would become subscribers to the *Freethinker* if they only knew of it. And where persons have some liberality to start with a journal like the *Freethinker* will frequently become, after half-a-dozen copies have been read, a very welcome weekly visitor.

## Creation.—II.

## AN OPEN LETTER TO A BISHOP.

THAT matter began to be, or will cease to exist, it is easy to affirm, and as easy to deny; but all analogy points to its eternity. Science shows us that matter cannot be destroyed any more than it can be created, and force is never diminished although it assumes different manifestations. The presumption, therefore, is in favor of the everlasting existence of both, whether in the ultimate analysis they are co-eternals, or different aspects of the one infinite substance of the universe. I say the *presumption* is in its favor, and before that presumption can be shaken you must give solid reasons for supposing that the universe had a commencement. It is futile, my lord, to observe that its eternity is inconceivable, since it is equally impossible to conceive of its beginning or ending. Where experience fails us reason moves but blindly, and speculation has no other guide than the light of analogy. And what analogy lends the slightest color to your hypothesis of Creation? The highest mind of which we have any knowledge is the mind of man, and the mind of man cannot create, it can only conceive. The utmost man is able to do is to move matter from one position to another. He does so in conformity with his conceptions; but, like himself, his "creations" are not imperishable. The universe which produced him finally absorbs him; his proudest "creations" may last for a few thousand years, but the effacing hand of time is ever at work upon them, and sooner or later they disappear, unable to resist the claim of Nature who allows of no eternity but her own.

Recurring for a moment to your treatment of Genesis, I see you remark that "to all persons capable of forming an opinion, the chief doctrines of geology are now beyond the range of controversy." You admit the great antiquity of the globe and the slow evolution of living forms, and you proceed as follows:—

"Many persons, perhaps at one time almost all thoughtful persons, who read the account of Creation in the first chapter of Genesis, concluded that the change from chaos to cosmos, though gradual, was one soon brought about by several quickly succeeding fiat of the Almighty will. Geology teaches with irresistible force that this was not so."

These thoughtful persons, my lord, who were nevertheless mistaken, paid the Scripture the compliment of supposing it meant what it said. They never suspected the wonderful elasticity of language in the grasp of theologians. They took the Bible, as you, my lord, are bound to take the Thirty-nine Articles, in the "literal and grammatical sense." Geology, therefore, was honestly resisted as impious, until a new and more dexterous race of commentators arose, in whose hands the time-honored language of Revelation became as plastic as clay in the hands of the potter or the sculptor, and capable of being fashioned into any form that suited the exigencies of the struggle between Reason and Faith.

Your position is that there is no "antagonism between the hypothesis of Evolution and the truth of Creation." Admitting the justice of your language, your position is impregnable. There cannot be antagonism between Evolution and any *truth*. But I deny the justice of your language. I say that you reverse the proper order of words. Evolution is the "truth," and Creation is the "hypothesis." Thus regarded they are not antagonistic, for there cannot be antagonism where there is no contact. You are, of course, free to assert, without even defining your terms, that a "spirit" works through the process of Evolution. You are likewise free to affirm that a "spirit" mixes the oxygen and nitrogen in the atmosphere, and the oxygen and hydrogen in water. Science is unable to contradict these statements, just as science is unable to dispute the meat-roasting power of the meat-jack. But, on the other hand, it does not trouble about what cannot be proved or refuted, and leaves metaphysical entities

and quiddities to the irony of Swift or the raillery of Voltaire.

From Haeckel, my lord, you quote a strong passage against "purpose" in Nature; and you might have added that Darwin saw "no more design in Natural Selection than in the way in which the wind blows." Does it not occur to you that these lords of science, these satraps of magnificent provinces in her empire, know her more intimately than you do, and that what escapes their vigilant attention is in all probability rather fancy than fact? Your unpractised eye sees God everywhere; their practised eyes fail to detect his presence. Even other eyes than those of the great English and German biologists have been unable to perceive what to you is so obvious. Sir William Hamilton, for instance, before Evolution challenged the public mind, declared "that the phenomena of matter, taken by themselves, so far from warranting any inference to the existence of God, would, on the contrary, ground even an argument to his negation." A very different writer, Cardinal Newman, confesses, "If I looked into a mirror and did not see my face, I should have the same sort of feeling which actually comes upon me when I look into this living busy world and see no reflection of its Creator." You, my lord, look through Nature up to Nature's God. I have your word for it, but I doubt if your vision is so telescopic.

That "volition originates," as you allege, is only true within certain limits. Volition does, indeed, originate fresh collocations of matter, but it originates nothing else. And when you say that volition "has no cause preceding itself," you are simply alleging that all volition is eternal, which is diametrically opposed to your own doctrine that the human will, the only one of which we have absolute knowledge, is a gift from God. You will find, my lord, an admirable discussion of this point in Mr. Mill's *Essay on Theism*. Volition, as he points out, only acts by means of pre-existing force, first within the body, and afterwards outside it. It does not answer, therefore, "to the idea of a First Cause, since Force must in every instance be assumed as prior to it; and there is not the slightest color, derived from experience, for supposing Force itself to have been created by a volition. As far as anything can be concluded from human experience, Force has all the attributes of a thing eternal and uncreated."

Your argument for a First Cause is completely answered in the same *Essay*. In reality, my lord, a First Cause is a contradiction in terms. Causes and effects only differ in their order of succession; both are phenomenal changes; every cause has been an effect, and every effect becomes a cause. Causation, indeed, only applies to the changes in Nature, without affecting its permanent substance. Your whole remarks on Causation betray an imperfect acquaintance with the subject or a miserable trifling with your readers. Certainly "the idea of cause is in the mind itself," but how did it get there? You deny that it is generated by experience, and you add that "a moment's consideration will show that this cannot be so." Do you really suppose, my lord, that the Experiential philosophers, from Locke to Bain, have not given a moment's consideration to the question? Do you assert this of Herbert Spencer? Do you assert it of John Stuart Mill? Have you read the fifth and twenty-third chapters of the third book in Mill's *Logic*? If you have, I say you are taking advantage of your reader's ignorance; if you have not, you are unfitted for the task you have undertaken.

Thus far, my lord, you have not arrived at a Creator, since you have not proved Creation, nor even defined it in intelligible language. Were I, for the sake of argument, to grant that mind is an entity as well as matter, the presumption would be in favor of their eternal co-existence. Whatever Deity you affirm is shorn of the attributes of infinity; he cannot be infinite in power, at least, even if he be in wisdom and goodness, for he has an everlasting rival or an everlasting colleague. Nor are your difficulties ended

here. The benevolence of your Deity is imperilled. It was the opinion of Plato that God is prevented from realising his beneficent designs by the inherent badness and intractable qualities of matter. But this view is easily confronted by an opposite dogma. Bentham was justified in saying, "I affirm that the Deity is perfectly and systematically malevolent, and that he was only prevented from realising these designs by the inherent goodness and incorruptible excellence of matter. I admit that there is not the smallest evidence for this, but it is just as well supported, and just as probable as the preceding theory of Plato."

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

## Real Christianity.—II.

THIS teaching of the worthlessness of this life in comparison with that of the future life soon bore fruit—poisonous fruit. It produced a longing for death. Our greatest historian of that age, the illustrious Gibbon, remarks, with caustic truth, that—

"The sober discretion of the present age will more readily censure than admire, but can more easily admire than imitate, the fervour of the first Christians, who, according to the lively expression of Sulpicius Severus, desired martyrdom with more eagerness than his contemporaries solicited a bishopric. The epistles which Ignatius composed as he was carried in chains through the cities of Asia breathe sentiments the most repugnant to the ordinary feelings of human nature. He earnestly beseeches the Romans that when he should be exposed in the amphitheatre they would not, by their kind but unseasonable intercession, deprive him of the crown of glory; and he declares his resolution to provoke and irritate the wild beasts which might be employed as the instruments of his death. Some stories are related of the courage of martyrs, who actually performed what Ignatius intended; who exasperated the fury of the lions, pressed the executioner to hasten his office, cheerfully leaped into the fires which were kindled to consume them, and discovered a sensation of joy and pleasure in the midst of the most exquisite tortures. Several examples have been preserved of a zeal impatient of those restraints which the emperors had provided for the security of the Church. The Christians sometimes supplied by their voluntary declaration the want of an accuser, rudely disturbed the public service of paganism, and rushing in crowds round the tribunal of the magistrates, called upon them to pronounce and to inflict the sentence of the law."\*

One proconsul beheld all the Christians in the town in a body at the bar of his tribunal claiming the right of martyrdom; he punished a small number and sent the others away with the words, "Be off then, you wretches! If you wish so much to die you have precipices and cords!"† "They absolutely courted death," says Dr. Knighton, "especially when it came in the form of martyrdom. 'O feet blessedly bound by the smith,' exclaimed Cyprian, 'which are to be loosed, not by the smith, but by the Lord! O feet blessedly bound to guide us to paradise along the road of salvation!'"‡

These people were only carrying out the teaching of Christ and Paul to its logical conclusion. They paid Jesus the compliment of believing that he meant exactly what he said, and they endeavoured, to the best of their ability, to put the teaching into practice. To cite the great historian again:—

"The Christians were not less averse to the business than to the pleasures of this world.....they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defence of the Empire.....This indolent or even criminal disregard to the public welfare exposed them to the contempt and reproaches of the Pagans, who very frequently asked what must be the fate of

the empire, attacked on every side by the barbarians, if all mankind should adopt the pusillanimous sentiments of the new sect."\*

The late Dr. Magee declared that any State which attempted to put in practice the teachings of Christ could not exist for a week. The early Christians did attempt to carry out these teachings, with the result that, instead of bettering the condition of the world, they worsened it. The Fall of the Roman Empire was contemporaneous with the rise of Christianity. The Christians did nothing to help or support that splendid civilisation. How could they? "A Roman statesman," says John Morley, "who had gone to the Sermon on the Mount for a method of staying the economic ruin of the empire, its thinning population, its decreasing capital, would obviously have found nothing of what he sought."† The teachings of Christianity, says the historian Lange, "unhinged the ancient world."‡ In fact, says Renan, "the Christians desired, at bottom, that everything should go on in the worst way. Far from making common cause with the good citizens, and seeking to exorcise dangers from their native land, the Christians rejoiced in these."§ The mighty Roman Empire represented the work of the "Prince of this World," with which they had nothing in common. To cite Renan again:—

"Thus in degree as the empire fell Christianity arose. During the third century Christianity sucked ancient society like a vampire, drawing out all its forces and creating that general enervation against which the patriotic empire vainly struggled."

"The little societies killed the great society. The ancient life, a life all exterior and manly; a life of glory, of heroism, of patriotism; a life of the forum, the theatre, and the gymnasium is conquered by the Jewish life—a life anti-military, a friend of shade, a life of pale immured people. Politics are not served by men too much withdrawn from the world. When a man decides to aspire only to heaven, he is no longer of the country here below. A nation cannot be made up of monks or of Yogis; the hatred and despoliation of the world do not prepare for the struggle of life."

It may be objected that Gibbon, Lange, and Renan were only unbelievers; but the time is now gone by when the statements of unbelievers can be disregarded. However, we give the testimony of an historian who is a great favorite with Christian Evidence Lecturers, and who has—from an election platform—confessed himself a Christian: namely, the historian Lecky, who says:—

"But yet the Pagans were not altogether wrong in regarding the new association as fatal to the greatness of the Empire. It consisted of men who regarded the Roman Empire as a manifestation of Antichrist, and who looked forward with passionate longing to its destruction.....The greatest and best of the Pagans spoke of it as a hateful superstition, and the phrase they most frequently reiterated, when speaking of its members, was 'enemies' or 'haters of the human race.'"\*\*

Here is another verdict of an historian who cannot be accused of even the mildest form of infidelity, Mr. C. W. Oman, the learned historian of the Byzantine Empire. He says:—

"When a State contains masses of men who devote their whole energies to a repulsively selfish attempt to save their own individual souls, while letting the world around them slide on as best it may, then the body politic is diseased. The Roman Empire, in its fight with the barbarians, was in no small degree hampered by this attitude of so many of its subjects.....The apathetic attitude of so many Christians during the afflictions of the Empire was maddening to the heathen minority, which still survived among the educated classes. They roundly accused Christianity of being the ruin of the State by its anti-social teaching, which led men to neglect every duty of the citizen."††

If this is not enough to convince any ordinary Christian—who, by the way, demands an enormous

\* Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, c. xvi., p. 218; 1830 Edition.

† Renan, *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 36.

‡ Dr. Knighton, *Struggles for Life*, p. 91.

\* *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, c. xv., p. 192.

† Rousseau, p. 263.

‡ *History of Materialism*, vol. i., p. 170.

§ Renan, *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 36.

|| *Marcus Aurelius*, pp. 337-338.

\*\* *History of European Morals*, vol. i., p. 413.

†† C. W. Oman, *The Byzantine Empire*, pp. 149-150.

amount of evidence to disprove that which he believes upon no evidence whatever—we will cite the evidence of Mr. F. C. Conybeare, who is not only a Christian, but has made the early history of Christianity his peculiar study. He declares that—

"The teaching of early Christianity was thus altogether subversive of ancient society. So it would be of modern society, and any one set of people who should literally carry it out in their conduct would very soon come into conflict with established law and morality, and would certainly descend sooner or later into beggary and destitution.....*They were regarded, and rightly, as enemies of the human race. If it is possible to endorse any judgment of the past, we may endorse this one of the authorities of the Roman Empire.*"\*

We have now traced the practical effect of the teachings of Christ during the first ages, when the Octopus was slowly and secretly putting forth its tentacles into the heart of civilisation, with such success that during the reign of Constantine it assumed the royal purple, and the age of so-called martyrdom was past. Shortly after the reign of Constantine the night of the Dark Ages commenced—the Ages of Faith, the essentially Christian ages, when men endeavoured to *live* Christianity. In our next article we shall show that these Dark Ages were the logical outcome of that endeavour.

W. MANN.

## Correspondence.

### ATHEISM AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Some years ago, I followed the example of a personage in Genesis, and "planted a garden." It was not exactly an Eden, and I was much puzzled at the enormous number of slugs and snails that grew in it, until I discovered that my neighbors, in tending their own plots, thoughtfully threw all their snails into mine. Since then I have observed that our neighbors, the theologians, have a similar habit of throwing *their* rubbish into the Freethought garden; and my article on Robespierre was intended to show that this insect belongs outside. If I have conveyed any different impression, I sincerely regret it.

Mr. Ryan appears to me to have confused two different propositions—namely, Robespierre as a politician, and Robespierre as a theologian. I thought I had kept these two things distinct; but, of course, a writer can never be quite confident of the exact effect of his words until he has been favored with the candid criticism of a reader.

As regards the politician, perhaps I may be permitted to quote Mr. Lecky:—

"That which distinguishes the French Revolution from other political movements is that it was directed by men who had adopted certain speculative *à priori* conceptions of political right with the fanaticism and proselytising fervor of a religious belief, and the Bible of their creed was the *Contrat Social* of Rousseau."

This is merely an echo of Condorcet's remark that the Revolution was a religion; but it will explain why the atrocities of the Revolution bear such a remarkable likeness to those of religious outbreaks.

As regards the theologian, the speeches quoted will be enough to show that Robespierre professed a different type of Deism to Thomas Paine (who was not a disciple of Rousseau, and therefore differed essentially from Robespierre, who looked upon his political principles with suspicion). All France was Deistic at this period: not merely the Red Republicans, but also the clergy, the court, and the aristocracy. Hence no stress was laid on Deism as such. The distinguishing feature of Robespierre was that he was more pronouncedly religious than any of the others. That was why I called him a *pious* revolutionist. The details of his private virtues were not introduced in any scoffing spirit, but simply to show that he conformed in every way to the religious ideal.

Mr. Ryan will pardon my thinking his admiration for the Revolution somewhat misplaced. The revolutionists, of course, professed to be striving against abuses and misery. Every political agitation has done the same; but the abuses and misery still remain. The French Revolution happened to take place in the dawn of that great change in thought, manners, and industry which has given the tone to modern civilisation; and thus the French upheaval is sometimes imagined to be the source of modern ideas. Such imagination is quite gratuitous; and it is perfectly conceivable that

our progress would have been purer and greater without the Revolution.

It must be obvious to any student of history that the French Revolution occurred because Louis XVI. was a fool. With any monarch possessed of an average amount of brain there would have been a reform, not a revolution. Then, again, the excesses can hardly be charged to popular excitement. The mobs only caused a small number of murders. The greater portion of the deaths took place under a form of law, and the outrages in the provinces were the work of a few bands of unruly ruffians. The leaders of the Revolution, for the most part, were wealthy and luxurious persons who had not suffered any deep oppression, although they may have had quarrels with their own class.

In any case, I fail to see why Freethinkers should have French politics thrown on their shoulders, or why they should smile at the burden. Let piety acknowledge its own children.

CHILPERIC.

### SOME FREETHOUGHT MISTAKES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As is well-known to all who take an interest in the contest between rationalism and priestcraft, a stock argument with religious fakirs is that agnosticism is a next-door neighbor to immorality, while churchism is a symbol of purity. I have just got into a snag with a former "pastor" of mine on the same subject. He just made a similar statement from the pulpit in my hearing. I go occasionally to church just from curiosity. Now I think we have been laying too much stress on the scientific aspect of the Bible and talking too much about God, while not laying sufficient stress on the notorious immoral characters of those whom churchians put before the people as the patriarchs of their faith, such as, for instance, the notorious drunkard Noah, the incestuous Lot, the polygamous, crooked Jacob, the murderer Moses, the adulterer David. Besides, it is a notorious fact that all reliable historians, to mention only Tacitus and Cæsar, have proved beyond dispute that our Pagan ancestors were not only more moral than the Hebrews, but were purer in their morals than their descendants of the present day; proving beyond dispute that notorious fraudulent priestcraft, mis-called Christianity, has corrupted our people. In my ten years' experience since I left the Presbyterian Church and joined the rationalist movement, I found this the most effective method. This method also accounted for Ingersoll's extraordinary success in America.

Montreal, Canada.

NORMAN MURRAY.

### Just as I am Without one "D."

A HYMN, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

(Dedicated to the Salvation Army—without permission).

Just as I am without one "D,"  
An Army job is offered me  
If I will only come to Thee.  
O Lamb of Gawd, I come.

Just as I am, a tattered lout,  
My Sunday togs all "up the spout,"  
To get a fiery new rig out  
O Lamb of Gawd, I come.

Just as I am for grub inclined,  
An Army Captain good and kind  
Says "Come to Christ, your meals we'll find."  
O Lamb of Gawd, I come.

Just as I am, on ticket-leave,  
An honest (?) screw I can receive  
For kidding noodles to believe.  
O Lamb of Gawd, I come.

Just as I am, to "tecs" well known,  
My pals in quod, I'm all alone,  
'Tis risky working "on my own."  
O Lamb of Gawd, I come.

Just as I am, by Gawd above!  
The job will fit me like a glove,  
For "doing" flats is what I love,  
O Lamb of Gawd, I come.

ESS JAY BEE.

HOPPERS AND PILLARS.—It was a curate who read in the lesson for the day! "He spoke the word, and cathoppers came and grasspillars innumerable."

\* F. C. Conybeare, *Monuments of Early Christianity*, p. 287. 1896. (The italics are ours.)

## 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.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Science and Immortality."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, Religious Freethought Parliament: Subject, "Is the Human Mind Immortal?"; 7.30, Joseph McCabe, "The Struggle in France."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, R. Rosetti, "Where and When was Jesus Christ Born and Crucified?"

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 3, T. Groom, "Glorious Failures"; 7, Herbert Thompson, "The Naturalist and His Camera." With Lantern Views. Thursday, December 15, at 8 (Bull Ring Coffee House), W. T. Easthope, A Paper.

FAIRSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Fred Grundy's Concert Party.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, H. Percy Ward, "Christian Missions in Heathen Japan"; 6.30, "Is Unbelief a Sin?"

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Monday, December 12, at 8, in Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts, Sauchiehall-street, H. Percy Ward, "What the Church has Surrendered to the Unbeliever."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, C. Cohen, "Old Problems and Modern Answers"; 7, Atheism or Theism? The Final Issue." Monday, at 8, Rationalist Debating Society.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 3, J. Lloyd, "The Master Builder"; 6.30, "The Way to Heaven." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, December 15, at 8. F. J. Shaw, "The Economics of Thrift."

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

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