

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

MEMENTO MORI! We don't understand that sublime sentence which some worthy got sculptured on his gravestone once. We've interpreted it in a grovelling and snivelling sense; we've wholly forgotten how to die. But be sure you do die nevertheless. Do your work, and finish it. If you know how to begin, you will know when to end.—THOREAU.

More Torreyisms. II.

DR. TORREY'S attempts at reasoning are perfectly childish. He is constantly a victim—or he constantly tries to make his hearers victims—of the fallacy which all pupils are warned to avoid at the very outset of their logical studies. I refer to the fallacy of arguing from a particular to a general proposition, or taking an accidental feature of an individual for the natural characteristic of a species. If a foreigner were to visit England, and the first inhabitant he saw on landing had a red nose, and he were to conclude that a red nose was the badge of an Englishman, he would be guilty of the intellectual offence which Dr. Torrey persistently commits with respect to "infidelity" and "immorality." He tells a story of some real or imaginary "infidel" who drank, or lied, or stole, or beat his wife, or starved his children; and either openly or tacitly he asks his hearers to believe that such crimes and vices are common to all who do not accept Christianity. Look at the following instance, which is one out of scores that might be culled from his *Talks to Men* and other publications:—

"I recall a man of brilliant parts, but stupefied and brutalised and demonised by drink, and this man was an agnostic."

Why did Dr. Torrey throw in that last clause? Simply to create the impression that agnosticism and drunkenness are regular companions. Now this is either a prejudice of "stupefied, brutalised, and demonised" bigotry, or it is a dishonest platform trick. A moment's reflection will satisfy any person who is not a hopeless bigot or a hopeless fool that the agnosticism of the "man of brilliant parts" was a sheer impertinence. For plenty of Agnostics can be adduced who are *not* drunkards, and plenty of Christians who *are* drunkards. And the truth is that bringing forward a drunken Agnostic or a drunken Christian throws absolutely no light on the question of how Agnosticism and Christianity and drunkenness are related to each other.

Here is another instance of Dr. Torrey's wonderful ratiocination:—

"Show me a man who denies or persistently questions whether the Bible is the Word of God, and I will show you a man that is leading either (mind you, I say "either," not "all") a life of greed for gold, or of lust, or of self-will, or of spiritual pride. I challenge any man to furnish me an exception. I have been looking for one literally around the world, and I have never found one."

This was enough to stagger the most orthodox audience. Some of them must have heard of Charles Darwin, and John Stuart Mill, whom Gladstone called "the saint of rationalism," and Professor Huxley, and Charles Bradlaugh, and Professor Tyndall, and Mr. John Morley. Consequently it

occurred to Dr. Torrey that when this astonishing utterance was put into cold print, it should be accompanied by a judiciously "hedging" footnote; and the reader is informed, at the bottom of the page, that "Anyone who has not surrendered absolutely to God is leading a life of 'self-will.'"

This is how Dr. Torrey salves his conscience and saves his face. But as he professes to believe in an omniscient God, one is tempted to ask him whether he thought he could deceive the Deity, as well as some of his readers, by that ridiculous footnote.

I call it a *ridiculous* footnote because it ought not to deceive a child. Dr. Torrey's original utterance was something more than a suggestion that doubts as to the Bible being the Word of God spring from wicked or defective character. By explaining away one of his terms he seeks a loophole of escape from criticism. But the explanation is mere silliness. For how does Dr. Torrey know that any man who doubts that the Bible is inspired has not "surrendered absolutely to God?" Evidently by the fact that he doubts. So that his not surrendering to God is proved by his doubting the inspiration of the Bible, and the quality of his doubt is proved by his not surrendering to God. Which is as pretty a piece of arguing in a circle as a man will meet with in a day's march.

Even if Dr. Torrey were not such an ill-reasoner as we have shown him to be, and even if he were allowed to put what meaning he pleases into "self-will" and "spiritual pride," the obvious fact would still remain that he is quite incapable of imagining how any man can have, not good or sufficient, but even decent grounds for doubting that the Bible is the Word of God.

There is another fact which must be mentioned in this connection. Dr. Torrey has his own way of believing that the Bible is the Word of God. He declares that his way is the right way, and that other ways are wrong ways; and, of course, a wrong way is no way at all—any more than the wrong way to a place will ever take you there. It follows, therefore, on Dr. Torrey's theory, that there are doubters inside as well as outside the Christian Churches, and that Christian teachers like the late Dean Farrar, Canon Driver, Professor Sanday, Dr. Clifford, Dr. Horton, and Mr. R. J. Campbell, no more believe that the Bible is the Word of God than I do. Not one of them believes that Jonah was swallowed by a whale or other "sea monster." Dr. Torrey does. He also asserts that Jesus Christ believed it too, and gave it his personal endorsement. He declares that "no one who accepts the authority of Jesus Christ can intelligently believe that the story of Jonah is an allegory." According to Dr. Torrey, therefore, the Christian teachers I have named reject the authority of Jesus Christ, and do not, in the proper sense of the words, believe the Bible to be the Word of God. And also according to Dr. Torrey's argument, they lead lives of self-will or spiritual pride, if not of greed or lust.

Such are the consequences of a man's starting off with the assumption that *his* beliefs are necessarily *the* truth, and that all who differ from him may be fools but are more probably rogues.

With regard to open "infidels" Dr. Torrey has not the slightest doubt that they are rogues. The father of doubt is sin; and doubt means a suspicion

that any one of Dr. Torrey's doctrines is not infallibly true. Here are his own words:—

"We see this to-day upon every hand—men who are becoming lax in their morals also becoming lax in their doctrine. Broad morals and broad theology go hand in hand; they are twin brothers."

This includes all the Higher Critics, all the Broad Churchmen, and all the "advanced" Dissenters. It also includes the more "liberal" Catholics. They, as well as the open "infidels" are "broad" in their morals; and it is easy to guess what Dr. Torrey means by "broad."

So sure is Dr. Torrey of his diagnosis of scepticism that "oftentimes," he says, "when men tell me they are getting into doubt, I put to them the question, 'What have you been doing?'" This is followed by one of his delectable stories:—

"Once, walking in a university town, I saw a little way ahead of me on the street a young fellow that I knew. I caught up with him and said to him, 'Charlie, how are you getting on?' and with a self-satisfied look he said, 'Well, to tell you the truth. Mr. Torrey, I am getting somewhat sceptical.' I said, 'Charlie, what have you been doing?' The poor fellow blushed and dropped his head. Charlie had been sinning, and sin had begotten doubt."

There you are. That is Dr. Torrey's gospel in a nutshell. He expands it from time to time, and dresses it up in all sorts of ways, but it is nothing but that at bottom. Sin is the father of doubt, and unbelievers are all scoundrels. And every one of them will have his portion in the lake that burneth with brimstone and fire.

Well, if the unbelievers go to that lake, the Bible says that the liars will go there too, and Dr. Torrey is likely to spend eternity with the "infidels"—which may be a poor prospect for him, but is ten times worse for them.

Really, it seems to me that Dr. Torrey is the worst liar in London. Some men lie for food and shelter, some for pelf, some for ambition, some even for love, and some for preference; but Dr. Torrey lies for malignity, and is as much worse than they as rape is worse than fornication. He is a Iago—without the brains. He conforms to Emilia's description of "some cogging, cozening slave," and would equally well give point to her passionate prayer:—

O heaven, that such companions thou'dst unfold,
And put in every honest hand a whip
To lash the rascals naked through the world.

There is a comic side to everything. Heine said that Brutus may have smelt onions on his knife before plunging it into the breast of Caesar. Dr. Torrey also smells whiskey in the "infidel's" breath before consigning him to hell. He is evidently a connoisseur in drinks. He knows the "infidel's" tap. It is whiskey every time. Probably that was Dr. Torrey's weakness.

In the third of his *Talks to Men* he fancies that if a man went into a public-house, with a Bible under his arm, and ordered whiskey, he would find a difficulty in getting it. Well, if he went in with a Bible under each arm, he would get two whiskies—easily. But let us follow Dr. Torrey:—

"But suppose I should enter the public-house and lay upon the bar a copy of any work of Ingersoll or Bradlaugh, a copy of the *Clarion*, or the *Agnostic Journal*, or the *Freethinker*, or the most respectable infidel book or paper that there is, and order a glass of whiskey straight, I would get it without a question or look of surprise. It would be just what they would expect. The Bible and whiskey don't go together. Infidelity and whiskey do go together."

Dr. Torrey evidently thinks (or pretends to) that the "infidels" consume all the whiskey in England. There are not enough of them. It couldn't be done without a lot of Christian help.

I know one "infidel" who drinks as little whiskey as Dr. Torrey—perhaps less. For you can never be sure that some of these pious gentlemen do not take a drop *medicinally*. And when you know a man to be a liar, the safest plan is not to believe anything he says, without good corroboration.

It is a marvel to me that the Christians do not

often wonder at Dr. Torrey's extensive acquaintance with infidels. How on earth did he get to know so many of them? One would imagine that they could hardly be fond of constant association with a "revival" preacher. But he brings them into his discourses by the dozen. He produces one of them every time he is short of an illustration. He appears to find an "infidel" story an excellent substitute for reason and argument. And some of these stories are enough to make a London cab-horse turn round and wink at his driver.

Dr. Torrey wants, for instance, to show that "infidels" are gloomy mortals; so he starts with a bit of anecdote, and tells of a New Zealand man who passed in front of the platform at the close of his address, and looked up and scowled, and said, "I am an infidel." The next day (of course!) Dr. Torrey received a letter from him "saying that he was miserable." That is the end of the story. It was all needed to serve as a preface to the question: "Did you ever know a joyous old infidel?" Well, it all depends on what you mean by "joyous." If it means capering, babbling, crying "Hallelujah," "the Lord be praised," and so forth; if it means talking about heaven, and the angels, and the throne of glory, and similar extravagances, there is certainly no "joyous" old infidel. But if it means cheerfulness, and becoming mirth, and gladness that the world keeps on improving, and readiness to assist it as far as age allows, and pleasure at seeing the lamp of life carried by younger and stronger hands; then there are hundreds of "joyous old infidels."

Dr. Torrey is moving towards old age himself. Is he "joyous"? He may be, but in that case his looks belie him. There is not a single note of joy in these *Talks to Men*, or in any other volume of his that I have consulted. He confesses that he has no humor—though the confession was quite unnecessary. He does not belong to the America of Mark Twain and the other Trans-Atlantic humorists; he belongs to the America of the sour Puritans who burnt witches, tortured Quakers, and made the Sabbath a provocation to suicide. One might even say that he belongs to the America of chronic dyspeptics and patent medicines; and one might wonder whether he needs Carter's little agitators or the more vivacious bile beans. He seems to illustrate Tom Hood's line about the people who "think they're pious when they're only bilious." It is admitted by all the critics that his face is hard and unsympathetic, and that his voice is of the same character. And after reading a number of his addresses I am puzzled to find where the "joy" comes in. The most powerful flavor in them is that of fire and brimstone. Some preachers would win you to heaven. Dr. Torrey would bully and kick you there. *Joy*, indeed! He is an odd sort of man to talk about *joy*. If he have any at all, he must keep it for these Christmas—or leap-years' days.

Dr. Torrey closes these "Talks" with the story of an "agnostic," who was an "intimate friend" of his during one of his "pastorates." One evening he was chatting with that agnostic friend on his front lawn. Soon afterwards his friend died and went to hell. Dr. Torrey tells it without a tremor. He warned the man, and "whose fault was it" if he fell into the everlasting fire? Dr. Torrey is able to look into the pit, see an old friend in eternal anguish, and say "I told you so." And this man talks of "joy," and wants to know where he can find a "joyous old infidel."

But let me end where I began. Dr. Torrey boasts of the number of infidels he has converted. Of course they had all sunk into infamy before he took them in hand. "In the city of Melbourne," he says, "more than one man came to me, a moral wreck, who said that his fall was due to the influence of the noted infidel in that place." This is a "Christian" lie about my old friend and colleague, Mr. Joseph Symes—a man of exemplary life, and a brave and strenuous reformer, who has taken poverty and ostracism cheerfully for the sake of his convictions. He and his have often been in want

of the necessaries of life, and he is libelled by this well-paid pot-bellied Christian preacher.

Let me suggest to Dr. Torrey that Melbourne is a long way off, and that he should produce an "infidel" he has converted in London. I say produce the "converted infidel." References and allusions are not sufficient. A grain of gumption shows how easily they are manufactured. Let us have a single case that will stand investigation. It will not do to say that his "infidel" converts all wish to avoid publicity. That may be true without being a proof of their genuineness. But evidence must, from the very nature of the case, be open and palpable; and why should every one of Dr. Torrey's converts be of such a supernaturally retiring disposition?

I ought not to finish this article without a reference to what Mr. Robert Blatchford wrote in last week's *Clarion*.

What I expected has happened. Some of Mr. Blatchford's readers have protested against what they are pleased to call "the attack on Dr. Torrey." Whereupon Mr. Blatchford says:—

"Now I think to describe Mr. Foote's manly and temperate defence of Colonel Ingersoll and Thomas Paine as an 'attack' on Dr. Torrey is to put the word attack to strange uses."

I am glad to see Mr. Blatchford taking this attitude. And he will have to persevere in it. He does not know Christian bigotry as well as I do. I have had a longer and more varied experience of it. And I venture to tell him that he may expect every criticism of Christianity, and every reply to its advocates, to be treated as an "attack." The Christians are so accustomed to having everything their own way—partly by penal laws, partly by social persecution, and partly by bullying—that they get angry at the slightest opposition. To attempt to conciliate them is a waste of time. The only way to deal with them is to defy them, and to show them that they have just the same rights as other people—no less and no more.

It is good to see Mr. Blatchford hitting out at these insolent superstitionists. He says plainly that Dr. Torrey's statements about Freethinkers are "lies." "Are we to sit silent," he asks, "while a malicious vulgarian calls us all 'infidels' and tells England and the world that we are vile?" Yes, that is what Christian bigots expect you to do; and they feel grossly insulted, and put on the most terrible look of offended dignity, if you answer them back.

Mr. Blatchford asks another pertinent question—a question which I have asked again and again in the *Freethinker* during the last two years:—

"Is there any educated Christian gentleman who believes these lies? Do not all the well-informed religious people know that Dr. Torrey is lying? Knowing, as they do, that his accusations are false, why do they 'protest' against our denials? Why do they continue to support as a Christian evangelist a man capable of such impudent and reckless slanders?"

This is the right tone. I hail it with delight. I am pleased to see Mr. Blatchford winding up with the confession that his "faith in the honor and manliness of the Anglican and Nonconformist ministry is weakening." It will be a capital result of this agitation if Mr. Blatchford is convinced, once for all, of the wisdom of *taking off the gloves* with these gentlemen.

G. W. FOOTE.

Dr. Dallinger on Science and Man.

THE *Mid-Cumberland and North Westmoreland Herald* for February 11 contains a rather lengthy report of a sermon by the Rev. Dr. W. H. Dallinger. Dr. Dallinger's address was on "Evolution and the Ascent of Man," and with this he is certainly as competent to deal as any other occupant of the pulpit, and a great deal more competent than most. He has more than a mere hearsay acquaintance with science and, presumably, scientific method while his remarks on the relations of religion and science

are usually free from the absurdities that proceed from such men as Dr. Horton, Mr. Campbell, or the Bishop of London. So far as our own observation has gone, he is less ready to rely upon the temporary ignorance of science, and quite ready to admit that while science has a number of problems that need time for their solution, it has little or nothing of "mysteries" that promise to be permanent.

But the man who sets out to harmonise modern thought with a number of beliefs which, however they may be disguised, are the products of savage ignorance remoulded during the darkest periods of European history, has a heavy, an impossible, task before him. The discordance between the two may be glossed over, but it remains. And the proof of the unsatisfactory character of such apologies is furnished by the way in which one is replaced by another, each enjoying but a transient popularity. And in this task the possession of intelligence is a hindrance rather than a help. A person like Dr. Torrey is perfectly at home in reconciling religion and science. He knows nothing of one, and only the cruder forms of the other; with the result that scientific criticism is quite powerless. But a man who does know something of science, and whose theology has become adulterated with certain modern social and ethical aspirations, finds the task one of great difficulty, and his apologia is, as a result, always of a more or less hesitating character.

Dr. Dallinger, as is well known, accepts the doctrine of evolution; and as his acceptance of it, along with that of "spontaneous generation," is of many years' standing, he stands out in this as a very honorable exception to the ruck of dissenting preachers. But Dr. Dallinger is also a preacher, and so his acceptance of evolution has certain qualifications attaching to it. "We may not," he says, "dispute the findings of physical science as to man's place in the universe.....The sincere and expert judgment is not to be set aside by the irresponsible prejudices of the uninformed." Still, while accepting this much, he believes that science quite fails to give an account of man as a whole.

"Man has been compared only as an object, a visible and tangible factor of the organic world, as if his whole being were summed up and completed in the bony framework and muscular and neural systems. No estimate has been taken of his conscious personality, his knowledge of right and wrong, his freedom of will, his perception of grandeur and truth, his idealism, his love, his hope, his faith.....We must dispute that when we have studied the nature and relation of man's bony and muscular and nervous systems we have exhaustively studied man and are prepared to assign to him a true relative place in nature and the universe."

Now if this were true, if that is, science dealt only with a part or an aspect of man, it would be absurd to pretend that we were able to indicate man's place in nature, and still more absurd to claim that the theory of evolution supplied us with all we needed. For evolution either contains the explanation of everything or nothing. But it is not true. It is not true that science is chained by its method to studying only the physical aspect of man, nor is it true that science offers no account of the moral and mental aspects of human nature. It is open to anyone to say that the scientific or evolutionary account is not satisfactory, but it is not open to anyone to assert that science either ignores or cannot deal with these subjects. Dr. Dallinger need go no further than Darwin's *Descent of Man* to see how wide of the truth is the statement that science only considers man as merely an animal object. And one may further say that Darwin's chapter dealing with the mental and moral qualities of man is richer in suggestiveness, and contains more real information on the subject than all the sermons that were ever preached.

What evolution, in the hands of such men as Darwin, Spencer, or Haeckel, asserts is, first, that there is an unbroken continuity between man and the animal world at large. Second, that this continuity holds good in mental and moral matters as in physical. Third, that mental or moral and

physical are but different aspects of the same thing; and that this is demonstrated by the constant relation and dependence of mental and moral states upon physical or neural conditions. Proof of these points need not be given now: it is enough to point out that such is the teaching of evolution in order to dispose of the statement that it regards man as a physical object only. It is astonishing that a man like Dr. Dallinger should attribute to modern science opinions that would make it ignore the qualities that make human nature, socially, of most value.

Usually those who take up this position are careful to be very general, and refer to the ignoring by science of what they vaguely call the "spiritual" part of man, and which generally means the erotic-hysterical ravings of a revivalist gathering. Dr. Dallinger is more precise, and says that no estimate has been taken of man's conscious personality. This, with the whole literature of modern physiological psychology before him. Nor of his knowledge of right and wrong—with such a work as Spencer's *Principles of Ethics* to rebuke him. Nor of man's perception of grandeur, truth, idealism, hope, and faith. And this with an enormous literature, written largely by Freethinkers and Materialists, and giving a perfectly natural and non-supernaturalistic interpretation of each quality. The more one reflects the more one marvels at the frame of mind—a tolerably common one—that can go on repeating statements of this description, that half an hour's search in any library would be sufficient to disprove. It is not that those who make such assertions are unacquainted with this literature; they simply will not entertain it. They declare it non-existent because they wish for its disappearance.

The real truth is that science ignores no aspect of human nature that religion "takes note of; it only offers a different explanation. It requires no supernatural force to account for the development of morality or of intelligence, but explains these are due to the development of new forms of force that is in itself indestructible. There are plenty of problems connected with the evolution of these "forms," but they are quite understandable in their general outlines, and offer no question that need be given up as insoluble. And when the religious advocate brings forward his "spiritual" phenomena, science again admits the facts but disputes the interpretation. No medical man, for instance, would doubt that men and women who went without food, as was the manner of earlier believers, or who spent years brooding upon unhealthy topics, did at last see visions and hear voices; on the contrary, he would predict that such would be the result. All he would point out would be that the normal result of such proceedings upon the nervous system is enough to account for all that occurred.

And not only is this the explanation offered by science, but it is the only one that covers the facts, and is in some degree accepted by all. The man who abuses his constitution by vice, or by drink, and then sees visions of a non-religious character is said, by religious people to be reaping the reward of his past conduct. The man who shuts himself off from healthful intercourse with his fellows, lowers the tone of his nervous system by prolonged watching, fasting, praying, and brooding, and sees visions of a religious description, is declared to be the recipient of a revelation from God! What is the difference between the two cases? Scientifically they are identical. One can safely assert that if Evan Roberts had seen a vision of the Paradise of Mahommed instead of the Christian deity, he would have been denounced as a lunatic instead of being acclaimed as a saint.

Dr. Dallinger believes that the "fallacy" that science can explain man lies at the root of all the modern attacks on Christianity. Well, if it is the "fallacy" it is, one must confess, a very common one, and one that is gaining ground. And after all science is the only thing that has explained anything

up to now. A mere assertion is not an explanation. You do not explain man by asserting that he is a "soul" or "spiritual being," or by any other of the verbal humbuggeries of the pulpit. These are mere words that never enlighten and always confuse. Like the cuttlefish that escapes from its pursuer under cover of the inky cloud it creates, the parson often escapes in the verbal fog he calls into being.

Dr. Dallinger is also of opinion that "There never was a time when there were such stupendous forces at work to uproot the Christian belief" as now. This is true, but it is only one aspect of the truth. The forces against Christianity are more effective now, for the reason that Christianity can no longer reply as it once did. It once had the stake to back up its teachings. And when it had not the stake it had the prison. And behind both it had a fairly universal ignorance. These were all-powerful adjuncts. But now both the stake and the prison have gone out of fashion. And ignorance is much less general and far less profound than of old. The knowledge of the average man may not be very great, or his intelligence very keen, but it is enough for him to realise to some extent how utterly at variance with Christianity is modern thought. Habit still keeps the mass of the people in the old ruts, but the habit gets weaker because the stimuli is not so strong nor so omnipresent. Mankind must be watched very carefully if it is to be kept religious, and when religion has no longer the power to exercise the necessary control and watchfulness, it may count the hours of its own decay.

C. COHEN.

Hope.

ONE of the most grievous charges brought against Secularists is that they are guilty of extinguishing the bright star of hope which has always been shining in the firmament of life. If such a charge is true, the obnoxious unbelievers, who are guilty of it, deserve to burn in the hottest hell forever. It is the general impression among Christians that the accusation is as well attested as anything can be. The question frequently put to Freethought lecturers is, "What will become of mankind if you succeed in robbing them of their hope?" The true answer to that question is, that Freethought lecturers, if they understand their mission, never attempt, and certainly have no wish, to rob mankind of their precious endowment of hope. On the contrary, it is their firm conviction that the value of hope to human life is altogether incalculable. Secularists are themselves the most heroically hopeful people in the world. Had it not been for this indubitable fact, they would have abandoned their mission long ago. Cruelly despised, maligned, and persecuted as they have ever been, they have yet persistently and bravely continued to advocate, with unswerving confidence, the principles so dear to their hearts. With perfect accuracy they could be described as those who are pre-eminently the children of hope. Consequently, it would be utterly inconsistent and rationally impossible, on their part, to seek to deprive their fellow-beings of the very possession that is of such inestimable worth to themselves. It is their desire, rather, to do their utmost to encourage the free and full exercise of this wondrously fruitful faculty. It is only illegitimate forms of it that they are in the habit of attacking. The hope of immortality, for example, is illegitimate, because it is fed neither by reason nor by experience, but alone by credulity, and so it comes under the lash of their condemnation.

The point of emphasis, in the present article, however, is that Freethinkers are ardent believers in hope. When they attack the hope of immortality, they do so because they are convinced that it is a form of hope that cannot be justified at the bar of reason, and that makes for the degradation of the ethical life, or, in other words, because the cultivation of it gives human life a false perspective, or

supplies a wrong incentive to right conduct. The existence of a future state, to say the least, is purely hypothetical; and, surely, it cannot be manly to shape one's life in society on a mere hypothesis. But that mankind have a future in the present state of existence, is not a hypothesis, but an absolute fact. It is upon this future alone, therefore, that it is legitimate to exercise the faculty of hope. Man is as yet only in his youth; and our hope is that he may continue to grow and develop until the full stature of manhood be reached. If this hope is in us, and burns vehemently, we shall enrich and ennoble ourselves by bending all our energies to the grand task of rewarding it with realisation. This hope is based upon belief in the possibilities of the human race, and justifies itself by a most unmitigated effort to convert these possibilities into actualities. Now, this is the hope to which Freethinkers have unreservedly committed themselves. It is a hope that enjoys the unqualified commendation of science. It is a hope that ought to spring eternal in the human breast, because it is a hope that gives every action a rational basis.

The roots of hope are in the past. What may be depends very largely upon what has been. To-day is only a link between yesterday and to-morrow; and standing on this connecting link we form our estimate of to-morrow with one eye steadily fixed upon yesterday. In other words, the surmise for to-morrow, to possess any value, must be a reasonable deduction from the fact of yesterday. Knowing how the human race has grown and improved in the past we are confident that it will continue to do the same in the future; and having this hope, we are determined to do our utmost to facilitate one another's advancement. Thus, the real justification of hope is history. To-day's fact was yesterday's hope, while to-day's hope will be to-morrow's fact.

The religious hope of immortality lacks this justification. It has absolutely no history behind it. Aware of this, Plato *imagined* a history, and then elaborated his famous Doctrine of Reminiscence. In the case of this first and chief of poet-philosophers, one assumption necessitated another. For logical completeness, existence after death must pre-suppose existence before birth. Wordsworth adopted Plato's ingenious theory. In his fine Ode on Immortality we find these lines:—

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

But the belief in Pre-existence is as devoid of evidence as the belief in Post-existence. Both hypotheses are alike creations of man's imagination. The eternity before birth is as silent as the eternity after death. Thus we see that Plato's imagined history does not furnish the slightest foundation for the hope of immortality.

Many Christian theologians allege that their doctrine of immortality is the outcome of positive knowledge. They contend that in Plato we only find a shrewd philosophic guess, while Jesus affords us absolute assurance. According to them, Jesus knew there is a hereafter because He had come straight down from the herebefore. Here we have two great doctrines suspended on a stupendous assumption—namely, the assumption that Jesus was a Divine Being. Of course, this assumption is unsusceptible of proof, being contrary to both reason and history. History and reason are as ignorant of Divine Beings as they are of Virgin Births and Resurrections. Hence, the assurance of Jesus is of no more value than the guess of Plato.

Is it not evident, then, that the only legitimate hope is necessarily confined within the limits of the present life and world? So far as we know, there is no other world, and there can be no other life. It is our destiny on this earth that is of supreme importance. If we prosper in the present state of

existence we need not stand in awe of any other. This state is known, and it is with this alone we should be concerned. Let us hope for a happy future for the race and for ourselves on this globe, and let us justify our hope by earnestly working for such a future.

It requires no keen eye to see that the secularist view of the Universe is being increasingly confirmed by modern science. Fifty years ago the theology of the Middle Ages completely held the field. The present life was said to be a state of probation merely. It was only after death that real life commenced. People looked up to the sky and said, "The real life is *there*." This world was a place to get out of as quickly as possible. Consequently, all hope concentrated itself on the world to come and its glowing possibilities of happiness. "Hope thou in God," was the universal exhortation. The few Atheists who ventured to call this theology in question were anathematised in the name of the God of love. But in the year 1859 a comparatively small book, entitled *The Origin of Species*, made its quiet, unostentatious appearance. When its purport became known, it was denounced and cursed and sworn at by innumerable defenders of the Faith. But persecution seemed to give it wings, so that it travelled faster and faster, inoculating a few minds here and there as it went. It promulgated a new view of the Universe, an essentially atheistical view which theology was bound to characterise as a deadly heresy, and to do its best to suppress. But the new doctrine possessed the vitality of truth, and, like leaven, it began to work in the meal of human thought. It worked and worked and worked until by to-day, within the space of forty-six years, it has practically transmuted the whole lump. Indeed, it is accurate to state that Darwin's book has utterly revolutionised the thought of the civilised world on almost every conceivable subject. It has found its way into the Church and necessitated an entire reconstruction of theological systems.

Now, the theory of evolution is essentially monistic. It takes no notice whatever, because it knows nothing, of another world. All it has discovered is that the Universe is one, and that it lives; that all living things are closely related; that no life has been found outside material forms; and that all higher forms have been evolved by a slow process from lower. Of this evolutionary process man is the flower. Since his first appearance, millions of years ago, man has been steadily improving. The process is still going on, although the pace is almost imperceptible. Is there a God? Science does not know the meaning of the word. Hence science neither affirms nor denies the Divine Existence, but simply ignores it. Science neither affirms nor denies a future life; it merely cannot conceive of it. This being so, it follows naturally that the only proper object of hope is man in the present world. "Hope thou in thyself and in thy kind," is the exhortation that should be addressed to every human being.

The backward state of society to day is largely due to the fact that so much human energy has been wasted upon purely imaginary objects. The fear of hell and its sufferings, the thought of heaven and its blessedness, the trust in the forgiving mercy of God through Christ, meditation upon the unspeakable blessings which flow from the intercessory ministry of the ascended and glorified Redeemer—these things have taken up so much time and consumed so much vital force that other things of immediately pressing importance have had to be put off and neglected. The contemplation of the Fatherhood of God has been so intense and persistent that the sense of human brotherhood has been kept in a state of abeyance. Is it not a mournful reflection that, while the loving Father in heaven is being zealously worshipped, the children who so worship him are weltering in blood on cruel battlefields, or in other ways preying upon one another in the silly scramble for pelf and power? Instead of being permitted to be of practical benefit to mankind

science has been applied to the construction of huge weapons to destroy them. If revivalists really loved their fellow-beings, they would endeavor to convince kings and governments of their duty to disband their standing armies and convert their machine-guns, their rifles, and their bayonets into some really useful articles. At present, Christian nations make war upon each other in the name of their common Father, and Christian people hate and devour one another under the cloak of their religion. What we all require to do is to take the lessons of science seriously to heart, and to have a lively hope one in another. Science makes it clear to us that the highest welfare of society can only be secured through the introduction into all relationships and activities of the sweet sense of brotherhood. What can awaken this sense of brotherhood? Education. It is in education, conducted on scientific lines, that our hope of human progress lies. Let brotherhood be taught to our children, not as a dogma of the Church, but as a fact of Nature. Let the solidarity of the race be brought home to them as a demonstrable truth, and let them know by apt illustrations that the love of one's kind is not a hard duty, but a gladsome privilege, which, if lived up to, will add to the happiness of all. As yet, alas, education is not conducted on these lines, and the Golden Age of humanity is not knocking at the door. Progress is slow. Let us not lose heart. If science will accomplish half as much during the next forty-six years as it has during the last forty-six, we need not despair. The general outlook is most inspiring. Let us fully trust in the reforming might of truth, and keep stoutly pegging on.

J. T. LLOYD.

Revivalist Raiment.

"AND why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, etc." But the *Daily Express* tells us how well and neatly, nay, elegantly, Revivalist Alexander is habited; and when he is perched on his red platform and gyrating his hymns out, that one can notice his coat that Bond-street might be proud of, and "his carefully-creased trousers."

Now we approve of this. A well, fashionably-dressed revivalist is much better than a shabby old colporteur hawking Bibles and tracts. It is fitting, like his handsome coat and trousers, that the soul-saver by song should be "decently habited." We could not and would not desire him to be only "clad with zeal as a cloke," for that would be too chilly and scanty, and even Albert Hall couldn't stand it, though it sings "Naked come to thee for dress." No, that won't do nowadays—even if the Church soprano does sing "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed, not arrayed," and after dwelling on his nude condition adds, after many quavers and trills, "like one of these." We were glad to hear that Solomon had clothes, very glad, and pleased that the Revivalist, as he sings and gesticulates, and goes on, and alternately rouses up the audience, is well and handsomely attired. It is well that is so—very well, and much more becoming than a John the Baptist style of garment, or a Simon Stylites insane and probably underclothed on his pillar, which was not red; or as George Fox and some of the early Quakers who perambulated the streets *in puris naturalibus*, as a protest against the extravagant fashions of the time in dress. They were "clad with zeal as a cloke," and nothing else. Nor could they sing—

Hear me, for Thy Spirit pleads,
Hear, for Bond Street intercedes!

"What went ye out in the wilderness for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold they that wear soft clothing are in the king's houses"—also the Royal Albert Hall helping Torrey. Doubtless Dr. Torrey is appropriately "arrayed" in well-made clothes. His message of salvation to London, although it is not needed nor wanted by the

majority of Londoners, and is most irrelevant, yet it sounds better from a man well-suited—as to his clothes—than otherwise.

A. K. H. B., the "Country Parson," relates in one of his pleasant essays, how much more he was impressed in hearing Bishop Wilberforce, of Oxford, by noting his exquisite lawn sleeves and ruffles when he preached. And the writer knew a famous bishop whose dear, good old mother herself did up her son's lawn sleeves, and used to take them fresh to him on his tours, that he might appear in all their glory when confirming or ordaining. He might have sung as he put them on, "That shall be glory, glory for me!" And it was not till he should be "on that heavenly shore" where lawn sleeves are probably not worn (though some bishops fancy they are), but now on earth, "while we have time," etc, and a fine palace, a carriage and pair, and a first-class cook. For the *chef* is not to be discounted even for "Just to be there and look on his face." Mr. Alexander, of course, knows this, for he not only dresses well, but presumably lives well, being well off: for he was so fortunate as to wed the daughter of the late Richard Cadbury, of Birmingham, and can sing with thankful feeling as he returns to supper after a revival meeting in the Royal Albert Hall—

Oh! that will be glory for me!

GERALD GREY.

Acid Drops.

The assassination of the Grand Duke Sergius was one of those inevitable things, about which there is very little to be said, because everybody really understands them. Those who sit on safety valves must expect explosions—and explosions are apt to hurt. That is all there is in it.

Not even Dr. Torrey will venture to bemoan the fate of the Grand Duke Sergius. The circumstances of the case were such that ordinary Englishmen declined to wear mourning. But if a leading man had been assassinated in some other country than Russia, we should have heard enough about "the blood-red hand of infidelity." The fact is, however, that the vast majority of political assassins have been Christians. And anybody who wants a call from the Lord to kill someone that he regards as an enemy of his country can easily find his inspiration in the Bible. The stories of Ehud, Jael, and Judith were often cited by the Jesuits in favor of "removing" objectionable personages.

The Czar has no tears for his murdered subjects. He reserves them all for his murdered uncle. In his imperial manifesto on that gentleman's decease, he begins by saying, "It has pleased Providence to afflict us with severe grief." Then he says his dear uncle fell by "the wicked hand of assassins." If this means anything at all, it means that Providence employed those assassins to kill Sergius and "afflict" the Czar. In that case, the assassins are divine instruments, and it is impious to punish them.

The Czar prays for the repose of Sergius's soul. We dare say it has repose enough now. When the Czar invites all his subjects to join him in that prayer, he only shows what a fool's paradise he is basking in. That is the most hopeless feature of the case.

The assassination of the Czar's uncle sinks into insignificance beside the wholesale assassinations that the autocratic gang have been perpetrating all over Russia. Some of the reports that reach the West of Europe are simply sickening. At Mohileff, on the Dnieper, the police attacked the townspeople who were in the streets, dragged them into the police-station, smashed arms, legs, and fingers, and threw the victims downstairs. Of course the principal sufferers were the poor Jews. A number of girls were flogged almost to death. One senseless girl was flung to the dogs. When we read of these atrocities we do not wonder at the assassination of a Grand Duke, and we have not a single tear to shed over his fate.

The finest Russian document that we have seen is the appeal from the women of Moscow to the Czarina. They plead with her to beg her husband to "listen to the voice of the country and the cry of its mothers." They declare that "All the bases of life are shaken, and all moral foundations are trembling," and that "Mothers, those who have to bring

up the young generation, are saddened, and their task made impossible." "If," they say in conclusion, "If the Emperor leads the country into the paths of greatness, its women will help in the work of its organisation by guiding their brothers and children into the new way and a life of light." Alas, dear women, your noble appeal is based upon the supposition that there is a MAN on the throne of Russia—whereas there is only a pious make-believe.

Resist not evil, said Jesus Christ; and if one smite thee on the one cheek turn unto him the other also. He also said, "Blessed are the meek." The Rev. Father Hopkins, superior-general of the Order of St. Paul, who bosses the abbey at Alton, is of a different opinion. He declares that the peace of the abbey is more assured by his ability to take a man by the scruff of the neck and throw him out than by his ability to preach, pray, or sing hymns. We can well believe it.

Rev. Michael McDoneil, Roman Catholic parish priest at Westport, is another muscular Christian—principally about the legs. Seeing a man called McAskill selling literature for the Presbyterian Church Mission, he rushed up to him and asked him by what right he sold the *Christian Irishman* to "my people," and proceeded to kick him. Being prosecuted for assault, he was not called and produced no evidence; yet the bench dismissed the case. It appeared that the stipendiary magistrate was for a conviction, but he was overruled by the two local justices—both very good Catholics, we may be sure. In their eyes a priest can do no wrong—not even when he practises football on Protestant shins.

Mr. J. W. Sullivan, one of our Torrey pamphlet distributors, informs us that he got into conversation with Dr. Torrey outside the Albert Hall last Saturday night (Feb. 18), and walked along with him towards his Kensington residence. Mr. Sullivan asked Dr. Torrey for the name of the Hyde Park lady lecturer that he had converted. Dr. Torrey replied that he never gave names, and that he would be sorry to see her among the infidel wolves. Mr. Sullivan asked him why he called them wolves; he replied that he was trying to save people and the infidels tried to nullify his work. Mr. Sullivan asked him whether a man could not differ from him without being of the lowest type. He replied that he had never said that all infidels were bad; he had admitted in his books that there were some honest infidels. Mr. Sullivan asked him why Dr. Clifford and Dr. Horton did not take part in his mission. He replied, petulantly, that he did not care whether they did or not. Then he spoke of our pamphlet distributors. "Fancy," he exclaimed, "saying I was a liar!" Mr. Sullivan asked him what he thought of his own people, who sometimes threw the pamphlets in the distributors' faces, and said they ought to be burnt alive. Dr. Torrey asked where were the drunkards the infidels had reformed. Mr. Sullivan replied that they would prevent drunkenness by working for better social conditions, and making men good citizens of this world instead of pilgrims to another. Dr. Torrey was asked whether he would debate the question with a leading Free-thought speaker. He replied that he addressed two meetings of 10,000 people daily, and said "Are they not more important than your forty or fifty people?" Mr. Sullivan said that there were a lot more of them than that; besides, they were the very people who wanted converting, whereas the Albert Hall audiences were nearly all Christians, and many of them went there night after night. Dr. Torrey replied that he converted sceptics every day. Mr. Sullivan dissented from the statement, and asked him to prove a single case. Mr. Sullivan even said that he was frightened. "Why, man," said Dr. Torrey, "you're lying." Mr. Sullivan persisted in his assertion. At that point they arrived outside Dr. Torrey's abode, and the conversation terminated. Mr. Sullivan says that he formed a very poor opinion of the evangelist. Anyhow, our pamphlets had made him very angry, and the "infidel" attack was obviously telling upon his nerves.

The *Ilford Recorder* editor says that "a copy of the vigorous irreverent *Freethinker*" lately found its way to his table. It contained our "Acid Drop" on Dr. R. T. Nichols' fruitless effort to obtain the name and address of "an infidel lecturer well-known in the London parks" who was stated in the *Daily News* to have been converted at Finsbury Park Hall. Our *Ilford* contemporary makes the sapient observation that "there are, unfortunately, many infidels and infidel teachers too" outside the Secular Societies, and very likely the convert was one of these. What a powerful brain that *Ilford* editor must have! It is really too powerful. If it were a more ordinary brain its possessor would see that the convert in question, being a well-known infidel lecturer, ought at least to be known to the infidel societies. To crawl out of responsibility by saying that "There are

others" is as mean as it is fatuous. It really seems that any Christian liar who will vamp up a story about some "converted infidel" may depend on the other Christians backing him up—just as policemen are said to back each other up in the witness-box.

To give the name and address of this converted infidel lecturer, if he is a real and not an imaginary character, would be to enhance a thousandfold the value of his conversion as an object-lesson in the saving-power of Christianity and the weakness of "infidelity." Any good there is in mentioning the case at all would naturally be multiplied by giving full particulars, which would place it beyond cavil. This ought to be evident to the meanest intelligence. We are astounded that the great *Ilford* journalist does not see it.

Mr. Reader Harris, K.C., delivered an address in the Plymouth Guildhall on a recent Sunday evening, with the Mayor of the town in the chair; and, according to the local *Morning News*, there was a very large attendance. Well, we are sorry for it. We hoped that Plymouth was capable of better things. Reader Harris may be a great lawyer; we leave that point to the legal profession. But as a religious teacher he is just a pap-brained idiot. He actually told that Plymouth audience (and they didn't throw things at him!) that he was delivered from Agnosticism in the following way:—

"He was returning from South America in a hurry and, failing to catch the steamer he wanted, he cursed God for having missed it. The vessel was lost, and all the passengers drowned."

That led to his conversion. God arranged that this gentleman should miss that boat; God arranged to send her to the bottom with all her passengers; and God did this to induce this gentleman to alter his views. What an opinion he must have of himself! And what an opinion he must have of God! And the Plymouth people stood it! That is the greatest wonder of all.

Reader Harris said at Plymouth what he has often said before, namely, that he was once an agnostic, and for many years a follower of Charles Bradlaugh. We have told him again and again that Charles Bradlaugh was not an agnostic and refused to use the term. We have asked him again and again to mention any follower of Charles Bradlaugh to whom he was known as another one. He does not reply—and his reason is obvious.

A correspondent calls our attention to a Church Army Mission which has been going on at Southend. The star name on the bills is that of the Rev. W. Carlile, who has been all the time holidaying in the South of Europe. The lion of the show has been that great and good man, the Rev. A. J. Waldron, who is advertised as "the Church's Hyde Park Champion of Christianity." Mr. Waldron followed the usual suggestive Christian policy of holding special meetings "for men only." All the "revival" soul-savers go in for this vulgar and demoralising practice. What a soul-saver has to say that women cannot listen to should be reserved for the smoke-room he happens to patronise.

A wonderful thing happened in the *Daily News* recently. The *Freethinker* was mentioned in an article. But it was not an editorial. It came from the pen of Mr. G. K. Chesterton. He wrote that dreadful word *Freethinker*; yet the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience printed it; and we repeat that it was wonderful.

Mr. Chesterton was writing one of his vivid paradoxical articles on "Bigotry versus Intolerance," and contending that burning a man for his opinions was not an act of bigotry. He also argued, though he did not say so openly, that it would be an act of persecution on the part of the man who was being burnt to interfere with the proceedings of those who were burning him, particularly if he felt that they were animated by religious conviction. What he did say openly was that "to prevent the Thugs from offering human sacrifices is unquestionably religious persecution." And clearly, if that is so, it is an act of religious persecution if the "sacrifice" resists the performance.

Mr. Chesterton went on to say:—

"I read some paper the other day (I think it was 'The Freethinker') which discussed this question, and said that I had 'defended,' or 'endeavored to defend,' the practice of religious persecution by urging that it was done in a spirit of sincere conviction. I sometimes wonder whether these people live in modern Europe or in the moon. It is not that I defend religious persecution. Neither is it religious persecution that is on its defence. It is religious liberty that is on its defence in the serious modern world."

More of the same sort follows, and it all amounts to this—

that "religious persecution is natural." Exactly so. Mr. Chesterton does not know that Freethinkers admit it. And when he adds that it is as natural as all crime is natural, we quite agree with him; only we add that Freethinkers said so before he was born. A shark is natural, a tiger is natural, and a Torquemada is natural. And human beings who object to the attentions of a shark, a tiger, or a Torquemada are also natural. Moreover, they are getting stronger and are asserting themselves. Mr. Chesterton would do well to make a note of Ingersoll's epigram that the Church never left off burning men until there were too many men who objected to be burnt. The long and the short of it is that persecution only stops when it can't go on.

Mr. Chesterton winds up with a protest. He says it is not bigoted to abuse a heretic as a heretic, but it is bigoted to "abuse him as something else, as a humbug or a stupid man or a demagogue or a person with bad manners." This is good and true as far as it goes. Still, we venture to suggest that the clergy are wiser in their profession than Mr. Chesterton is. They have a plain business object in calling an enemy something else than a heretic. "Heretic" has no force left in it, and doesn't hurt in the least. But if you abuse the heretic as a drunkard, a profligate, or a scoundrel, you are sure to excite some prejudice against him, and thus to keep a number of people from hearing him. This is what the clergy aim at. They realise the full meaning of that dreadful saying that certain things need not be true to injure a man, it is sufficient that they have been said.

During the week Hengler's Circus is given up to troupes of performing animals. On Sundays the Methodists take their place, and although the performance is more subdued, it is often far less sensible and certainly not so edifying. A couple of Sundays ago Mr. G. K. Chesterton, who is not a Methodist that we know of, occupied the platform with an address on "Religion and Equality." In the course of his lecture, or sermon, he gave it as his opinion that civilisation would drop to pieces if Christianity were taken out of it. The statement is really too silly for a lengthened confutation. We will content ourselves with pointing out that civilisation did not begin and has never been co-extensive with Christianity, and there is no reason for believing modern civilisation to be bound up with it in any other sense than that a society is necessarily colored by all its components. Unfortunately, Mr. Chesterton has a reputation for saying smart things, and seems to spend no small portion of his energies in trying to live up to it. A little more attention to *what* was said, and a little less anxiety to be "smart," would make Mr. Chesterton's addresses far more profitable reading. If one can combine wit and wisdom, so much the better; but to sacrifice one to the other is a poor game.

The friends of the Welsh revival never tire of talking about its spontaneity. They are always ready, too, to talk about Mr. Evan Roberts's disinterestedness. Well now, we invite attention to the following extract, which is not taken from an "infidel" paper, but from the pious *Daily News*, of Wednesday, February 15 :-

"In regard to the rumor that Mr. Evan Roberts declined to visit Cardiff because the financial terms offered by the Cardiff Committee were not acceptable to him, the Rev. Mardy Davies, the evangelist's organising secretary, states that financial considerations had nothing whatever to do with Mr. Roberts's decision. No conditions as to fees were laid down when meetings were arranged for, and whatever contributions were made to the necessary expenses were quite voluntary."

What "spontaneity" is there in Mr. Roberts having an "organising secretary," who is presumably paid for his services? And where does the "disinterestedness" come in? Why are not the financial facts plainly stated? Why all this beating about the bush? Welshmen have stated, as a matter of personal knowledge, that £2 per day has been paid to Mr. Roberts for his mission work. Not long ago he was earning thirty shillings a week in the ordinary labor market. Is he earning more or less now? Let that question be answered. People will then be able to form their own opinion of his "disinterestedness."

Dr. Torrey is another "disinterested" gentleman. He allows his mission agents to declare that he is paid nothing for his work in Great Britain. But this is a half truth which is the worst form of lying. Money is paid over to a Chicago society, and the Chicago society pays Dr. Torrey. Tom receives nothing from Dick, but Dick pays Bill, and Bill pays Tom. Mephistopheles himself is not more artful than a Yankee revivalist.

It has been stated again and again by the secretary of the Albert Hall Mission that Dr. Torrey only receives (directly)

a certain sum for "expenses." But while the secretary's mouth is open he should be a little more communicative. He should say nothing or say all. What is the *amount* of Dr. Torrey's "expenses"? Are they calculated on the basis of a "gentleman player's" expenses in the cricket field? Not being a professional player, but a gentleman player. Mr. W. G. Grace could not take a "fee" for his services; he could only take his "expenses"; but we believe that his "expenses" came to more than the professional's "fee." Is it the same, we wonder, with Dr. Torrey's "expenses"?

Dr. Torrey tries to make out that "infidels" are great committers of suicide. A hundred times, perhaps a thousand, he has charged Colonel Ingersoll with being the cause of most of the suicides in the United States. But here again the facts are all against the Yankee revivalist. How seldom the newspapers record the suicide of an "infidel"! But the suicide of a Christian is perfectly common. Ministers of religion kill themselves; and surely *their* deeds are not the result of "infidelity." Two minutes ago we opened a newspaper quite casually, and one of the first headlines we saw was a "Curate's Sad End." The Rev. H. M. Worthly, a Church of England curate, had committed suicide at Gillingham by turning on the gas in his bedroom and stopping up the chimney with his cassock. Dr. Torrey should bring this case into his next sermonette on suicide. Probably it would be better, though, if he brought in the latest case—say in that day's newspapers. It is well to be up to date, and men of God "in trouble" are never lacking.

After the Tea-Pension scheme comes the Pious-Pension scheme—which Mr. Justice Joyce has just ordered to be wound up. Amongst the trustees of this scheme were the Rev. W. Cuff (Shoreditch Tabernacle), the Rev. F. G. Wheeler (Thornton Heath), and Mr. W. Tavener (Spurgeon Memorial Sermon Society). Its advertisements mainly appeared in the religious weeklies, and 12,000 persons were induced to join the Trust. The promises made were absurdly impossible, but that did not prevent it from catching on. Mr. Tavener, in the *Spurgeon Memorial Record*, sang its praises lustily, and adorned his panegyric with all sorts of pious expressions. In what he called "a triumphant send-off" to the National Old-Age Pension Trust, he said that three kinds of works were mentioned in Scripture—Good Works, Dead Works, and Wicked Works. He claimed that the N.O.A.P. was a Good Work, and said that it "must be of God." Mr. Justice Joyce has come to a different conclusion.

The Crusader, the organ of the Passive Resistance movement, is disgusted that Dr. Forbes Winslow, one of our greatest authorities on diseases of the brain, should describe the present outbreak of revivalism as a species of madness. Dr. Winslow gave it as his opinion that men like Evan Roberts should be "locked up like common felons and their meetings prohibited." This is not likely to happen, although it gives an eminent specialist's opinion of such hysterical monomaniacs as the Welsh Revivalist, and the effect of such crusades upon the mental and moral health of the people. For ourselves we hardly know which are the worse—cases like Evan Roberts, or the calculated cupidity and cunning of travelling professional revivalists whose livelihood is gained by debauching the young and flattering the ignorant prejudices of older people. In moral intention the former would come out first. But in actual results there doesn't seem much to choose between them.

Dr. Clifford and his Dissenting friends may prove the truth of the proverb that you cannot eat your cake and have it. We hear that the Finance Committee of the Paddington Borough Council is going to propose to rate Nonconformist churches in which political meetings have been held. Dr. Clifford's own church would be rated at £400. And why not? Buildings registered as places of religious worship, and in consequence exempted from local rates, ought not to be used for quite different purposes. Why, indeed, should these buildings be exempted at all? To exempt Nonconformist places of worship from taxation is simply to endow them to the extent of the exemption.

The *Methodist Times* records the fact that a Christian missionary in Japan, having asked permission to distribute copies of the New Testament among a body of soldiers gathered in a Buddhist temple, not only had his request granted, but was also allowed to give a short address to the men. Well, now, we wonder what would happen if a Buddhist missionary—and there are some in England—were to ask permission to distribute some of his tracts to the congregation in St. Paul's Cathedral or Westminster Abbey? It would certainly not be granted, and even if it were the missionary would need police protection while engaged in the distribution.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

March 5 and 12, Stanley Hall, Junction-road, London, N.; 26, Coventry. April 2, South Shields; 30, Liverpool. May 7, Stratford Town Hall.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—February 26, South Shields; 27, Newcastle-on-Tyne; April 9, Glasgow; 16, Liverpool.

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

W. R. FITTON.—Glad to hear you have distributed the Torrey pamphlets judiciously and feel that they are doing good; also that the Welsh revival is making more Freethinkers than Christians. We are pleased to know, of course, that our *Bible Romances* and *Bible Handbook*, together with the *Freethinker*, have done so much to open your own eyes.

D. PERRY.—Thanks for addresses. It is pleasant to know that you are "a great admirer of Mr. Foote." What we wish is that all who feel in that way would translate the sentiment into active help to the *Freethinker* and the Freethought cause generally.

G. VIGGARS writes:—"I have been a reader of your paper now for some years, and out of nine weeklies, beside dailies, monthlies, and quarterlies, there is none I prize more than the *Freethinker*."

GUNNER.—Thanks for the statement as to Church Parade in the army, which we shall make use of in an early number of the *Freethinker*.

W. L. AINSWORTH.—(1) You say that "the Freethinkers ought to be ashamed of themselves for only raising a paltry £72" to defend Paine and Ingersoll and expose Torrey. But the sum will probably be increased, and we may issue some special leaflets besides the two pamphlets already in circulation; (2) Mr. Foote debated with the Rev. J. M. Logan at Bristol. So far your informant at Accrington is correct. The subject of the debate was the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It may be true that Mr. Logan claims that he "beat the infidel." But there never was a debate in which the Christian did not claim to have beaten the infidel. What more can we say? You don't want us to imitate the reverend gentleman's manners, do you? What we can say is this: that the debate led to some Christians at Bristol becoming Freethinkers. We never heard that it led to any Freethinker becoming a Christian.

R. DOUNIE.—We have not seen the newspaper report you refer to, about Dr. Torrey's inducing three men in the spirit trade to give up their business, and his much tamer version of the matter when tackled by an interviewer. Thanks for your good wishes.

THOMAS BENNETT.—Pleased to hear that you have "spent many delightful hours" over our articles and pamphlets. You will see that we have printed your account of the converted Welsh Atheists. These converted Welsh Atheists are as much like the real thing as a "Welsh Rabbit" is like the animal of that name. Our readers will be interested to learn what is really going on at these revival meetings.

OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £77 7s. 3d. Received this week: Thomas Robson 3s., W. C. Ainsworth 2s. 6d., R. Dounie 5s., H. 2s., F. Shaw 6d., Freethinkers from Mardy and District 10s., Stranger 4d., J. W. Snooks 1s., J. O. 1s., F. F. Deane 5s., W. Tipper 2s. 6d., W. Maack 2s., Two Derby Saints 5s., Alert 2s. 6d., G. Cowan 2s. 6d., F. Garry 2s. 6d., J. Rogers (per D. Baxter) 1s., A. G. 2s. 6d., S. and H. Organ 1s., G. F. H. McCluskey (second sub.) 2s. 6d., J. A. S. 1s.

W. P. PEARSON, the Liverpool Branch secretary, has changed his address to 3 Snowdon-view, Withens-lane, Liscard, Cheshire. All interested will please note.

A. HOPKINS.—Voltaire wrote finely in so many directions that it is not easy to name his "masterpiece." He was poet, historian, critic, dramatist, theologian, and reformer. The best of his Romances is *Candide*; it is a brilliant satire, and irresistibly laughable. We have seen an English translation, but cannot say where it is now obtainable. Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* is now only to be met with (in English) second-hand. It gives a good idea of his general powers. His histories of Louis XIV. and Charles XII. are obtainable in English. But there is no classical translation of any work of Voltaire's that we know of. Rousseau's *Heloise*, *Emile*, and the *Confessions* are all classic in their way, but the last is perhaps the most finely written and the most fascinating. There have been English translations of all of these, but none of any special merit. There is a really great translation of Rabelais—the one by Urquhart and Motteux, which is published in several forms. We wrote an article some years ago on Shakespeare's will. It was drawn up by his attorney, and the pious flourish with which it opened was the common form of the time. No critic of any standing regards it as an expression of Shakespeare's personal opinions.

T. ROBSON.—We don't expect to make any impression on the far-gone Torreyites who go night after night to his entertainment; but there are some Christians not in so hopeless a state, and many persons who go to the meetings out of curiosity;

these our pamphlets may influence, and they are expressly written with that object.

G. F. H. MCCLUSKEY.—Thanks for cuttings and list of addresses; also for your second subscription. You say "the poor little £100 will be spent and should do a lot of good to the old Freethought cause." Certainly it will be spent, when we get it. The party has not made it up yet. Meanwhile we are going on with the printing and distributing of the pamphlets. Glad to hear you were delighted to see the reproduction in the *Clarion*, and that you thought so highly of the articles on "Two Graves at Rome" and "Shelley at Rome."

V. C. MARTIN.—Too full of matter this week; perhaps in our next.

R. HORSFIELD.—Duly attended to. Pleased to hear that, after taking the *Freethinker* for some months, you "look forward to it as one looks for an old friend."

R. E. HOLDING.—Converting Berry the hangman was a good stroke. He will be useful to Jehovah in the next world, if that deity's character is what it used to be.

T. FLETCHER.—(1) The *Freethinker* started in May, 1881. It consisted of eight pages of the present size. It was subsequently increased to twelve pages, and finally to sixteen. (2) Not that we know of. (3) We cannot undertake to make a calculation of the number of lectures Charles Bradlaugh delivered annually. (4) A long article on Nietzsche appeared in the *Freethinker* some nine years ago from the pen of its then sub-editor, the late J. M. Wheeler.

W. LANG.—Pleased to hear you are still "firm in the faith."

A. L. ANSELL.—Shall be sent as desired.

J. BRYCE.—We thank you for your trouble in the matter, and will try to make use of the extracts.

S. AND H. ORGAN.—Glad to hear from you again. The cuttings you refer to must have gone astray.

D. C. CURRIE.—Sorry we cannot answer your question.

E. B. (Hull).—Shall appear.

A. G. LYE.—Already overset for this week. Will reply to your letter by post.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

H. R. CLIFTON.—Thanks. Too late this week, but may be useful next week.

F. J. VOISEY.—Will deal with the cuttings in our next.

A. E. KILLUP.—We never heard of any Freethought leader called J. B. Atkinson. We suppose the man Brooks, who is lecturing at Birkenhead, is one of the persons who lied about the *Freethinker* when they wanted to keep it out of the West Ham Free Library. We have sent you a packet of the Torrey pamphlets for distribution.

G. F. GOURD.—We have nothing to do with the editorial management of other papers. You say you are "prepared to show that religion is the curse of the world." We are doing that ourselves. You are evidently under a delusion as to the policy of the *Freethinker*.

C. D. THOMAS.—We are sorry to hear that the Society of Perpetualists (whatever it is) suffer from Christian violence in Victoria Park. You should write to the London County Council on the subject.

W. P. PEARSON.—Parcel of the Torrey pamphlets forwarded for distribution at Liverpool. More will follow if wanted. Take up a collection for the Fund, by all means; but don't sell the pamphlets in any case; they are marked outside "for free distribution," and should be distributed accordingly.

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's second lecture at the Camberwell Secular Hall on Sunday evening drew a still larger audience than the first, a good number of people having to stand at the back. Mr. Victor Roger, who occupied the chair, made a spirited appeal for financial support to the Branch, which we hope was generously responded to. After the lecture, which was very warmly applauded, and evidently much enjoyed, a few questions were asked, and one tiresome, insolent Christian did his best to waste time, and even to

create disorder. But the self-restraint of the audience defeated his charitable intention.

A well-known North London Hall (Stanley Hall, Junction-road) has been engaged for a course of Sunday evening Freethought lectures during March under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited. Mr. Foote is to deliver the first two lectures, and to be followed by Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd. We hope the North London "saints" will do their best to advertise these four meetings. Printed announcements for distribution can be obtained from the Secretary, Miss Vance, at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

There will be another course of Sunday evening Freethought lectures in the Stratford Town Hall at Eastertide. The dates booked are April 23 and 30, and May 7. The lectures will be delivered by Messrs. Foote, Cohen, and Lloyd. The Secular Society, Limited, is taking the responsibility, and has the co-operation of the West Ham N. S. S. Branch in the necessary local arrangements.

Mr. Cohen delivers two lectures at South Shields to-day (Feb. 26), and all the "saints" in the district will please note. There ought to be good attendances at both meetings. Mr. Cohen has many friends in the district, and if they all rally round him on this occasion he will have a big success—especially if they try to bring some Christians along with them.

Newcastle-on-Tyne friends will please note that Mr. Cohen lectures for the local Branch on Monday evening at 7.30 in the Lovaine Hall, his subject being "A Scientific View of Religion."

Mr. J. M. Robertson lectures for the Liverpool Branch to-day (Feb. 26), and should have "full houses." His ability and uncompromising hostility to the Christian superstition ought to appeal to the local "saints."

We are still open to receive addresses of persons who might become regular readers of the *Freethinker* if it were only introduced to them. We undertake to send a copy to such addresses for six weeks running, after which the recipient would probably buy it or drop it. Addresses, please.

Our two Torrey pamphlets—"Dr. Torrey and the Infidels" and "Dr. Torrey and the Bible"—are still being distributed at the Albert Hall meetings, and several distributors have got into conversation with the revivalist outside the building. On this point we may say something more next week. What is certain is that Dr. Torrey is perfectly well aware that the pamphlets are being distributed nightly. He has even said that he is not opposed to the distribution. This is very kind, of course, but his consent is not necessary.

A great many Christians besides Dr. Torrey know of our defence of Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll's characters against the Yankee revivalist's libels. Mr. Robert Blatchford who reproduced our pamphlet in the *Clarion*, calls it a "manly and temperate defence." Yet we do not hear of a single Christian clergyman raising his voice against Dr. Torrey's policy of defamation. As long as he only libels "infidels" they evidently think it is very good business.

We beg Freethinkers all over the country to circulate our two Torrey pamphlets as widely as possible. It is striking the iron while it is hot, and taking advantage of the psychological moment. Both pamphlets are carefully designed for their special objects, and we should like to see a million copies in circulation. We should also like to see more subscriptions flowing into the Fund. There are plenty of Freethinkers to find the "wherewithal" if they would only take the trouble.

If a Freethought "Carnegie" were to come along and plank down the money to print a million copies of our Torrey pamphlets, the whole difficulty would be surmounted at a single leap. But as that does not seem at all likely (though, of course, you never can tell) the only thing to be done is to invite the general body of Freethinkers to provide the sinews of war for this campaign. A big hole has been made already in the second 40,000 copies we have had printed, and it is easy to see that we cannot go on for very long at this rate unless further resources are placed at our disposal. We hope there will be a much longer list of subscriptions acknowledged in next week's *Freethinker*.

The Book of Daniel.—I.

WHENEVER I see Bible sayings or narratives referred to in the daily papers as matters of historical fact concerning whose authenticity there can be no question, I find myself asking, in the words of the Psalmist, "How long, O Lord, how long?" How long is complete ignorance of the character of the books that make up the Christian scriptures to obtain in this country? Notwithstanding the many and grave admissions made by a few clerical scholars, it seems to me that the great mass of the people—all the regular church and chapel goers, and, with here and there an exception, all other professing Christians—know nothing whatever of the results of modern Biblical criticism, and, in consequence, regard all the Christian sacred books, from Genesis to Revelation, as the inspired word of God, which they should read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest—if they did what they believe to be right. This, I have not the slightest doubt, is the almost universal view taken by the great mass of the English people, and it fully accounts for the wholesale abuse and calumny hurled by ignorant Christian Evidence lecturers of the Salvation Army type at better informed people whom they call "Infidels." And the most effectual remedy for this deplorable state of affairs is, in my humble opinion, to prove to these uncritical and ill-informed persons (1) that morality is in no way dependent upon religion, and (2) that the Gospel "history" and the Old Testament narratives upon which Christianity is based are unhistorical and untrue. When these two facts are clearly demonstrated and have become widely known the Christian superstition will be a thing of the past.

These reflections are suggested by noticing in the London *Daily Mail* (December 27, 1904) two closely printed columns by the Rev. M. Baxter, describing "twenty coming events" between the years 1907 and 1931. We have heard of the prophet Baxter before, as well as the ingenuity he often displayed in so cleverly postponing the dates of his published predictions; but the point to be considered is that the editor of the *Mail* placed at the prophet's disposal so much of his valuable space, thinking, no doubt, that the subject would have a seasonable interest for his million, or more, presumably Christian readers.

Now, when we look through the reverend Baxter's predictions we find that the majority of them are based upon alleged "prophecies" in the canonical book of Daniel. We may take it, then, that the editor of the *Mail*, in common with the great body of professing Christians, has heard nothing against the authenticity and credibility of that book. He did not know, probably, that several eminent Biblical scholars had given the book up as an undoubted forgery; though it is quite likely that had he known this fact, it would have had little weight in affecting his opinion, for he could find plenty of orthodox scholars who profess to regard the book as authentic and historical. And to the man who does not investigate such matters for himself, what further test is needed? If a few Biblical critics may be named who impeach the genuineness of the book of Daniel, a much larger number can be found who vouch for its historicity and accuracy. Besides, did not Jesus Christ himself cite the book (Matt. xxiv. 15) as prophetic and historical? I propose, then, with the Editor's permission, to briefly examine this book, so that every reader may see for himself the grounds upon which it is rejected as a forgery.

In his opening paragraph in the *Daily Mail* Prophet Baxter says: "We cannot help knowing seven years beforehand the exact time of Christ's personal descent upon this earth at the End of the Age, because, according to more than two hundred expositors of the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks in Daniel's 9th and 11th chapters, a 'A Prince that shall come,' etc.

The "Prince" is, of course, said to refer to Jesus Christ, who, according to the Gospels, promised to

return to this planet before the age in which he lived had passed away, and even during the lifetime of many of his hearers. But what a long and arduous search among old Bible commentaries our twentieth century prophet must have had to find "more than two hundred expositors" who agreed with his interpretation. I do not propose to follow expositor Baxter through his "twenty coming events"; to do so would be a complete waste of time. I will merely show upon what a rotten foundation his batch of predictions is built.

The Book of Daniel is an ancient work of fiction which may be divided into two parts; chapters i.—vi. historical, and chapters vii.—xii. prophetic. Part I. professes to be a record of events which occurred in the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius; Part II. consists of visions which are stated to have been seen by a prophet named Daniel in the reigns of Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. According to this book, Daniel, who is implied to have been the writer, lived in the reigns of the following kings, who are represented as reigning in succession:—

1. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.
2. "Belshazzar the king," son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar.
3. "Darius the Mede," who wrested the kingdom from Belshazzar.
4. Cyrus, king of Persia, who succeeded Darius.

I shall commence by glancing at what professes to be history in the first portion of the book, which "history" we shall find to be pure fable.

We are told that among the Jewish captives in Babylon in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar were four young men, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who by order of the Babylonian monarch were instructed in all the learning of the Chaldeans, and that after three years of this tuition the four Israelites were found by the king to be "ten times wiser than all the magicians and enchanters in all his realm." The first occasion upon which the wisdom of Daniel was called into requisition is stated to have been "in the *second* year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar," from which it would appear that time had been moving backwards. In this year Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which "the magicians and the enchanters and the sorcerers and the Chaldeans" were unable to recall or interpret. Daniel then presented himself, and by the help of the Lord did both. The king in gratitude loaded the Jewish interpreter with presents, and "made him to rule over the whole province of Babylon, and to be chief governor over all the wise men." Thus was Daniel raised to the position of president over Babylon and chief of the Magi.

Next, we are told, "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold.....and he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon," after which he issued a proclamation to all "peoples, nations, and languages" commanding all men, when they heard the sound of "the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music," to prostrate themselves before the golden image under penalty of being cast "into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." The names of these "instruments of music" are Greek; they would therefore be unknown to anyone who lived in Babylon in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. According to the story, the three companions of Daniel publicly refused to comply with the king's command, and were consequently thrown into the furnace; but the fire had no power to harm them, as they came out without having so much as the hair of their heads singed, or even "the smell of fire" upon them. After this miracle Nebuchadnezzar made a decree ordering that any one found "speaking amiss" against the god of these three Israelites should be "cut in pieces" and his house destroyed, "because there is no other god that is able to deliver after this sort." Neither, it may be added, did the Jewish deity ever work a similar miracle on behalf of any of the thousands of martyrs who were condemned to the stake, in later

times, for believing and trusting in him. The next matter of "history" is Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a large, wide-spreading tree, which was cut down, leaving only the stump in the ground. This signified, according to the interpreter Daniel, that the Babylonian king should be driven from his kingdom, and should herd with "the beasts of the field" for seven years—an event which is stated to have occurred "at the end of twelve months." According to the story, the king of Babylon "was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen." At the expiration of the seven years Nebuchadnezzar was restored to his kingdom, and was so pleased at his recent degradation that he published a proclamation informing "all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth" how the Jewish God had punished him for his pride. How long the Babylonian king reigned after his restoration is not recorded, neither is mention made of his death. We only surmise that the latter event had occurred from the following statement in the next paragraph:—

"Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem," etc.

This is called Belshazzar's impious feast, and the narrative goes on to tell how that monarch was punished for his desecration of the sacred vessels. In the midst of the revelry there suddenly appeared "the finger's of a man's hand" writing some words upon one of the walls. This apparition terrified the king who "cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers." The wise men, however, found themselves unable to interpret the writing, whereupon the queen remembered the great interpreter Daniel. Then Daniel, who apparently had forgotten that he was chief of the Magi, was sent for, and, as might be expected, immediately gave the interpretation. The words written on the wall signified that God had numbered Belshazzar's kingdom, and brought it to an end; that Belshazzar was weighed in the balance, and found wanting; and that his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians. This interpretation was furthermore soon shown to be correct. "In that night," says the sacred historian, "Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about three score and two years old" (v. 30-31).

The next chapter (vi.) of this veracious history commences as follows:—

"It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty satraps.....and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one." Then comes the account of a plot against Daniel, and of that Israelite being cast, by order of the king, into "the den of lions," and of the Lord who, to protect his servant, "sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths," so they were unable to harm the prophet. The reason for this special act of providence is thus stated by Daniel: "Forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me." There was no divine intervention, however, on behalf of the innocent wives and children of Daniel's accusers, for it is recorded "the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came at the bottom of the den." Neither do we hear of intervention in the case of any of the "innocent" Christian martyrs who are said to have been thrown to the lions in the Roman amphitheatres. Evidently, the Lord did not care to work the same miracle a second time.

After Daniel's miraculous preservation king Darius "wrote unto all the peoples, nations, and languages, *that dwell in all the earth*"—rather a large order—commanding them to "tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever." The death of this king is not recorded, but it is implied that he was succeeded by Cyrus: "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (vi. 28).

We have now, as a matter of Bible "history" four kings who successively occupied the throne of Babylon in the time of Daniel: first, Nebuchadnezzar; then his son, Belshazzar; then "Darius the Mede"; and lastly, "Cyrus the Persian." Moreover, certain years in the reigns of the last three of these sovereigns are mentioned by Daniel himself; e.g.:—

Dan. viii. 1: "In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me, Daniel."

Dan. ix. 1-2: "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus of the seed of the Medes.....I, Daniel, understood by the books," etc.

Dan. x. 1-2: "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel.....In those days I, Daniel, was mourning," etc.

There cannot, then, be the smallest doubt as to the fact that Daniel is described as a Jewish prophet who lived in Babylon in the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus, and also that these kings are represented as reigning over the Babylonian empire in the order named. The importance of this fact will be fully recognised when it is stated that no such kings as Belshazzar and Darius bore rule in Babylonia between the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

"Converted Atheists."

HAVING been informed that two "Converted Atheists" would be speaking at the Bethel Chapel, Miskin, Mountain Ash, Glam., S.W., I determined to be present, for the purpose of discovering whether there was any truth in the stories told in the press concerning the conversion of Atheists during the Welsh revival. Accordingly, accompanied by a friend, who is at present a believer in the Christian religion, I attended the above-named chapel. We went inside, and found it some three-parts full of men, women, and children; the majority being women and children. My friend informed me that there were many present who did not usually attend this chapel, the "Converted Atheists" no doubt being the attraction. Just as we took our seats they commenced singing a Welsh hymn. Directly the hymn was finished—before, in fact, the last note had died away—someone commenced praying in Welsh. I marvelled at his longwindedness: but when he concluded his record prayer some old gentleman rose to his feet, and, stretching out his hand, began in the old Welsh preacher's sing-song tone of voice, telling the Infinite how he should control the universe, and commanding him to send certain things which he (the old gent.) particularly needed. Some of the sentences uttered by the old gentleman seemed to strike those present more forcibly than others, for now and then loud shouts of "Amen!" and "Hallelujah!" would echo and re-echo through the building; and the old gentleman, no doubt thinking they were meant as encores, would say the last sentence over again. For the space of eighteen minutes by the chapel clock (I timed him) he continued, advising, commanding, and enlightening the all-knowing God concerning the affairs of the little village of Miskin. No doubt the reader is wondering where the "Converted Atheist" comes in, and that is just what I was doing during the time that this old gentleman was wasting his breath; but just as my stock of patience was becoming exhausted, a young man rose to his feet and commenced addressing us in Welsh, and I listened eagerly, hoping to gather from his words whether he was one of the "Converted Atheists." He told us that he had been a terrible fellow (I would never have thought it, to look at him), but he had seen Christ, and since then he had completely changed. He was now an angel, no doubt. Then he told us that he was just three months old. Now this is one of the very few statements in his address which was backed up by evidence.

He kept on talking in this way for a long time, and I was just about to reach for my hat, in despair of hearing anything concerning his conversion from Atheism, when I heard him exclaim in a loud voice, "I used to be a bit of everything; I was a bit of an Ethicist, and a bit of a Socialist." Ah, I thought to myself, now we are getting at it; and I eagerly leaned forward so that I should not miss a word of what he said. But, alas for my hopes, it was all a snare and a delusion. I have heard Christians talking before, and I know that the best of them cannot talk common sense when speaking of anyone or anything opposed to religion; but of all the utter nonsense and twaddle ever uttered from a Christian pulpit this was the worst. Reader, I had thought

to tell you all he said concerning Ethicism and Socialism, but I will spare you. One martyr is enough in 1905, so I will bear the torture alone.

No sooner had he concluded than the Lord's ears were again battered for the space of an half hour or so. Then this "Converted Atheist" again got to his feet, and invited all those who were Christians to rise to their feet and all those who were not to remain seated. I can only suppose that they were all Christians, for within the reach of my vision there was no one seated but myself and my friend. Presently a young man, with a face and forehead which were strong proofs of the truth of Evolution, approached us, and in a hollow voice inquired whether we wished to give ourselves to the Lord. I told him in a civil manner that I was not a believer in the Lord or the Christian religion, and that my purpose in attending the meeting was to question these so-called Atheists, hoping thereby to get at the truth as to whether they had ever been Atheists or not, and I requested him to inquire if I would be allowed to question these persons. He then left us, and presently we were approached by the minister of the chapel. We received the same old question, "Do you wish to give yourself over to the Lord?" I replied, "No, I am not a believer in your Lord or your religion." He seemed to take this as a personal affront, for he asked me not to get in a rage. I told him that I was not in a rage, but that I considered it very wrong and unfair of him and his friends to try to force his religion down the throats of those present who did not happen to be Christians, as I considered they were doing by making a spectacle of myself and friend. "But you know," he replied, "there are very few infidels to-day." Surprised for a moment out of my composure, I indignantly asked him if he was blind, if he read any Freethought journals; if not, by what authority did he make such an absurd statement? I asked him if he knew that last year a Freethought Congress was held at Rome, at which there were present nearly 4,000 delegates from every civilised country in the world, representing, no doubt, some millions of Freethinkers. To this his reply came in the form of a question. "Were they intellectual?" said he. I was astounded at the ignorance of the man. Could it be possible that this man, who is paid a good salary to tell the people all about a future state of existence, did not know that amongst the Atheists there are such intellectual geniuses as—to mention but a few—Professor Hacckel, Professor Serge, Dr. Moncure D. Conway, Mr. G. W. Foote, and—but there, the list is long enough already to be a complete answer to his silly question. I replied, "Sir, judging from your absurd question, these persons were as intellectually above you as the stars are above the world." I was told at first that I would not be allowed to ask any questions. I then put it to his sense of fairness as to whether it was right for him to bring these persons there as a kind of novelty and attraction to pose as "Converted Atheists," and to tell the people a pack of falsehoods, and to refuse others present, who were prepared to prove from the very words uttered by these so-called "Converted Atheists," that they had never been anything of the kind. To this he made no reply, but presently he left us for the purpose, he said, of inquiring of these persons whether they would answer any questions or not. I asked him to beg of them to speak in English, as although I understood a little Welsh, I would understand them better in the English language.

The end of it was that this "bit of an Ethicist and bit of a Socialist" got to his feet; and, after apologising for his poor English, he proceeded to tell us that he had at one time denied the existence of God, and how he was converted from denying God to do a thing more absurd yet—affirm the existence of God. The manner of his conversion was as follows, at least so he told us. He was sitting in the house reading a certain paper—he did not tell us what it was, but I have no doubt he was hinting at the *Freethinker*—when a young woman came in and told him that there was a funny man preaching at some chapel in the place. He enquired who it was, and was told it was Evan Roberts, the revivalist. Having read about Roberts in the papers, he determined to go to hear him. So he went, and, as he stated, he came away under the impression that Roberts was mad. But there was something so "funny" about the meeting that he felt constrained to attend the evening service again. He found it just as "funny" again. He was unable to sleep that night. He was unable to work next day (Monday) so he went to the meeting Monday night again, and there was something "funnier" than ever. It went on like this until Thursday. He was unable to sleep at nights and unable to go to his work by day, and he attended the meetings every night, finding something funnier every time. Thursday he went to work, but he could do nothing, everything seemed to go wrong, and at last in despair he threw down his tools, and asked his brother to come and have some food. When he commenced to eat he burst out crying; why, he did not say, but he now thanked God that he did cry. He went to bed that

night, he said, and he found himself in a strange country; he did not know how he got there, nor how he came from there. He was there three-quarters of an hour, and it was beautiful to be there. He wondered how he was going to keep his children in this strange country. He went to the meeting the following night and he saw Christ, he saw him with his own eyes. He was not dreaming when he saw the strange country, nor was he dreaming when he saw Christ.

I leave the reader to imagine, if possible, my feelings after this little lot. Remember it was not taken like medicine, one spoonful every four hours, but all at one dose. And all this twaddle from a man who was supposed to have been an intelligent Atheist!

As soon as he sat down I sprang to my feet, and I asked him if he would answer me a few questions. He kept looking this way and that way, but at last his eyes fell upon me, and, looking him straight in the eyes, I said, "Yes, you I mean; will you, or will you not, answer me a few questions?" He said, "No." I said, "Thank you"; and, as some other person commenced praying—for me no doubt—I made a hasty exit, accompanied by my friend. I felt grieved at first, for I thought my time had been wasted. But the time spent at that meeting was not spent in vain. The utter nonsense spoken at that meeting by this so-called "Converted Atheist," the refusal to allow me to question him, has opened the eyes of my friend to the worth of these tales of "Converted Atheists." He is a really intelligent young fellow. One who has had Christianity pumped into him with his mother's milk. He is beginning to think, and when intelligent and honest young men begin to think about Christianity, they soon cease to be Christians. He has a copy of the current number of the *Freethinker* in his possession, and he has read it, and he wishes to read more, and I intend to see that he is supplied with plenty of Freethought literature.

Just a few questions and I have done. If this man had been an intelligent and honest Atheist, could he have been converted in the manner described? If he had received any evidence not known to his fellow Atheists, which proved the Christian religion to be true, was it not his duty to give us this evidence? He calls himself a "Converted Atheist," but why did he not allow me to question him? Was he afraid that I would have shown the people that he did not understand what Atheism is?

I have challenged the ministers of the town in which I reside to come forward and discuss the truth of the religion they are paid to defend. But they will not discuss. Why? Because they know that it is absurd, contradictory, impossible. They know that an intelligent opponent would shatter their idols, disprove their dogmas, and rob them of their salaries.

T. BENNETT.

Obituary.

We have to record the death of Mr. James Carrol Jordan, which took place on Sunday, February 5, at his residence, Salcott-road, New Wandsworth, London. Deceased had reached the great age of 86. For seventy years he had been a staunch Freethinker. He was a frequenter of the Hall of Science, and was well known to the older Freethinkers who are now so few in number. Of late years he had attended Mr. Foote's and other lectures in various parts of London. His intelligent and benevolent face made him easily distinguishable. He was a loyal supporter of the cause of progress, and strove hard in his stronger days for the emancipation of the people. He was a loving husband, a good father, and universally respected, and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. It was his wish that Mr. Foote should officiate at his funeral, but this unfortunately was not possible. Mr. John Lloyd, however, took Mr. Foote's place, to the satisfaction of the relatives and friends. The funeral ceremony was performed at Brompton Cemetery on Wednesday afternoon, February 8.—We regret that a suitable piece could not be found for this obituary notice in last week's *Freethinker*.

A GREAT PAGAN'S DEATH.

Antoninus Pius—who was perhaps truly the best and most perfect man this world has known, better even than Marcus Aurelius; for in addition to the virtues, the kindness, the deep feeling and wisdom of his adopted son, he had something of greater virility and energy, of simpler happiness, something more real, spontaneous, closer to everyday life—Antoninus Pius lay on his bed, awaiting the summons of death, his eyes dim with unbidden tears, his limbs moist with the pale sweat of agony. At that moment there entered the captain of the guard, come to demand the watchword, such being the custom. *Æquanimitas—evenness of mind*, he replied, as he turned his head to the eternal shadow.—*Maeterlinck*.

Correspondence.

"FREETHINKERS AND FRIENDSHIP."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have followed with much interest the discussion in your columns on 'Freethinkers and Friendship'; but so far, while agreeing with most of your contributors on some points at least, I have not felt that any satisfactory suggestion has been made.

I, for one, should be very sorry to think it necessary to lower the intellectual standard of the *Freethinker* to make it more interesting to women. Neither would it seem to me desirable that our lecture-rooms should be used for gossip and flirtations, after the manner of Dissenting chapels and schoolrooms. Yet, on the other hand, I believe a more social atmosphere in our Societies is desirable, with more possibilities of making friendships, and even such matrimonial alliances as arise naturally out of such friendships as they mature. The suggested Matrimonial Bureau *might* commend itself to men. I scarcely think it would be made use of by self-respecting women.

Would not a "Guild of Women Freethinkers," more or less on the lines of the Women's Co-operative Guild, in some measure meet the difficulty? All women Freethinkers, to whatever organisation they might or might not belong, could be invited to join; and, where the numbers justified the formation of Branches, local committees might be appointed in addition to a central committee. Through these committees members would be introduced to each other, and help could be given in arranging the social side of meetings held by the different Freethought organisations, when opportunities for easy and natural intercourse between men and women would arise.

As the names of those joining need only be made known to members of the Guild or recognised Freethinkers, such timorous mortals as fear the loss of employment or other social disadvantages from avowing themselves as Freethinkers might be gently nursed till such time as their courage grew or increasing numbers showed them that there was nothing to fear.

Possibly you might, if the idea commends itself to you, see your way to allowing a column of the *Freethinker* to be used as a "Woman's Corner," as is done in the *Co-operative News*.

I need not go into details. As you will see, there is nothing original in the idea; it is merely a suggestion that we apply to our Freethought propaganda a method which has been an unqualified success in the Co-operative movement, through which I have learnt something of its working.

Let me, though, guard against misconception. In proposing a Woman's Guild, I would entirely deprecate the idea of any sex prejudice. It is only while women are so unaccustomed, as they now are, to the idea of organisation of any sort that I believe they are more easily brought into line in Societies managed by women, though working cordially with and helped by the advice, sympathy, and practical aid of the men. I hope to live to see the day when all sex distinctions not made by Mother Nature will entirely vanish, as in that day I earnestly believe civilisation and progress will at last be more than empty names.

Trusting that this discussion may not close till some forward step is taken, I am, yours faithfully,

LA PENSEE.

DICKENS ANTICIPATES TORREY.

To these may be added another class of men—the stern and gloomy enthusiasts, who would make earth a hell, and religion a torment: men who, having wasted the earlier part of their lives in dissipation and depravity, find themselves when scarcely past its meridian, steeped to the neck in vice, and shunned like a loathsome disease. Abandoned by the world, having nothing to fall back upon, nothing to remember but time misspent, and energies misdirected, they turn their eyes and not their thoughts to Heaven, and delude themselves into the impious belief, that in denouncing the lightness of heart of which they cannot partake, and the rational pleasures from which they never derived enjoyment, they are more than remedying the sins of their old career, and—like the founders of monasteries and builders of churches, in ruder days—establishing a good set claim upon their Maker.

O man! hold thee on in courage of soul

Through the stormy shades of thy worldly way,
And the billows of cloud that around thee roll
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day,
Where hell and heaven shall leave thee free
To the universe of destiny.

—Shelley.

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 N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, Religious Freethought Parliament: J. Somerville, "Of What Utility is Prayer"; 7.30, S.D.F., Fred Knee, "M.P.'s and Their Social Reforms."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, A Musical Entertainment.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Coffee House, Bull Ring): Thursday, March 2, at 8, H. Lennard, "Some Criticisms of a Narrow Materialism."

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

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class. Open Discussion. D. G. Lindsay, "God and the Force of Circumstances"; 6.30, G. Scott, "Roman Catholicism: An Impeachment."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): 6.30, Dr. Robert Park, "Irrationalism and Semi-rationalism."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Miss M. McMillan, "George Combe."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, John M. Robertson, "Modern Unitarianism and the Gospels"; 7, "Dr. Momerie on Belief in God." Monday at 8, Social.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 3, H. Percy Ward, "An Atheist's View of the Revival Mania"; 6.30, "Christian Missions in Heathen Japan: An Exposure." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, March 2, at 8, R. Mitchell, "Our Foreign and Colonial Trade."

OLDHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Institute, Bankside-street): 7, J. Lester, "Spiritualism."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Tivoli, Laygate, High Shields): 3, C. Cohen, "Christian Missions Old and New: A Chapter in the History of Religion"; 7, "Theism and Atheism—the Final Issue."

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