



distributing this out-of-date work. If Secularists are really desirous of enlightening the public, why do they not ask some really eminent men to write up-to-date books? This would be more convincing than a hash of outworn fallacies could ever be. But I am afraid the Secular Society would soon cease to exist if its members began to search for the truth.

"FREDERIC C. SPURR.

"Maze Pond Chapel, S.E."

In spite of my previous experience, I determined to give the *Chronicle* another chance; accordingly I sent round the following reply to Mr. Spurr—written, as my readers will see, in a way that almost compelled total insertion or total non-insertion:—

My previous letter, not a long one, was so cut down as to misrepresent what I said. This accounts for the Rev. F. C. Spurr's mistake. I did not hope that "some decent Christian" would protest against Dr. Torrey's reference to Paine and Voltaire. I hoped to see such a protest against Dr. Torrey's reference to what he is pleased to call "infidelity" and his statement that it is the constant companion of "immorality." This explanation answers the major part of Mr. Spurr's letter. With regard to the rest, I may tell him frankly that Christians must be very soft to tender advice to Freethinkers as to how their battle against Christianity can be most successfully conducted. Does he imagine that the Japanese would take military advice from the Russians? Let the Christians look after their own campaign, and Freethinkers will do the same. My protest is not against independent tactics, but against the controversial hooliganism which asserts that unorthodox opinion springs from "sin" and "wickedness."

G. W. FOOTE.

This last letter was delivered early by hand, but I did not see it in Tuesday's *Chronicle*, and I do not suppose I shall see it.

Now I ask my readers to consider for a moment how the *Chronicle* served me. First, it mutilated my letter, cutting out what I *did* say, and making me say what I *did not* say. Then it inserted a Christian preacher's reply to what it *made* me say. Finally, instead of hastening to repair the mischief, it either delayed my letter of explanation or threw it in the waste-basket.

Such is the action of men who can talk by the hour, and write by the yard, about religion, but cannot rise to the level of common decency in their relations with their fellow men—especially when their fellow men happen to be "infidels."

People have often asked me why I do not write more frequently to the newspapers. They will understand now. Some two years ago the *Daily News* treated me very shabbily, mutilating my first letter, and refusing to insert my second; thus giving two men of God a grossly unfair advantage over the "infidel." Nearly four years ago the *Westminster Gazette* printed a false personal statement about me, and refused to insert my very brief correction. I have never troubled either of those papers since, and I am not likely to trouble the *Chronicle* again.

My readers must not expect me to waste my time and court misrepresentation. I have told them repeatedly never to trust a Christian, as a Christian, in relation to a Freethinker, as a Freethinker; and they ought not to be astonished if I act on the same principle myself.

And now let my readers observe how silent the "decent Christians" have remained over Dr. Torrey's hooliganism. Not a single leader of Church or Chapel opinion has uttered a word of protest. One orthodox Londoner has informed me that he did write a letter of protest, but it was cut down to nothing, and was quite meaningless. I also see a protest from the Rev. W. Mann, of Bristol, who speaks highly of the character of the "agnostics or rationalists" he has known. But that is all. Dr. Torrey's hooliganism is countenanced, because it is not *discountenanced*; for, in a case like this, whoever is not *for* decency is *against* it. And I hope Freethinkers will remember this fact in the days to come.

I have left myself room to say a few pointed words about Dr. Torrey's article in the *Chronicle*, or rather the part of it which I have reproduced for my own readers. I will not trouble any further about this poor creature's opinion of Voltaire and Thomas Paine. Nor will I trouble about the "new breath of God" which is going to send "the modern infidel propagandist" to the bottomless pit or some other place outside the reach of international postage. I prefer to dwell upon his admissions and his temper. He says that "the moral condition of the world in our day is disgusting, sickening, appalling." Surely this is a strange tribute to the religion of Christ. If that personage came to save the world, we have Dr. Torrey's word for it that he has not succeeded—which is as much as any "infidel" could say. And to lay the blame of this upon "infidelity" is intellectually childish and morally disgraceful. If "infidelity" means "unbelief"—and what else can it mean?—it certainly does not account for the vice and crime in England and other Christian countries. Statistics are all against Dr. Torrey, common sense is against him, the nature of things is against him. He spits against the wind, and the filth returns in his own face. It is not the "infidels" but the Christians who get up wars, foment international hatred, float swindling companies, sweat labour, live on the rents of loathsome slums, and the profits of prostitution, and curse the world in all sorts of terrible ways. It is not the "infidels" but the Christians who fill our prisons, workhouses, and asylums, and keep the police and the magistrates in constant activity.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Evading the Issue.

THE *Christian World* has found it necessary to express its grave displeasure at some of the sermons preached by the Rev. Campbell Morgan. We are not much surprised at this; indeed it is only following the *Freethinker's* lead in this respect. We have waded through a number of this gentleman's "orations," and found nothing beyond an inexhaustible supply of "gas." Yet Mr. Morgan was ushered into Westminster Chapel with a great blowing of trumpets, and very great things were predicted as the result of his ministry. And now one of our leading religious journals sees fit to declare that some of his sermons are "nothing less than a calamity." The *Christian World* could hardly say more of the *Freethinker*.

The trouble has arisen over a sermon on "Christ and the Bible." Mr. Morgan comes from the States; and in America, where Presbyterians, Methodists, and "sich" are proportionately much stronger than in England, religious opinions are apparently much cruder and narrower. Consequently Mr. Morgan's preaching on such subjects as the supernatural are much too old-fashioned to suit the editor of an English religious journal. Mr. Morgan's offence has been the declaration that belief in the supernatural stories of the Old Testament is one and the same thing with belief in Christ. Here is the passage complained of:—

"Or, again, begin with your Book and deny the miraculous wherever you see it. Wherever something occurs that is supernatural, whether that something is the translation of a man in a chariot of fire to heaven, or the feeding of people with manna in the wilderness, or the talking of an ass, say it is not so. Do you know where you must end logically? You must end by denying the resurrection of JESUS..... You cannot begin to question the supernatural in the Bible without denying the supernatural in JESUS CHRIST."

And on this the *Christian World* remarks that "If the fortunes of Christianity in the world depended upon the historicity of the story of an ass's speech, we should tremble indeed for the future..... We repudiate entirely the notion that the supernatural in Christ or the doctrine of his resurrection rest on any such foundation..... It is nothing less than a

calamity to see good and earnest men, with eminent capacity for spiritual service, hindering their true work and creating immeasurable difficulties for the Christian apologists of the future by making impossible propositions of this kind the touchstone of the real and saving verities."

Now I have not, as has been said, a great admiration for the abilities of Mr. Morgan, yet he seems to me to be on this subject wholly right and the *Christian World* wholly wrong. In the first place, one would like to ask the *Christian World* what it conceives to be Mr. Morgan's "true work" as a preacher of the gospel? It is evidently not to preach what he believes to be the truth. Mr. Morgan believes that if people give up the supernatural stories in the Old Testament they are logically bound to give up the New Testament stories also, and as he does not desire the latter he protests against the former. Whether he is right or not does not matter, he believes that the two hang together, and says so. Yet the *Christian World* calls this "a calamity," and asserts that he is hindering his "true work," and creating difficulties for other preachers. Evidently, then, it is not the function of a minister to preach what he believes to be true. And quite as evidently his "true work" is to propound such theories as will commend themselves to current feeling, leaving the question of their reasonableness and accuracy quite out of sight. Such is the conduct of the understanding as preached by the religious press.

The best of it all is, however, that Mr. Morgan is so obviously in the right. Can anyone point out any essential difference between the supernatural occurrences narrated in the Old Testament, and those connected with Jesus? Is the Virgin Birth more credible than the talking ass, the Resurrection more believable than the Jonah story—endorsed by Jesus—or is the story of the feeding of the multitude by Jesus more reasonable than the tale of the feeding of the children of Israel by miraculously sent manna? Yet the *Christian World* rejects one and accepts the other! In the Old Testament a prophet is translated to heaven in a chariot of fire in full sight of a number of people. Unhistorical and absurd, says the *C. W.*, and Christianity must not be tied to any such legends. In the New Testament Jesus is translated to heaven also, in full sight of a number of people. This is historical, cries the *C. W.* and cannot be rejected by Christians. How is any reasonable being to differentiate between the two? A man may be a fool and accept both. He may even be of average common sense and accept both. But to accept one and reject the other offers a strong presumption in favor of his being a hypocrite.

Neither the acceptance nor rejection of these stories is a question of evidence. There is just as much evidence in favor of the miraculous in the Old Testament as in the New. That is, none at all. The basis of the rejection of the Old Testament stories, by the average educated person, is that they are incredible, and by the average parson that it no longer pays to preach them as true. But to insinuate, as does the *C. W.*, that the resurrection rests upon any different or better foundation than the miracles of the Old Testament is absurd. The only evidence that ever has been produced in favor of the miracles of the New Testament is that certain people believed in them. And this kind of proof would establish the truth of nearly every legend in existence.

Mr. Morgan is not a brilliant personage, but his very lack of brilliancy enables him to state clearly the nature of the real point at issue. And this, when stripped of all reservations, qualifications, and subterfuges, is the credibility of the supernatural. It is not this or that particular miracle, but all. Whether one special miracle is false out of a number is a very small point. The important point is whether a single one of them be genuine. In other words, and to repeat what has already been said, it is whether we can admit the supernatural at any time and under any conditions. Mr. Morgan, without saying this in so many words, feels it to be the

question at issue, and takes up the perfectly logical position—for a Christian—that if you begin by rejecting one set of miracles as incredible you ought logically to reject all, since they are all, from a critical point of view, equally incredible. And all reasonable people will agree with him.

From the office of the *Christian World* there comes also, on the same day as the number of the paper from which I have quoted, the report of a sermon on "Demonic Possession," preached in the City Temple by the Rev. Charles Brown, and to which the editor might well devote a little attention. Mr. Brown deals with the attitude of Jesus towards demoniacal possession; a subject much evaded, for the reason that the believer is almost certain to accuse Jesus of either want of knowledge or of candor. Now Mr. Brown does not evade the issue; he plumps boldly for the existence of evil spirits who do somehow enter, and take possession of, the human body. The fact may not do credit to Mr. Brown's judgment, but it is a testimony to his courage. Mr. Brown's case is simple. Jesus, he says, found the men of his time possessed with the belief that certain disorders, physical and mental, were due to the presence of evil spirits. There is not the slightest shadow of a hint in the Gospels that Jesus disagreed with this belief. Nay, he confirmed it as strongly as was possible. He cast them out, he held conversations with them, and gave to his disciples the power to cast spirits out of other people. No clearer proof than this could be given of a belief in demoniacal possession.

Now I have no doubt that the *Christian World* would pronounce it "a calamity" that a Christian preacher should hinder his true work by asserting that evil spirits were actually responsible for the disorders and diseases described in the New Testament, because this is certainly a belief that very educated people maintain to-day. But what is a Christian preacher to do? Of course, he might evade the question, or gloss it over with vague generalities and loud-sounding but empty words, and our pious editor would call him a most powerful preacher. But suppose he feels disinclined to follow this plan? Well, in this case he has two other courses open. He can assert that Jesus knew, as we know, that these supposed demoniacs were people suffering from epilepsy or some other nervous derangement, but humored the prejudices of those around him, and deliberately withheld knowledge that would have been of profound importance to all who then lived, and to generations that were to live. This apology will not quite cover the case, but it would do at a pinch. Or if he does not care to sacrifice the moral honesty of Jesus in this manner, he can assert that in this respect Jesus knew no better than other people—and so sacrifice his knowledge. But either line of defence makes the character of Jesus inconsistent with all that Christians claim for it. And of the two the last is the most damning. For, as Mr. Brown says, "If there is one domain over which our Lord may be supposed to have knowledge and dominion, it is the spiritual environment of man"; and yet it is just here that he is shown to have been no better informed than the most ignorant Jewish peasant, and considerably less informed than the contemporary Pagan writers of Greece and Rome. We commend this case of demoniacal possession, not only to the *Christian World*, but also to others who are so fond of serving up such quantities of clotted sentimentalism concerning the character of Jesus.

Moreover, while the *Christian World* is taking up this superior attitude and lecturing Mr. Campbell Morgan upon his very crude and stupid, but eminently Christian beliefs, let us note one other thing. There is hardly need to say there is a revival going on in Wales. We are all aware of it. And the *Christian World* supports it, and believes Mr. Roberts to be really an agent of God. Now what is the difference between Evan Roberts and Campbell Morgan? Mr. Roberts believes the Bible to be true from beginning to end; so, apparently, does Mr. Morgan. Both believe in the miracles of the old Bible, both believe

that if you do not believe them you are on the way to rejecting Christ. Yet Evan Roberts is accepted as an inspired messenger from God, Mr. Morgan's sermon referred to as a calamity! The *Christian World* does not believe in the theology of Evan Roberts, nor do the majority of the clergy who are working the revivalist craze for all it is worth, but they accept it, refer to it as a great "outpouring of the spirit," and pocket all the profit that comes their way. It is an object lesson in the chronic dishonesty that is characteristic of modern Christianity.

Finally, let me repeat that I agree with Mr. Campbell Morgan. The man who rejects one portion of the supernatural ought logically to reject all. The man who believes in the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection ought to be capable of believing anything—at least he ought not to jib at such a common, ordinary miracle as a talking ass. Such niceties of taste are apt to breed trouble. It is for Christianity a saving truth that very few people are logical. The man who swallows the ridiculous story of the ascension of Jesus looks with an air of pity on one who believes Elisha went to heaven in a chariot of fire. Each one prides himself on his own special foolishness and denounces the particular folly of his neighbor. The *Christian World* is thus no exception to the general rule. The beliefs it retains are equally as stupid as those it rejects. It simply lacks the intelligence, or the courage, to reject all. It may even be questioned whether it properly believe any. Anyway its comments show that it has given up *believing* like a Christian; it can only act and write like one.

C. COHEN.

### "The Discrediting of the Gospels."

THE position maintained by Freethinkers is that the Gospels have been completely discredited as historical documents. It is necessary to put special emphasis on the words as *historical documents*, because Freethinkers are often charged by Christian apologists with regarding the Gospels as containing nothing that is true and beautiful. All we mean is that, from a historical point of view, these books are utterly untrustworthy. We claim that this proposition has, again and again, been proved by arguments which are absolutely unassailable. I am fully aware that theologians make the same claim on behalf of their position, but I do not hesitate to affirm that their position is supported not by valid arguments, but by dogmatic assertions. As an illustration of this, I have before me the fifteenth of the present series of Manchester Lectures on "What is Christianity?" It bears the title at the head of this article, and is by the Rev. W. C. Allen, M.A., Fellow and Lecturer of Exeter College, Oxford. Of course, Mr. Allen's object is to defend the Gospels against the attacks of modern critics, but his defence consists of a series of unsupported assertions. He speaks of his opponents with something like contempt. There is not one "scholar of repute" amongst them. They are, as a rule, ignorant, having never duly pondered the facts of the case. But surely Mr. Allen must know that to abuse the enemy is always a bad policy.

The lecture opens with a reference to the three existing views of the Gospels. The first view is that they are infallible, the second that they are fairly accurate, and the third that they are "altogether untrustworthy, and, for the most part, purely fictitious." Mr. Allen himself champions the middle view, asserting that "the writers were men who were honestly trying to describe carefully and faithfully such facts of the life of the Lord as had been handed down to them on very trustworthy and good tradition." He rejects the first view as "an overstatement or an exaggeration of an element of truth," while he characterises the third as simply absurd, and as held by men who are in "a state of profound ignorance of the laws of historical evidence."

It is worthy of note that the supporters of the third view are nameless in this lecture, while the advocates of the lecturer's own view have names attached to them. Such writers as Dr. Hort, Bishop Westcott, and Dr. Kenyon are proudly mentioned by their names; but the names of the opponents, from whom quotations are given, are never mentioned. Each one of these, when quoted from, is merely "this writer," "a gentleman who writes in public prints," "one," "one who thinks that the text of the Gospels is altogether untrustworthy." I merely refer, in passing, to this significant fact.

Mr. Allen frankly admits that the Evangelists had their "human limitations," that they "did not possess that absolute knowledge, which God alone has, which would have enabled them to record the things which they wished to put down from the point of view of ultimate scientific truth," and, consequently, that the Gospels may contain a few trifling mistakes. For example, Matthew "may have been mistaken" when he stated that at the crucifixion of Jesus there was darkness over all the earth, or over all the land. But Mr. Allen alleges that the presence of such minor and unimportant blunders does not necessarily invalidate the narrative as a whole. This contention would have been valid had the mistakes of the Gospels been few and of a trivial nature, which they by no means are. This is how the lecturer disposes of the difficulty:—

"I put it to you who are present here seeing and observing what you can. If thirty years hence you were to endeavor to give to someone an exact description of everything that took place in this room this afternoon, you would, if you have good memories, be able to give your inquirer a very fair idea of what happened. Nevertheless, it is exceedingly probable that you would make some slip in memory, or give in some detail a wrong impression. But would you not feel justly aggrieved if your listener, after pointing out some improbability in your statement, were to conclude by telling you that you were an altogether untrustworthy witness?"

That looks plausible enough, and would have been good reasoning had the cases been in the least degree parallel. Unfortunately for Mr. Allen, the cases are not parallel. For example, it is not all probable that, on the day in question, at the Central Hall, Manchester, the lecturer claimed that he was the second person in the Holy Trinity and had come down to earth on purpose to reveal God, nor is it at all likely that any four of the listeners, on giving an account of the occasion thirty or fifty years hence, will even dream of asserting that before, during, and after the lecture Mr. Allen performed many mighty miracles, such as giving sight to people born blind and raising the dead. Whatever events happened at Manchester on that Sunday afternoon, we are convinced that they were ordinary and quite believable, while nearly all the alleged events recorded in the Gospels are abnormal and naturally impossible. It is the abnormalities with which the Gospels are crowded that make one doubt their historicity, and when, in addition to these abnormalities, one discovers that they contain numerous mistakes and contradictions, the doubt easily develops into a conviction. But even had the miraculous element been entirely absent from the Gospels, the detection of inaccuracies and discrepancies in certain parts of them, would cause one to look with suspicion upon all other parts, unless the truth of these could be independently established.

Mr. Allen does not explain the grounds upon which he holds his own view. He says: "I can only say that I hold it and believe it to be true. I believe that these Gospel records describe for us accurately the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in broad outline; that He said most of the things which are here recorded of him; that He did most of the things which they attribute to him." His one concern is to slay the enemy at whatever cost. Let us see how he does it.

He selects two out of the many accusations which are made against the trustworthiness of the Gospels. The first accusation, according to him, is "that

the Gospels have been so tampered with by way of addition and interpolation since they were written that we can never be certain what the writers originally wrote." Does Mr. Allen bring proof to show that this accusation is false? He practically admits its truth. All he says is that it would be absurd to pronounce the documents untrustworthy on that ground. But why so? Once you admit the tampering by way of addition and interpolation, you are bound to admit further that "we can never be certain what the writers originally wrote. It is well known that the oldest extant manuscripts of the Gospels do not carry us further back than the fourth century; and it is equally well known that even these existing texts differ considerably from one another. Dr. Hort and Bishop Westcott minimised these differences as much as possible; but they could not conceal the fact that additions, alterations, and interpolations were made subsequent to the date of the most ancient manuscripts. That being admitted, it follows that no one can tell how many changes were made prior to that date. From the very structure of the Gospels themselves it is perfectly clear that we do not possess them in their original form, that they must have been frequently and severely edited by different hands, and that, therefore, we cannot trust their accuracy. Mr. Allen thinks that the ignorance upon this point is astounding; and yet he has not succeeded, by the aid of his own superior knowledge, in lessening the difficulty.

But, in any case, this point is not nearly so important as Mr. Allen seems to regard it. To prove that the text of the Gospels is genuine would not be to prove that the narrative is credible. Of the historicity of the Gospel Jesus there is absolutely no proof. Taking the story as it stands, what can we make of it? It has its parallels in the great heathen mythologies, and these parallels are wonderfully close. In his *Christianity and Mythology*, and in his *Pagan Christs*, Mr. John M. Robertson has traced these parallels with marvellous minuteness. There is scarcely an event or a saying recorded in our Gospels that has not its analogue or prototype in the lives and teachings of mythological Saviors. Mr. Allen tries to break the force of this argument in two ways. In the first place, he begs the question by exclaiming almost indignantly, "How is it, then, that the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ has done what the teaching of no other man ever did—reformed human life and human morals, and attracted to it in all ages, as it does to-day, the love, the reverence of men of the highest quality, who see in it, and are proud to confess that they see in it, a revelation of principles of life to which their one desire is to conform themselves?" Such a vehement exclamation may be a sign of genuine piety; but it betokens the active presence of an inveterate prejudice which is blind to incontrovertible facts. It is a notorious truth that fervent piety is not necessarily accompanied by exalted morals. Whether the teaching of Christ is good or bad there is scarcely one believer anywhere who even tries to conform himself to it. An enthusiastic Christian is not on that account a good man. One of the most devout men I ever knew had such a vile temper that his home was a perfect hell on earth; and I was once intimate with a woman who had no faith in Christ, but whose character was noble and beautiful in the extreme. And is not the highest type of character often produced under other religions as well as under none at all? Mr. Allen's passionate appeal has nothing behind it but sentiment. It is simply not true that Christianity ever went "through European society like a blast of fresh wind purifying the minds and consciences of men." It has not done so to this day, as the present condition of Christendom abundantly testifies; and of this Mr. Allen, unless he keeps his eyes shut, cannot help being aware.

In the second place, Mr. Allen seeks to meet the argument by misstating it. "The argument is," he says, "that stories of supernatural birth and of resurrection and of miracles had been told of heathen

gods and of great men in ancient times," and that "therefore they are clearly untrue when told of Christ." That is not the argument, and to state it thus was to throw dust into the eyes of the people. The argument is that the stories of supernatural events are equally true or equally mythical in all the great religions that relate them—or, in other words, that there is positively no evidence that they were true when told of Christ and false when told of all others. Mr. Allen naively confesses that he "can find no sense in an argument like this." Of course he cannot; because, if he could, he would be compelled, as an honest man, to abandon his present position. But, perceiving how perilous it would be to argue the point out, he falls back upon pious dogmatism. These supernatural stories, when told of pagan deities and of great men, were merely foreshadowings of the incarnation of Christ. He says: "In the fullness of time it pleased Almighty God to send his Son into the world." But Mr. Allen does not know that; he merely believes and affirms it without the shadow of proof. Fancy a man of intelligence saying this: "Consider, if it be not irreverent to do so, what was He (God) to do? Was He to avoid the method of supernatural birth because men had thought of it?" But Mr. Allen does not know that God ever did adopt such a method, not even that there was a God to adopt it. Supernatural birth is more likely, judging by the evidences at our disposal, to have been, in all cases alike, a human invention to account for the appearance of exceptionally great men. Is it not true that all deities were originally human beings?

Mr. Allen has not answered and overthrown the arguments against the historicity of the Gospels, nor has he even accurately stated them. He has only succeeded in making the orthodox or semi-orthodox view intellectually ridiculous. He has only shown himself to be an adept in the art of question-begging. It is easy to browbeat so-called enemies in the presence of more or less ardent friends, designating them as "uncritical," "profoundly ignorant," and so forth; but brow-beating cannot be mistaken for reasoning. The Gospels are admitted by Mr. Allen to be fallible human documents, and being such their place in literature can only be determined by scientific criticism; and at present scientific criticism is emphatically opposed to the pious practice of regarding them as possessing any historical trustworthiness whatever.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Dogma and Science.

BY DR. MONCURE D. CONWAY.

(Concluded from p. 92.)

THE mistranslations and the interpolations in the Bible are not trivial things; men do not make counterfeits for centimes. In one chapter woman is said to have been made from the rib of Adam. The sense of the original is that woman was made from the female side of man. Nothing is said of a rib. Yet by that rib error woman has been degraded throughout the Christian era. In Mark xvi. 15 Jesus is represented as saying, "Go ye into all the world and preach my gospel to every creature." This text is now known and admitted by all Christian scholars to be spurious, yet on that spurious text the whole missionary system is founded, foreign races are invaded by a gunpowder gospel and receive what the old crusader called "the curses of sweet Jesus."

There are many thousands of ingenious forgeries in the Bible, all now admitted by theologians. Christendom circulates them by millions in 150 different languages; that is, it circulates throughout the world millions of admitted falsehoods. But if it is all for the glory of God, who cares for the falsehoods?

The supremacy of the Bishop of Rome over all other bishops rests upon a perversion of one sentence in a decree of the Council of Nice. The original manuscript is in the British Museum; anybody may examine it. There is no superiority given by the Council to one bishop over another. As Renan said, at the bottom of every institution there is a fiction.

One great difficulty of any direct propagation of Free-thought is that half the world are in holy livery. If the churches and temples of the world were all closed many millions of people would starve. The officers and sailors on American ships, ordered to threaten Turkey with a deluge of blood on account of the unpaid pecuniary claims of missionaries—these American marines may be Freethinkers, they may despise missionaries, but each is in uniform—that is, in livery—and must if ordered murder any number of Moslems to get money for missionaries. The livery of politicians and legislators may not be so visible, but in truth the majority of people find it useful and comfortable to belong to parties and sects, and escape individual responsibility. But the Freethinker is that man who welcomes every teacher, but calls no man master. It is well that there should be congresses of this kind, because in no country can there be any continuous organisation for any particular type of Freethought.

The only bond which can unite Freethinkers is the negation they have in common. Every one of us here, representing a group or groups, feels perfectly certain that the creeds and Dogmas are untrue. It never even occurs to us to take a theological Dogma seriously. Their growth, history, development, represent departments of ethnology and anthropology. We study them, explain them, but never answer them. When Freethinkers step away from their common negation, and begin to affirm, they become distinct individualities. They accept the facts of Science, but Science can give them nothing final; the seeming solid facts of to-day may all be floated by new facts discovered tomorrow. We cannot, therefore, compete with the organisations founded on Dogma. Those are for people who have adjourned their lives to another world. The Freethinker considers only the world he is in; he has all the heaven there is, and aims to make the most of it.

There is an old story of a knight who inherited a grand castle, but when he went to take possession of it found the best rooms closed. One room was walled up by the testator's will because someone had been murdered in it, another because it was haunted, a third was filled with the dilapidated old furniture accumulated in the family generations. The poor knight in his grand castle could only get a closet to sleep in.

That castle is but a too faithful picture of the world we are in. While Science is revealing its palatial grandeurs, and art its power to decorate them, millions of people never enter the great halls of reason and wisdom, know not the beauty that surrounds them, dwell in the dark closets of superstition and fear. It is easy for people who never saw the world to believe that it is under a curse. And indeed Protestantism in America takes pains to make Jehovah's curse actual for one day every week. Because a murdered Lord rose out of his sepulchre one Sunday our people must show their joy by going into his sepulchre and staying there twenty-four hours every week. This weekly entombment is enforced by law. The American Sabbath is at present the most grievous tyranny and oppression in the whole world. There cannot be a grosser superstition than to suppose one portion of time holier than another, unless it be the superstition that gloom is holier than mirth. It is solemn weekly human sacrifice. And it was sad tidings indeed to hear lately of a royal decree in Spain restricting the freedom and amusements of the people on Sunday. And I am sorry, also, to observe that the Roman Catholic priesthood in America, in their competition with Protestant sects, are beginning to assist in the Sabbatarian oppression. The free Sunday was the best thing about them, their distinction, and they are throwing it away.

Napoleon Bonaparte said: "The people do not care for liberty. Those who want liberty are a few peculiar persons. What the masses want is equality." And Bonaparte secured equality by turning the whole French nation into soldiers. What he said about the indifference of the masses to personal liberty is sadly illustrated in America. Democracy loves the uniform and uniformity. The Freethinkers, who know that it is through differentiation and variation that higher species are evolved, have as much as they can do to defend personal liberty—free speech, moral freedom, emancipation from the Sabbath. We are a small minority of the eighty millions of our people, largely immigrants who have come there not to find liberty but to make money. A large proportion of these immigrants in America are Catholics, and there has just been formed a Federation of Catholics. To Freethinkers, Catholicism is represented by its history, by the Inquisition; and the growth of that Church—now numbering fifteen millions—is watched jealously.

This jealousy is just now accentuated by the conflict between the French Republic and the Papacy. At a time when competent leadership is in apparent decadence in some foremost nations, France has preserved its high traditions in literature, art, and Science. It is not easy for Americans to discern how far the conflict represents the

culture and genius of France and how far it is a simply political affair. In every revolution for national independence many different parties combine against some common enemy, but when that enemy is overthrown all the parties to the combination reclaim their share of the result. The experience of the United States has proved that, though a Church may be disestablished, Dogma cannot be disestablished. The Church of England was disestablished only to be followed by the practical establishment of all the Churches. The vast English Church properties were inherited by the same denomination; but whereas while connected with the State its properties and endowments were under control of the State, after the separation it possessed this immense wealth without any secular or legal restraint. The Church gained more than its former advantages, and was freed from all of its responsibilities and obligations. Having resided thirty years in London, I am certain that there is more religious liberty in the English Church than in the same denomination in America, and generally more freedom of thought and speech in England than in America. If the French Republic, after amputating the Concordat, shall make a Concordat at home with Catholicism and with Protestantism, we may find reason to remember a bit of demonology mentioned in St. Matthew. It is said that when an unclean spirit is disestablished in a man he goes off and brings back with him seven other spirits uncleaner than himself, and they all enter in, and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first.

And, after all, that is the real aim of Freethought—to disestablish the popedom in the mind. So long as the unclean spirit of superstition possesses the mind it matters not whether it is under pope or president. Scientific investigators are not always Freethinkers outside their own specialty. There are two eminent men of Science in England associated with Spiritism. Their minds always impressed me as good looms; they weave well all the threads supplied them, but are without power to discover or judge whether the threads they weave are sound or rotten. The Freethinker has his *metier* just there. He can utilise and apply Science for human liberation. And when I have listened to the marvellous eloquence of our great orator, Robert G. Ingersoll, I have indulged a dream that there might at some time be a training school for public teachers of freedom—freedom of thought, speech, and morality.

It was the belief of Friedrich Strauss, author of the *Leben Jesu*, that all freedom must be preceded by emancipation from supernaturalism. It is precisely forty years since I visited Strauss at Heilbronn. I walked with him beside the Neckar, and the same evening wrote down as nearly as I could remember what he said about his great work. This memorandum, taken from my old note book, shall close my address:—

Strauss said he felt oppressed at seeing nearly every nation in Europe chained by an allied despotism of prince and priest. He studied long the nature of this oppression, and came to the conclusion that the chain was rather inward than outward, and without the inward thralldom the outward would soon rust away. The inward chain was superstition and the form in which it bound the people of Europe was Christian supernaturalism. So long as men accept religious control not based on reason, they will accept political control not based on reason. The man who gives up the whole of his moral nature to an unquestioned authority suffers a paralysis of his mind, and all the changes of outward circumstances in the world cannot make him a free man. For this reason our European revolutions have been, even when successful, mere transfers from one tyranny to another. He believed when writing the *Leben Jesu* that in striking at supernaturalism he was striking at the root of the whole tree of political and social degradation. Renan had done for France what he had thought to do for Germany. Renan had written a book which the common people had read; the *Leben Jesu* had been confined to scholars more than he liked, and he meant to put it into a more popular shape. Germany must be made to realise that the decay of Christianity means the growth of national life, and also of general humanity.

### Torrey (Acrostic).

Jewish Mono-theism was changed by *Mary* into *Poly*-theism.—  
G. L. M.

T orrey, notorious, torrid,  
O rthodox, ignorant, horrid;  
R owdy declaimer,  
R abid defamer,  
E cho of all that the thoughtful despise:  
Y esterday's errors, and terrors, and lies.

G. L. M.

## Acid Drops.

The *Daily News* reporter sent to the opening performance of the Torrey-Alexander company at the Albert Hall must have written his account of the proceedings with a spice of sarcasm. Anyhow, he told an inconvenient amount of truth. In his very first paragraph he recorded the fact that "diligent Secularists were distributing pamphlets rebutting Dr. Torrey's attacks on Ingersoll and Paine." This will show the readers of the *Freethinker* that our promise was strictly kept.

Now for the reporter's description of the Albert Hall audience. Here it is:—

"A vast well-to-do, comfortable audience, benevolent old business gentlemen, grey-haired, bald-headed, and gold-chained; jolly, big-eyed high school girls; plump uniformed nurses; spectacled bank clerks, and in front near the platform nearly a hundred journalists and artists. A miracle, indeed, one thinks, if any revivalist can stir the comfortable worldliness of this great metropolitan crowd. There are no signs, no outbursts; they just sit placidly watching each other as if they were at Covent Garden."

In other words, they were looking forward to a nice entertainment—and apparently they got it. But the character of the audience is our point. It was a middle-class gathering, and no doubt ninety-nine in every hundred were in the habit of going to church or chapel. The working classes seem to have been conspicuous by their absence. They begin to understand the Kingdom-Come business.

The reporter described Mr. Alexander as "a keen, alert, business-looking young man, the top of his head quite bald." His movements as musical conductor were referred to as follows:—

"Arms and body sway in the most alarming manner, as though he must inevitably step off his small pedestal. Now he is a living Discobulus, now a Ranjitsinhji, now a Sousa, and again an Ajax."

Mr. Alexander conducted a big singing class, whose members "at last wildly clap their hands at the success of their own performance."

The description of Dr. Torrey was certainly not flattering. There was "mighty hand-clapping" as he came in at the well-timed psychological moment. By-and-by he mounted the rostrum to give his address, and the reporter thus introduces him:—

"It must be a trying time for him, but of this there is little sign. With a stern, high, narrow face, and head so long in proportion to its breadth that it seems as though compressed between boards, he speaks in a loud, strident, argumentative tone. Evidently the big hall tries him, and there is not a note of feeling in his tones except when he drops his voice."

Dr. Torrey is supposed to be a highly educated man, though we can testify that he writes the baldest and most inelegant English. According to the *Daily News* reporter he pronounces "Achilles" and "Augustine" with the accent on the first syllable!

"As for 'results'—well, we must wait." These were the last words of the *Daily News* descriptive report. Evidently the reporter was not greatly impressed. "You cannot convert a metropolis," he observed, "by the same methods as will touch the heart of a Welsh collier. When at the close Mr. Alexander and a lady sang 'Tell mother I'll be there' there was no sign of emotion at the Albert Hall, though the same song will throw a Welsh audience into a passion of weeping."

Even the *Daily Chronicle*, which has worked this London revival for all it is worth, and has gushed over it like any little Bethelite, was not charmed by Dr. Torrey's eloquence. That is to say, its reporter was not charmed. "When he spoke," we are told, "there was a shiver of surprise, for his words were uttered in a voice that is naturally harsh, and vibrates with what is probably the most pronounced Chicago accent ever heard on an English platform."

According to the *Chronicle* report of his opening address, Dr. Torrey is still carrying about a converted infidel—as some Italian organ-grinders carry about a monkey. It is part of the show. On Saturday night at the Albert Hall the Yankee organ-grinder (we beg pardon, revivalist) told "the story of an Agnostic student whom he had converted." This nameless student (they are all nameless) is now "radiant, triumphant, jubilant, glorious." "Agnosticism," cried Dr. Torrey, "has nothing in it to satisfy the cravings of the human heart." Well, it has something in it to induce men to tell the truth; and who can say that of Dr. Torrey's

creed? It may be true that Dr. Torrey has tried to tell the truth; what we say is that he has never succeeded.

The London *Echo* "commissioner" came out pretty hot and strong on the Torrey-Alexander performance at the Albert Hall. He admitted Mr. Alexander's cleverness, but he says "It did not catch on, nothing happened. As a matter of fact the audience was case-hardened; they had been through it all again and again until even the American hustler could not get a spark out of them." The *Echo* man recognised many individuals whom he knew to be frequenters of such meetings. "The first person," he said, "I saw when I got into the hall was an old man who once sent up a request for praise at a meeting because, having lost his way in a fog, and being just about to slip into the Serpentine, 'the Lord opened the mouth of a duck,' which quacked, and showing him water was near saved his life." One tipsy man was led out by two stewards, and so missed his chance of salvation. "Dr. Torrey's address," the reporter says, "fell absolutely flat." It was "as stale and uninteresting as if he had unearthed a sermon preached in early Victorian days by some obscure provincial preacher.....I listened eagerly for one word of beauty or inspiration, for any appeal to the finer instincts, and there was absolutely none."

Mr. Robert Blatchford, of the *Clarion*, who is reprinting one of our Dr. Torrey pamphlets in his paper this week, says that our other pamphlet, *Dr. Torrey and the Bible*, is "powerful and convincing," but that he does not "consider Dr. Torrey's utterances on the Bible worth serious notice." Nor do we. We quite agree with Mr. Blatchford on this point. But many things have to be done from a sense of duty that would never be done from inclination, and answering Dr. Torrey is one of them. The answer is not so much intended for him as the crowd he attracts. Some of them are not beyond an appeal to reason if it could only reach them, and some of them have been deceived as to the facts of the case. Is it not a good thing to set them thinking and let them have a chance of seeing the truth? That is our object.

Mr. Blatchford himself, in the way of duty, has had to reply to some shockingly feeble, and sometimes insolent, orthodox critics of his *God and My Neighbor*. They were not worthy of serious notice, but he had to let them have it all the same. The fact is that very few Christian apologists are worthy of serious notice. It is the dupes of these adventurers that we have to reach; dupes who were taken advantage of in their childhood, and who are really not to blame for their ignorance and superstition. They are to be pitied and helped. And we are sure that Mr. Blatchford will share our view of this matter now that we have explained ourselves more fully.

Evan Roberts is in the Lord's hands. In other words, he is on a bed of sickness. He has broken down. The doctors say he is suffering from nervous prostration. It is a clear case for a miracle, but one did not happen. The power of prayer is a pretty doctrine at revival meetings. It doesn't amount to much in a sick room.

Father Gerard, the *Catholic Times* says, is asking for writers of ability to take up the defensive against the anti-Christian literature which is being circulated broadcast over the country. "Several of his old school friends are now declared Agnostics, not to mention the indifferent." The holy father also deplores "the scanty attendance and the abstracted demeanor of men at Sunday evening service." Good! We are getting on famously.

Rev. A. H. Macnutt delivers addresses to men (what have the women done?) at All Saints' Church House, Great Titchfield-street, London, on "Infidelity, its Cause, Consequence, and Cure." Perhaps some Freethought "men" in the neighbourhood will look in and ask him a few questions.

The Congregational Church Hymnal contains the following sweet item which ought to gladden the sad heart of Dr. Torrey:

### A MISSION HYMN.

Ere night that gate may close, and seal thy doom;  
Then the last, low, long cry—"No room, no room!"  
No room! no room!—O woeful cry—"No room!"

AMEN.

The "Amen" belongs to the original. It is not a facetious addition of our own. Is it not a choice morsel?

There was an excellent letter in the *Daily Chronicle* recently by "Freethinker," dated from the Savile Club. Ridicule was poured on the Nonconformist attitude on the Education struggle, and a most pertinent question was

asked, namely: "Is the Nonconformist idea of toleration this—that everyone is to tolerate them, and that they are to tolerate nobody?" To this the editor appended the following note: "An Agnostic parent would be able to withdraw his child from any Bible lesson." Yes, and every Nonconformist parent can withdraw his child from any religious lesson in a Church school. Perhaps the editor will explain why the Conscience Clause should satisfy Agnostics and not Nonconformists.

Soul-saving is a paying game. Canon Stratton, for fifty years vicar of St. Paul's, Leeds, has left property of the value of £56,745. Yet he believed, or professed to, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The Manchester *Daily Dispatch* recently printed a strange story from its 'own correspondent' at Madrid. It ran as follows:—

"A terrible death-bed tragedy is reported from Pampeluna.

"A prominent Atheist and Republican, named Matias Oces, who was lying in a dying state, had declined the proffered ministrations of the Church. Nevertheless the parish priest succeeded in forcing his way into the house.

"Violently pushing aside Senora Oces, who stood on guard at the door of the death chamber, the priest approached the bedside of the dying man, and proceeded to administer Extreme Unction.

"Suddenly Senor Oces, by a supreme effort, raised himself on his pillow, and seizing the priest by the throat, strangled him to death with his hands.

"The next moment he fell back dead."

What a treat it would have been for Dr. Torrey if he had stood in that priest's shoes! He would have felt the full flavor of converting "infidels."

Not many years ago we were politely, though firmly, turned out of the Presbyterian Church because we could not endorse the Westminster creed. But, now, the Union Theological Seminary of New York discards the same creed *in toto*, and receives for it, instead of expulsion and excommunication, over two hundred thousand dollars. We were in too great a hurry to leave the good, old Presbyterian church. Think of what we missed for not having the patience of the Union Theological Seminary.—*Liberal Review* (Chicago).

[Readers of the *Freethinker* will, we trust, pardon the meagre supply of "Acid Drops" this week. An unusual pressure of other work and much correspondence, largely connected with the exposure of Dr. Torrey, has thoroughly tired out the poor Editor. He is quite well, only weary, and hopes to come up with a broad smile again next week].

#### PASSED CREDITABLY.

"Down in Tennessee, where I was living a few years ago, a colored blacksmith conceived the idea that he had a call to preach," said a local business man yesterday. "Sam could barely read, but he had floundered through the Bible and considered that he was qualified to teach men the way to salvation. One day a convention of Methodist preachers was held in the town, and to them Sam made known his ambition. Two or three of them took him in hand and examined him as to his qualifications.

"Sam knew nothing at all about theology, and the interrogators soon discovered the fact and took up the Bible. The examination ran about like this:

"Why did Joseph's brethren put him in the pit?"

"Joseph he wouldn't work 'cause he war a pet wid de ole man, an' he allus go 'round wid his fine coat on what de ole man give 'im, and w'en he wouldn' help husk cawn hes brudders take he coat away an' put him in de cellar an' two she bears cum an' eat 'im up."

"What did Ananias do?"

"Ananias he take up de collection in de church an' he take a piece of money fum de basket an' giv' it to hes wife an' de Lawd turn him over to de Populists an' dey put out his eyes an' make him work in de mill."

"Sam became convinced that he was not giving details enough, so when he was asked for an account of Jezebel he replied:

"Jezebel she wuz de queen. She was lookin' out of de upstairs winder of de house and G'neral Jehu he come along an' she tells him, 'G'long, yo' old baldhead,' and two or three black fellows look out de window and Jehu tole 'em to frow her down, and dey frow 'er down; an' he tole 'em to frow 'er down agin, an' dey frow 'er down agin; an' he tole 'em to frow 'er down seven times, an' dey frow 'er down seven times; an' he tole 'em to frow 'er down seventy times seven, an' dey frow 'er down seventy times seven, an' de dogs licked 'er sores and dey took up ob de fragments dat remained twelve baskets full.'"

—*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

#### Revivalism and Strikes.

The following news item is interesting:—

"Religious revivalists in the coal fields of South Wales have succeeded in bringing about a truce between unionist and non-unionist miners. This has been accomplished in the face of an all round reduction of 5 per cent. in wages."

Splendid! When, in the future, servants, laborers, and domestics ask for higher wages, send them to the revivalist. Promise the workman all he wants in the next world, and he will let you have all you want here. Wanted—revivalists to solve the industrial problem.

However, there are some things which even revivalists cannot do—preserve the orthodox creed from decay. But a prophet is without renown in his own town; the revivalists are more successful in getting workmen to accept lower wages than in persuading preachers with liberal leanings to hold on to the old creeds.

—*Liberal Review* (Chicago).

#### The Renaissance of Asia.

The fall of Port Arthur introduces Japan to Modern Civilisation in a formal way. A new world, however, has appeared upon the stage of international politics. Asia has risen from her long sleep and stands upon the threshold of a new career with something of the ancient fire in her eyes. There was a time when the Ottoman empire, as one of the world powers, could compel Europe to respect her elder sister, Asia. But the Moslem empire was never equipped intellectually or morally as the Nipponese are, and, therefore, the coming forward of Japan will do more for Asia than all the Sultans ever accomplished. We should rejoice to see the regeneration through Japan of that vast continent. Live Asia! A Happy New future to Asia! Let not foolish fears prejudice us against the Japanese. If they progress they will survive, and we can't prevent it, and ought not to desire to do so. Nature has no partiality for colors—one skin is as good as another. Nature prefers the strong. To the fittest, be they yellow or white, belongs life. By the opening of Asia to self-government and modern thought, the world's forces for progress will be doubled and the fellowship of civilisation extended. Welcome Asia! Forget the past, cherish the future. Religions paralysed thy energies; science will revive them.

—*Liberal Review* (Chicago).

Self-love and reason to one end aspire,  
Pain their aversion, pleasure their desire;  
But greedy, that its object would devour,  
Thus taste the honey, and not wound the flower:  
Pleasure, or wrong or rightly understood,  
Our greatest evil, or our greatest good.—*Pope*.

Love, hope, and joy, fair pleasure's smiling train;  
Hate, fear, and grief, the family of pain;  
These mix'd with art, and to due bounds confined,  
Make and maintain the balance of the mind:  
The lights of shades, whose well-accorded strife  
Gives all the strength and colour of our life.—*Pope*.

O, sons of earth! attempt ye still to rise,  
By mountains piled on mountains, to the skies?  
Heaven still with laughter the vain toil surveys,  
And buries madmen in the heaps they raise.—*Pope*.

One self-approving hour whole years outweighs  
Of stupid starers, and of loud huzzas.—*Pope*.

Here is how the editor of *L'Univers*, a Roman Catholic journal, published in Paris, paid its compliments to Charles Darwin:—"The savant who invents and propagates them (evolutionary views) is either a criminal or a fool. *Voilà ce que nous avons à dire du Darwin des Singes.*" (This is all we have to say of Darwin of the monkeys.) This is, perhaps, the best answer that the Church, Catholic or Protestant, can make to Darwinism. Call its author a fool or a knave; then let *him* answer you, if he can. Besides, if you call another a criminal or a fool, you, yourself, might be taken for a saint.—*Liberal Review* (Chicago).



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, February 12, Secular Hall, New Church-street, Camberwell-road, London, S.E., at 7 p.m. (not 7.30), "An Hour With Dr. Torrey." Admission free.

February 19, Camberwell; March 26, Coventry; April 30, Liverpool.

### To Correspondents.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—March 12, Glasgow; 19, Liverpool; May 7, Merthyr Tydfil.

J. H. BELL.—Your order is placed in the proper hands. Pleased to hear you have given away six copies of *Bible Romances*, and "have had praise given it from all who have read it." Perhaps you will have an opportunity of seeing Mr. Foote at Bolton again some day.

WILLIAM VILE.—A weekly cover on the *Freethinker* would considerably add to our already too heavy bill, and advertisers are afraid to patronise us.

OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £66 11s. 3d. Received this week: R. H. Side (second sub.) 10s., Putney 5s., A. J. Batten 5s., West Ham Branch per J. W. Smith 8s., H. Cowell 1s. 6d., T. H. Elstob 2s. 6d., Guy Aldred 2s., F. Hermann 5s., E. Millar 2s., J. Barault 2s., F. Tescheleit 4s., G. E. Harris 5s., T. Fisher 3s., Autolycus 10s., G. Wilkins 1s., Ardent Supporters 5s., J. M. Day 1s., G. S. Eagleson 2s. 6d., H. S. Currie 2s., F. D. 2s., S. P. 2s. 6d., Mr. and Mrs. James Neate 10s., J. P. Cain 2s., W. M. C. 2s., W. M'Lean £1 1s.—Correction: H. M. 10s. last week should have been H. M. R.

J. W. HARRISON.—You do not trespass upon our time; on the contrary, we are pleased to receive your letter; it shows what a number of people there are who would welcome Freethought if they only came into contact with it.

G. E. HARRIS.—Yes, Mr. Foote is keeping very well, but gets very tired sometimes.

NEWARK SAINT.—One thing at a time. The present discussion in the *Freethinker* does not involve a debate on the merits of marriage as an institution. We note your suggestions as to a serial, etc.

H. W. JUNE.—We don't think the notes of Sir Robert Anderson's speech would be of much use to us. Thanks all the same. Your cuttings are welcome. Pleased to hear you were so "delighted" with Mr. Foote's lecture at Manchester.

W. MARTIN says the words of the "Glory Song" go rollickingly to the tune of Hermann Lohr's "Chorus Gentlemen," and that the result is bound to be "roars of laughter."

W. W. P.—Thanks; see "Acid Drops."

A good deal of correspondence on "Freethinkers, Marriage, and Friendship" stands over till next week in consequence of pressure upon our space.

T. FISHER.—Glad to hear from you again. Pamphlets are being sent. You may depend upon it that the "Do We Believe?" correspondence was "faked."

AUTOLYCUS.—Thanks for your humorous letter. We see that you are as fond of the "Nonconformist Conscience" as we are. It isn't at all shocked when Revivalist Torrey shouts "immorality!" against the opinions of men like John Morley, Algernon Swinburne, Thomas Hardy and George Meredith—not to run the list as long as this column.

MISS VANCE (N. S. S. Secretary) desires to call attention to the fact that by an accident the names of Messrs. F. A. Davies, T. Gorniot, W. Leat, and J. Neate were omitted from the list of those present at the last Executive meeting.

W. BINDON.—Adaptation as an "act" is not what we referred to. Using the word in that sense is bogging the whole question. We referred to adaptation as a *fact*. Men are stout-lunged in hard climates. That is a fact. What is the explanation of it? Design? Nothing of the sort. Weak-lunged men are born, but sooner or later they get weeded out. In such a climate the dice of life are loaded against them. It is a mere matter of natural (physical) selection.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

O. T. DAVIES.—Your suggestions shall be considered. But you must remember that the devices that some papers resort to in order to raise their circulation would be very undignified in the case of the *Freethinker*. Besides, we don't cater for an idle gaping crowd; the people we write for must think a bit.

F. BACON.—Yes, still living, and we trust in health; address, W. B. Thompson, Sherwood House, Wigmore, near Chatham.

S. P.—We quite understand why you must remain "passive." The bigots would soon starve you.

D. J. M.—The *Truthseeker* address is 28 Lafayette-place, New York City, U.S.A.

G. CROOKSON.—Sorry not possible in the circumstances.

JAMES NEATE.—Overlooked in last week's desperate hurry. Pardon!

E. R. WCOLWARD.—Much obliged; see paragraph.

J. P. CAIN.—Sent as requested. Thanks for cutting.

G. DICKINSON.—We have often dealt with Dr. Macnamara's utterances. He seems a slippery customer in this respect; still, we hope he has found salvation at last on the matter of Secular Education—though it looks almost like a deathbed conversion.

G. SCOTT.—Pleased to hear from you that our Glasgow lecture on Japan was noticed by a section of the local press, though the papers in question have not reached us.

G. E. M. writes:—"You have forwarded me copies of the *Freethinker* for the past three weeks. I like it very much. Its depth of thought and convincing argument have my admiration. I look forward to a real treat in *Acid Drops*." This correspondent has become a subscriber, and insists on paying for the copies that were sent to him gratis. Such a fact should encourage our friends to persist in helping us in this way. We want more addresses, please.

J. K.—We are doing our best to defeat such an intention. Thanks for good wishes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

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

### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote is delivering two Sunday evening lectures in the Camberwell Secular Hall. His subject this evening (Feb 12) is "An Hour with Dr. Torrey." No doubt the hall will be crowded. It should be noted that the chair will be taken at 7 o'clock, instead of the usual hour of 7.30. The change has been made in order that Mr. Foote may catch his last train home. We hope it will not inconvenience South London or other metropolitan friends.

Some thirty London Freethinkers, mostly young and energetic-looking, but with at least one veteran in Mr. Side, of Walworth, assembled at the *Freethinker* office on Friday evening, February 3, in response to Mr. Foote's invitation. After a two foot formal conversation on the subject of how the two pamphlets prepared by him should be distributed to Dr. Torrey's audiences at the Albert Hall, with a view to preventing the possibility of any police or other interference, Mr. Foote had to catch his last train home, leaving Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, to look after the detailed arrangements with the distributors. Everything went off smoothly, and we believe there will be volunteers to distribute these pamphlets at Dr. Torrey's meetings as long as may be necessary. Miss Vance informs us that nearly 10,000 copies were distributed at the Saturday and Sunday night meetings; which shows with what spirit the volunteers must have attacked the job. That they were "diligent" is testified to by the *Daily News* report, which is referred to in the first paragraph of this week's "Acid Drops."

The *Daily Mail* reporter also referred to the "Atheist pamphlets" that were being distributed outside the Albert Hall. We are glad to have the fact recognised, anyhow; it shows that our distributors did their work well.

*Reynolds's Newspaper* drew attention very promptly to our pamphlet on "Dr. Torrey and the Bible," describing it as "brief but effective." We hope it is effective, but we do not think it is brief—for it runs to sixteen pages of small type. However, we thank our contemporary for its ready reference to our pamphlet.

Mr. Robert Blatchford wrote to Mr. Foote asking to be allowed to reprint the *Torrey and the Infidels* pamphlet in the *Clarion*. Mr. Foote readily gave permission, and said he was glad that the idea had occurred to "Nunquam." The wider the exposure of the libeller of Paine and Ingersoll the better. And we think the *Clarion* is to be congratulated on the prompt resolution to lend its strong shoulder to this good work.

Our two Torrey pamphlets are entitled *Dr. Torrey and the Bible* and *Dr. Torrey and the Infidels*. The first criticises the revivalist's old-fashioned nonsense about the Bible, shows that he is fifty years at least behind the age, and proves that his views are at variance with those of the leaders of the very Churches that are promoting or blessing his Mission. The second is a ruthless exposure of Dr. Torrey as the libeller of Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. The facts in this pamphlet simply overwhelm the Christian slanderer. He is crushed and annihilated. We repeat that the facts do this. For that reason Freethinkers should give it the widest possible circulation. It is an eye-opener and is bound to do a lot of good. Of course the other pamphlet is an eye-opener too—in another way.

At present these pamphlets are being distributed gratuitously. They are marked on the title-page "For Free Distribution." The cost is being borne by our "Anti-Torrey Mission Fund," which should receive further support. The £100 asked for has not been made up yet, and it is a ridiculously small amount for the Freethought party to boggle over. Sixteen-page pamphlets cannot be printed by myriads for nothing, and a great many myriads will be wanted if this thing is to be done well—as it should be if it is done at all. Ten thousand copies were distributed outside Albert Hall on the first two nights of the Mission, and the Mission is to last three months. People are writing for copies from all parts of the country; and the circulation of these pamphlets will be excellent propogandist work, especially in towns which Dr. Torrey has visited.

Those who want copies of our Torrey pamphlets to read, or for distribution, should not apply to Mr. Foote for them, who has too much to do already, but write direct to Miss E. M. Vance, at our publishing office. Stamps should be enclosed for postage. If parcels have to be sent by rail the consignee, of course, must pay carriage.

Mr. G. Scott's article on Secularism is concluded in this week's *Freethinker*. By one of those accidents which happens once in twenty years, a piece of the conclusion, without the context, appeared in our last issue. We dare say our readers wondered what on earth they were reading. They know now.

Sir Hiram Maxim is evidently a wag. His ironical letter in a recent number of *To-Day*, rebuking Lieutenant-Colonel Spencer Acklom for his "insidious attack upon Christianity" was a little masterpiece. The irony was thoroughly sustained from the first sentence to the last.

After a lot of trouble and correspondence the Camberwell Branch has succeeded in getting the *Freethinker* into the Livesey Library. Councillor A. B. Moss behaved extremely well and took a great deal of pains in the matter. We thank him and congratulate him. The Branch, we understand, intends to make further efforts in the same direction.

Our friends are still requested to send us the names and addresses of persons who might be induced to take the *Freethinker* regularly if they had an opportunity of making its acquaintance. We are prepared to post this journal to such addresses for six weeks in succession. By that time the recipient would be ready to buy the paper or drop it.

### Obituary.

On Tuesday last, January 30, the remains of Mr. William Fraser were interred in the Smithdown-road Cemetery, Liverpool. He was connected with the local Branch for about twenty years, and seized every opportunity he could of spreading the gospel of Freethought. The Secular principles he supported in health sustained him throughout his last sickness. It can honestly be said of him that his character won a genuine respect from his friends and a deep and lasting love from his family. Nearly a hundred persons were present at his funeral, when a Secular Burial Address was read by Mr. H. Percy Ward.

## Shelley at Rome.—III.

### VII.

SHELLEY'S flight to Italy was a turning point in his life, and his two visits to "the Eternal City"—the one but the introduction to the other—were a turning point in his poetical career. In England he had been inspired by the spirit and principles of the French Revolution; In Italy he found a fresh inspiration in contact with the visible relics of that mighty civilisation which gives all its glamor to the name of Rome. And the place was to be rendered sacred to him personally by the memory of an irretrievable loss in the death of his little son.

"It was in solitude," Professor Dowden says, "among the flowery ruins of ancient Rome, that his highest mountings of mind, his finest trances of thought, came to Shelley." We have the poet's confession of this fact in the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* :—

"This poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extending in ever-widening labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening of spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama."

Shelley resembled Wordsworth in one thing; he loved the open air, and never cared to be indoors while it was possible to be out. Morning after morning, in the spring of 1819, he left his lodgings in the Corso and wandered alone amongst the ruins of Rome, taking the Capitol and the Forum on his way, and finally seating himself amid the vast remains of the Baths of Caracalla, where he continued the composition of the most sublime and sustained product of his own genius. What a spectacle! if one could but realise it in its world-environment. The greatest of modern English poets, who never needed to pray for "a muse of fire," whose imagination shone and pulsated like a strong electric light in comparison with the flickering gaslight of most of his poetical contemporaries; misunderstood, maligned, and ostracised, and with a tragical recollection of one who had been dear to him—of which he never trusted himself to speak; sitting there in the fervor of his purifying powers of thought and passion, while the echoes of the French Revolution were dying away in Europe, and Napoleon was eating out his Titan heart on the ocean-rock of St. Helena, and reaction was once more flooding the Western world with its reviving waves; sitting there surrounded by the ruins of one civilisation, and haunted by the apparent failure of the promise of another that seemed destined to carry forward its traditions and conquests—yet weaving, if not from the earth's past or present story, then at least from the impulses and revelations of his own mind, the texture of the most magnificent dream of man's ultimate emancipation.

Strange as it may sound to some ears, I have no hesitation in recording my belief that Shelley's silent brain-work on that desolate but romantic spot was the central fact of European history at that moment. The thought could not have occurred to him, who was so devoid of self-consciousness, and so apt to recognise and praise all worthy performance in others, and even to rank their inferior achievements far above his own; but if modesty forbade, truth would have justified, the cry of Constance from *his* lips as he sat on the crumbling relics of dead glory—

Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it.

### VIII.

There were friends, acquaintances, and visits to diversify Shelley's sojourn at Rome. Lord Guilford called on the Shelleys once or twice; they also saw Sir William Drummond, whose *Academical Questions* the poet highly esteemed, and it is certainly written with power and elegance, although it is now but little read, and is one of the rarest volumes to be

met with at the second-hand booksellers'; visits were exchanged with Dr. Bell, an English physician residing at Rome; nor must the Gisbornes be forgotten, to whom some of Shelley's letters were subsequently addressed.

The poet was not much in love with the generality of his countrymen who were to be met with at Rome, either as flying visitors or as temporary residents. "The manners of the rich English," he wrote at the time, "are wholly unsupportable, and they assume pretensions which they would not venture upon in their own country." He must have witnessed scenes calculated to provoke the satirical spirit in which he did not abound, but of which he was far from devoid. Here is a little scene from the diary of Mary's friend, Claire Clairmont, who was with them at that time:—

"In the evening go to the conversazione of the Signora Marianna Dionigi, where there is a cardinal, and many unfortunate Englishmen, who, after having crossed their legs and said nothing the whole evening, rose all up at once, and made their bows and filed off."

How characteristic!

Shelley visited the museums, the galleries, the churches, and above all the monuments of ancient Rome. "You know not," he wrote to Peacock, "how delicate the imagination becomes by dieting with antiquity day after day."

From the diaries of Mary and Claire we may gather an idea of what Shelley read during that great three-months. We find in the list the Bible, which Shelley, although an Atheist, was fond of perusing, Livy, Montaigne, Euripides, Plutarch, Cobbett, Wordsworth; and we may be sure that Shakespeare, and probably Dante and Milton, were never far distant. Shelley was, indeed, a great reader of the best literature. The common idea of an "inspired" poet, as one who owes everything to his own unaided nature, is perfectly ridiculous. People say they are staggered by the immense knowledge that Shakespeare displays. They wonder how he acquired it. But the reply is very simple. Shakespeare sucked his travelled and learned contemporaries like oranges, when he wanted the juice of their information; and, for the rest, I subscribe to Emerson's dictum that he was a great reader; getting, of course, with that penetrating mental eye of his, in the most rapid manner to the heart of a writer's meaning. The same was true of Shelley. He was rarely without a book. "He invariably read," Trelawny says, "when he was eating." Even when Trelawny found him once in the deepest recess of a wood, sitting under a fallen pine tree and gazing in reverie on the dark mirror of a deep pool, he noticed books lying on the ground, one being a pocket *Æschylus*, and another a volume of Shakespeare. "Sometimes," Trelawny says, "he would run through a great work on science, condense the author's labored exposition, and by substituting simple words for the jargon of the schools, make the most abstruse subject transparent." Which illustrates what I have just said as to the way in which Shakespeare would read.

#### IX.

It has already been observed that the mural tablet to Shelley in the Corso at Rome overstates the case with respect to the composition of the *Cenci* and the *Prometheus Unbound*. The first act of the latter had been written before Shelley visited Rome, chiefly in the summer-house of his garden at Este. The second and third acts were undoubtedly written during the longer visit to Rome. In that state the drama was intended to be complete. It was not till several months afterwards, at Florence, that Shelley conceived and wrote the fourth act which was necessary to express his full conception.

The *Cenci* appears to have been written, though perhaps not revised, entirely at Rome. Shelley said that it was "done in two months." Now we know that the third act of *Prometheus Unbound* was almost completed by April 6, 1819. Writing to Peacock from Livorno in July, he said, "I have written a

tragedy, on the subject of a story well-known in Italy." In a letter to Leigh Hunt on August 15, he says, "My *Prometheus* is finished, and I am also on the eve of completing another work," which was obviously the play. Putting these facts together, I conclude that the *Cenci* was written at Rome between the first week in April and the first week in June, and was revised for publication between that date and the middle of August. Thus the Rome tablet, as far as the *Cenci* is concerned, is substantially correct.

#### X.

Shelley told his publisher, Ollier, that the *Cenci* was "written for the multitude." He added that it "ought to sell well." Alas, he did not know the multitude, or he would not have penned such an absurd statement. When the multitude take to reading the *Cenci* we may well be apprehensive of the next prodigy. I saw it performed once—the only time, I believe, it ever was performed—at the Grand Theatre, Islington, with Miss Alma Murray as Beatrice and Mr. Herman Vezin as Count Cenci. That must have been nearly twenty years ago. My impression is that there was "not enough happening" for a theatrical success. Shelley had not, like Shakespeare, a practical acquaintance with the business of the stage. He worked from the point of view of literature. And from that point of view, I think it is undisputable that the *Cenci* is the finest English tragedy since the close of what we loosely call the Elizabethan age. We miss Shakespeare's ease and abundance, of course—for there is only one Shakespeare. Count Cenci is a tremendous figure, though not altogether a success; but Beatrice is a beautiful and triumphant conception. The scene at the trial, when her high spirit, untainted by fleshly pollutions, compels Marzio to tell a lie which is truer than the truth itself, is intensely dramatic, and should bring the house down if adequately rendered; while the final scene between Beatrice and Lucretia sounds the depths of poetry and pathos. And that song of Beatrice's, which closes the third scene of the last act, how it almost suggests the hand of the incommensurable Master himself!

Byron censured the *Cenci*, and Shelley thought that Leigh Hunt would not agree with his lordship. "Certainly," he wrote, "if *Marino Faliero* is a drama, *Cenci* is not—but that is between ourselves." This is a sure, and not cruel, touch on one of Byron's weak spots. He was no dramatist. There was far more of the dramatist in Shelley.

Byron, however, as Shelley told Hunt, was "loud in his praise of *Prometheus*"—which does more than usual credit to his judgment. Shelley thought it his masterpiece, as far as he was capable of writing masterpieces. "My *Prometheus*," he said, "is the best thing I ever wrote." Six months later he called it "my favorite poem," and charged Ollier "to pet him and feed him with fine ink and good paper." He thought it could not "sell beyond twenty copies," but then it was only written for some half-dozen readers. Well, the twenty copies were not sold; not a single copy, I believe, went over the publisher's counter. One press copy was referred to by a critic—was it not Theodore Hook?—who said that the poem was rightly called *Prometheus Unbound*, for who would ever think of binding it! After which desperate poor jest it is well to remember that a copy of the original edition of this despised masterpiece is now worth twenty times its weight in gold.

#### XI.

Before Shelley left Rome he lost his son William. The child was seized with a gastric attack on the second of June. For the mother, about to become a mother again, it was a moment of terrible trial. Dr. Bell represented science at the sick bed, and the fever-tossed little patient was watched by the sleepless eyes of love—Shelley's own eyes never closing during the child's sixty hours' agony. The end came on the seventh of June. The next day Shelley roused himself to communicate the news to Peacock

"It is a great exertion to me to write this," he said, "and it seems to me as if, hunted by calamity as I have been, I should never recover any cheerfulness again." The next morning Shelley and Mary left Rome. It was a bitter ending of that great and pregnant visit. Shelley had to hasten away in order to look after Mary, who was in quite a dangerous condition, and needed all his love and attention to sustain her. He tried to sing a requiem for his dead child, but his hand faltered, his tears fell, and he could not finish it.

During that great three-months Shelley had enriched English literature with some of the noblest poetry ever written. Just as he had arranged to leave Rome death struck down his darling child. It was a strange payment, in the economy of God or Nature, for his services to the world. He had grown, alas, too much used to strange calamities, but this blow fell upon him with crushing weight. It gave life a new savor of dust and ashes. And perhaps it was well that his wife's danger called upon him for action. It was in care for others that he, like his humbler brethren, found the surest salvation from grief.

## XII.

Before closing this article I should mention that it was at Rome, in the month of May, that Shelley's portrait was painted by Miss Curran, daughter of the Irish Master of the Rolls. "This portrait," Professor Dowden says, "begun when Shelley was but lately recovered from a feverish illness, the hasty work of an imperfectly trained amateur, is that by which the face of Shelley is most widely known." It was at first condemned by Mary Shelley, and it was nearly burnt with other artistic lumber of Miss Curran's; but she saved it just as the fire was scorching it, and in Professor Dowden's words it remains "in spite of its defects, a precious possession to those who most hold Shelley's memory dear." It may be seen in the National Portrait Gallery. Nearly on a line with it, to the right, is the wonderful portrait of Coleridge in his younger days, with that lax mouth, so different from Shelley's, and that "fore-head broad and high, light as if built of ivory," and those "eyes rolling beneath like a sea with darkened lustre"—as William Hazlitt described them. In the shape of the brow, and the bright beauty of the eyes, there is a certain resemblance (which must not be pushed farther) between these two poets; and each was a lyrist of the highest order, with a faultless ear for the richest and subtlest music of words. Both were masters of melody and harmony, both were exquisitely individual, both possessed what is generally called metaphysical power, and a genius for the ideal. But while Coleridge did little justice to his extraordinary endowments, and finally sank into creative impotence, Shelley soared and soared, higher and higher, like his own skylark, until the "arrow of the envious gods" pierced his brain, and he fell dead from the loftiest height of his song. For him there was no languor, no feebleness, no long twilight—"With one stride came the dark."

G. W. FOOTE.

## Secularism as a Substitute for Supernaturalism.—II.

(Concluded from p. 76.)

If the Freethought propaganda has any object or mission in view at all, it is to encourage men and women to think for themselves, and not accept anything contrary to reason on any authority, either human or divine. Convinced as we are that nothing but good can ultimately come from the free inter-communion of mind with mind and the candid discussion of every question that affects the welfare of humanity, we desire to do away with the foolish feeling of reverence for so-called sacred things that have no valid reason whatever to our awe and veneration. Holding, as we do, that belief in the supernatural and all that it has entailed in the past tends

inevitably to nullify the efforts of science and education to spread the light of knowledge and truth, it is incumbent on us in the first place to do what we can to clear the minds of others from the trammels of ecclesiastical domination and religious superstition.

But, as we have already indicated, while the Freethought propaganda must consist largely of destructive criticism, Secularism is by no means merely a gospel of blank negation. They little understand it who dub it with such a depreciatory title. Secularism is happily devoid of dogma, but it can boast of ideals and aspirations that will compare favorably with those of any purely religious sect. Anyone who glances at the concise summary of the immediate practical objects of Secularist propaganda which is issued by the Secular Society will admit that here we have a practicable program which is surely well worth straining every nerve to carry into effect. Its various clauses may almost be said to cover the entire field of moral reform and social regeneration. As a practical basis upon which to construct an improved state of society it leaves the Sermon on the Mount in the shade.

It may be urged by advanced and liberal-minded Christians who have imbibed a modicum of the humanitarian spirit that they do not yield a whit to us in their zeal for the amelioration of the condition of the people and their solicitude for the material well-being of the community at large. But the fundamental difference between Secularists and Christians is, that the latter subordinate everything to considerations of the next life and the saving of their souls, while the former hold that it will be time enough to worry about the next world when we get there, and that meanwhile there is plenty to be accomplished in the way of helping and raising humanity here where we are. In short, the Christian social reformer is of real service to his fellow-creatures precisely in so far as he breaks away from the traditional orthodox attitude of the Churches and approximates to the Secular standpoint on social questions. It is fairly certain that it is not the man who is constantly worrying as to how his debit and credit balance with God stands in the books of the recording angel, or who is asking himself day and night what he must do to be saved—it is not *that* man who is likely to achieve much in the cause of human progress.

The only leaders in religion who have made any distinctive mark on the pages of history—whether their influence on their contemporaries was for good or evil does not affect the conclusion—have been those who interpreted their own strong desires and resolves as being in accord with the wish of the Almighty, and labored under the pleasing delusion that they were doing God's will by defying conventionalities generally. Whereas they were simply imposing their own will upon others, and ascribing to God the credit—or discredit—of actions that originated in themselves or in the circumstances of their life and time. Speaking generally, the man who will most probably accomplish anything that is waiting to be done is, *not* the man who hesitates to see if God wants it to be done, but the man who goes ahead and does it irrespective of whether God wills it or not. The Secularist realises that whatever we are to attain in the way of progress must be attained by man himself without waiting on any deity. So that in this connection the superiority of Secularism over Supernaturalism as a practical motive power seems to be sufficiently manifest.

In fact, to the man who has become sick of religious cant, priestly mysticism, and the stagnant atmosphere of the Churches, there seems to be no nobler gospel than that of Secularism, and certainly there is none more useful from the standpoint of the lover of humanity. It is an intensely human and practical teaching, and it entirely dispenses with those appeals to the craven fears or the selfish expectations of the multitude which form so large a part of the stock-in-trade of the Supernaturalist.

The ethic of Secularism is grounded in humani-

tarianism and its morality is fundamentally utilitarian—using the word in its best sense. It teaches that it is a much more grievous thing to ill-treat a dog than to stay from Church on Sunday or eat flesh meat on Friday. Secularism, in so far as it accepts an explanation of the universe, demands that such explanation shall be consistent with itself and with the facts and processes of nature as we know them. But it declines to make terms with any system of philosophy or religion that can only be made plausible by *a priori* methods of reasoning.

We have heard it suggested that some Freethought advocates are rather strenuous in their denunciations of clericalism, religious superstition, and all that is included under the term sacerdotalism. Personally we must confess that we are totally unable to appreciate the fine air of philosophical calm and detachment so gracefully assumed by certain individuals in dealing with these matters. Nor is their placid attitude likely to be extensively emulated by those who have actually been under the ecclesiastical harrow or who have any vivid conception of the baneful influence of priestcraft in human affairs. Allowance must nevertheless be made for personal proclivities.

The contrast between Secularism and Supernaturalism might be extended indefinitely, but perhaps for the present enough has been written to show in some degree that the Secularist conception of life and its possibilities, of man and his destiny, is neither so sordid nor so unlovely nor so debased as many religious people are disposed to think. Rather is the contrary the case. For after all that can be said on behalf of Secularism *has* been said, Secularism itself is much greater and grander than any conception or definition of it that can be put into language. Thought, in its rapid and soaring flight, so easily outstrips our stumbling tongues and halting pens that the mental conception of our ideal must ever transcend its mere verbal or written expression.

G. SCOTT.

### Correspondence.

MR. ALEXANDER AT CAMBRIDGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The "wonderful" revivals which have occupied the attention of the Christian and non-Christian world during the past few weeks seem to many to herald the immediate and ignominious discomfiture of all unfortunate Agnostics and Freethinkers. I myself have been compelled to listen to triumphantly enthusiastic funeral orations delivered at the supposed decease of Rationalism by witnesses of the great Welsh Revival, and when I ventured to suggest that possibly *all* Agnostics might not feel convinced by even so obvious a manifestation of God's power, I was likened to Pharaoh, presumably because God had himself deigned to harden my unfortunate heart against his message of salvation. God has moved Cambridge! Over thirty undergraduates have been convinced of the truth of Christianity by the power of God working through Mr. Alexander, according to the somewhat florid verbiages of the local reporter. I was present at this remarkable meeting, perhaps the reporter was not; we will give him the benefit of the doubt, and hope that he was not.

The emotional element was early in evidence. The "Glory Song" was sung, and when we came to the last verse Mr. Alexander asked all those who had lost friends and hoped to see them again to subdue their musical efforts to a whisper.

After this an address was given by a friend of Mr. Alexander. This consisted chiefly of a description of the loneliness of death and the discomforts of Hell. The reporter said that interest flagged during this address; personally I was greatly interested—and amused.

Then the missionary took over the musical part of the meeting. This he soon resigned to a colleague in order to devote himself to sundry necessary arithmetical computations. This colleague sang a "touching" hymn, the chorus of which was:—

"Tell mother I'll be there, in answer to her prayer;  
This message, blessed Savior, to her bear;  
Tell mother I'll be there, Heaven's joys with her to share;  
Yes, tell my darling mother I'll be there."

At first the effect was not marked; but at the end of the hymn Mr. Alexander asked those who wished their mothers to know that they would "be there" to stand up. Some-

one led off, and about fifteen in rapid succession followed, somewhat taxing Mr. Alexander's arithmetical abilities. His patter was of this nature:—

"Twenty have decided. What does that mean?"

"Twenty happy homes when they hear about it."

"How delighted your mothers will be! Are there any more?"

"No more? Sing that chorus again, softly" (to colleague).

So the manifestation of God's power proceeded, and about thirty three in all were saved. But to the mind of a Rationalist, I think, the joy of a Christian mother at the return of her errant offspring to the fold hardly constitutes a very cogent argument in favor of the truth of the Christian religion. We *all* love our mothers and wish to please them as far as is consistent with truthfulness and reason. Those men stood up because they felt it would gladden their mothers, not because they were conscious of the divine origin of the Christian faith. Subsequently they were told to enter upon service and to try to convert others. How, I wonder, are they to do it?

Presumably by singing "Tell mother I'll be there....." as that was the only means suggested by Mr. Alexander's methods; and the limitation of the number of converts to thirty or thereabouts was doubtless due to the fact that the hymn did not cater for those who had no great expectation of their respective mothers "being there."

At any rate, I think your readers will agree with me that such psychical phenomena will not seriously influence the progress of Free Thought and Reason.

Another mission is to be held next week, and I fully expect that it will be as interesting as last Sunday's "spiritual awakening."

AN UNDERGRADUATE.

### BIBLE MORALITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Manville seems to be in some confusion of mind as regards morality and ethics. Precepts of conduct are not necessarily moral, otherwise the rules of a Football Club would be a moral code. The bulk of the injunctions in the Old Testament are obviously concerned with religion and its ceremonies; and if the rest were netted down to their demonstrable meaning, there would be little or nothing left that could be strictly classed as "moral."

The ancient Hebrews no doubt had ideas of what they considered good, and what bad. But when we find them holding outrage and massacre to be good, and heresy bad, we can only conclude that their standard or ideal had little or nothing to do with what we understand by morality.

Ethics is concerned with such questions as What is the object or aim of life? What end does human conduct seek to attain? What is the nature of virtue? etc. But the Bible gives no answer to any of these problems: in fact it does not seem to realise their existence. Later theologians have tried to formulate replies; but as these replies only become intelligible in proportion as they ignore the Bible altogether, it is evident that the "inspired" writers had no conception whatever of ethical principles.

The first four commandments are not moral, but religious ordinances. The fifth enjoins filial piety, without calling for any reciprocity on the part of the recipients. The sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth are obvious and universal principles; and the tenth commandment is idiotic, for the trade and commerce of the world could not go on if people did not desire one another's goods. Wives are not saleable in civilised communities, but houses, oxen, and asses are not usually bought unless the purchaser first desires them.

CHILPERIC.

### THE ETHICS OF RELIGIOUS TORTURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Good as is Mr. Cohen's paper on "Religious Persecution," I think he has omitted a very important aspect of the case against every persecuting religion. That aspect is this. That no religious body in the world's history has ever burnt to death or otherwise murdered those from whom it differed in belief *until it thought it could do so without risking its own skin*. Mr. G. K. Chesterton has attempted to extenuate—or even to justify—murder by religious bodies, on the ground that these bodies of men and women were so convinced of the importance of their own opinions that it seemed to them a good and necessary thing to murder those that did not believe as they—the aforesaid religious men and women—believed. If Mr. Chesterton will take a ticket for Burgos and there carry off the first person he can find who does not believe as Mr. Chesterton believes, and set fire to him or her in Burgos Market Place, I might believe in Mr. Chesterton's sincerity, though I should certainly think him to be a religious maniac, for before he could give complete evidence of his own sincerity the populace of Burgos would have frizzled him on his own fire. The Chestertons never try to burn anyone until they are in an overwhelming majority.

QUANTUM SUPP.

**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.**

CAMBERWELL BRANCH S S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, Religious Freethought Parliament: A. Morgan, "Phrenology"; 7, G. W. Foote, "An Hour With Dr. Torrey."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "What is the Use of Religion."

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Coffee House, Bull Ring): Thursday, February 16, at 8, A. V. Deakin, "The Five Senses of Man."

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): Oldham Clarion Vocal Union.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Joseph McCabe, "The Decay of the Church of Rome"; 6.30, "Sir Oliver Lodge on Haeckel."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): 6.30, Wm. Cassells, "Economic Rent." Monday, February 13, at 8, Ignatius McNulty, "Why I Left the Church of Rome." Tuesday, February 14, at 8 (City Halls, Candleriggs), Joseph McCabe, "The Welsh Revival."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, John T. Lloyd, "The Way to Heaven."

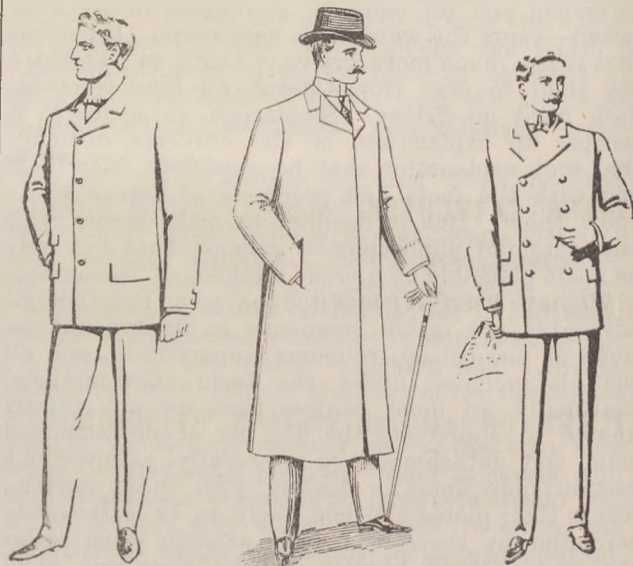
LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, H. Percy Ward, "The Hypocrisy of Protestantism"; 7, "An Atheist's View of the Revival Mania." Monday, at 8, Rationalist Debating Society, Geo. Clarke, "Spiritualism."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, Harold Elliot (lecture postponed from last Sunday), "Christianity Reconsidered; or, How I Became a Secularist."

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, February 16, at 8, Mr. A. W. Hildreth, "The Problem of Poverty."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Vocal and Instrumental Music, Recitations, etc.

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