

THE Freethinker

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Conscience is born of love.
—SHAKESPEARE.

The Rights of Freethinkers.

MR. G. J. HOLYOAKE seems to be solving the problem of immortality at Brighton. He is already in his eighty-eight year, and is still "going strong." He has attended the funerals of many persons who expected to attend his. Some of his robust friends were taken to their graves when he, who was always delicate, had settled down for an uncommon longevity. He keeps his hold upon life with all the pertinacity of an annuitant; and, being an invincible optimist, he maintains his cheerfulness concurrently with his existence. He is at once an argument for, and an argument against, old-age pensions. His case seems to prove that security of subsistence is a great promoter of long life, and that the poorer classes would find old age not unenjoyable if bread were guaranteed to them. On the other hand, it suggests that old-age pensions might cost the country a great deal more than is generally supposed, and that the economical argument has lost sight of the psychology of the question.

Another thing is perfectly clear. The American revivalist who is trying to save London in his own peculiar fashion, has asked, "Did you ever know a joyous old infidel?" It all depends, of course, on what he means by "joyous." But if, as I said last week, it "means cheerfulness, and becoming mirth, and gladness that the world keeps on improving, and readiness to assist it as far as age allows"—Dr. Torrey might be referred to "George Jacob Holyoake Esq., Eastern Lodge, Brighton." I do not mean that Mr. Holyoake is the only joyous old infidel, for I know several more; but I mean that he will do for Dr. Torrey to go on with—and he does not suffer, like Dr. Torrey's "converted infidels," from having no quotable name and address.

Mr. Holyoake's pen is still busy, and he has just published through Mr. Fisher Unwin two big volumes entitled *Bygones Worth Remembering*. In a letter I received from him recently he says it is the last book of general interest he is likely to publish. "I thought," he adds, "you would like to see it, so have had one sent to you, as it contains many points which are common between us." The book has arrived, and I am happy to possess it. But I should have been better pleased if the publisher—following a trade rule more honored in the breach than in the observance—had not defaced the title-page. I quite agree with the protest I saw lately in a well-known literary journal against this abominable practice. Why should a publisher deface his own productions in this way? It is a sacrilege if the book is of any importance, and a waste of time if it is of none. If the object is to destroy the commercial value of the book, why not deface the title-page still further by stamping it right across with the bold announcement "not negotiable?"

I propose to dip into these two volumes for the sake of my readers, many of whom will be glad to learn something more of what they contain than may be gathered from ordinary press notices. But

before I do that I want to clear away a very considerable bone of contention, which I prefer to deal with separately, and get rid of once for all.

Mr. Holyoake's thirty-eighth chapter is headed "Penal Christianity"—and he says that "Predatory Christianity" would not be far from the mark. After allowing that the new Education Act "confiscates Nonconformist property to maintain Church schools"—a point on which, as my readers know, I am not in complete agreement with Mr. Holyoake—he proceeds to say something which will be far less pleasant to his Nonconformist friends:—

"There exist penal laws against all who do not stand on the side of faith, which Nonconformists as well as Churchmen connive at, profit by, and maintain. Is not this destruction of their spiritual pretensions? Can they preach of holiness and truth without a blush? No Higher Criticism can condemn Christianity, as it is self-condemned by resting on predatoriness. No person who does not stand on the Christian side can leave property for promoting his views, as a Christian can for promoting his. No Christian conscience is touched at this disadvantage imposed upon the independent thinker. No sermon is preached against it. No Christian petition is ever set up against it. Neither the Church conscience nor the Nonconformist conscience is stirred by the existence of this injustice. It would cease if they objected to it. But they do not object to it."

Feeling that this is to some extent only too true, and to some extent seriously untrue, I am bound—for reasons which should be obvious, and need not be indicated—to state the grounds of my dissent. I shall do that presently. Meanwhile I may add that Mr. Holyoake prints in full his old Liberty of Bequest Bill which never came to anything in the House of Commons. "It required a member like Samuel Morley," he says, "of known Christianity and a conscience, to carry it through the House." This is a graceful compliment to Samuel Morley, but many Freethinkers will discount it when they remember that it was this very gentleman who sent a telegram to the electors of Northampton advising them not to support a sound politician like Charles Bradlaugh because he was an Atheist.

Mr. Holyoake goes on to emphasise the point on which I believe he is inaccurate.

"I know no case in which the Crown has interfered to confiscate a bequest on the ground of heresy in its use. Members of families, legally entitled to the property of a testator, may claim the money and get it. If the family enters no claim the bequest takes effect. In the meantime the state of the law prevents testators leaving property for the maintenance of their opinions, and Christians bring charges against philosophical thinkers for lack of generosity in building halls as Christians do chapels. The Christian reproaches the philosopher for not giving, when he has confiscated the bequest of the philosopher and the power of giving."

Now as far as this is a reflection on the Christians it has my hearty concurrence. Nothing could be meaner than their behavior. They did talk about civil and religious liberty, and maintain penal laws against Freethinkers. They did rob Freethought and taunt it with its poverty. They did intercept bequests to Freethought, and ask with hypocritical amazement why it had not done more with its intercepted resources. They did denounce persecution, and put Freethinkers in prison. Even when they could not beat Freethinkers as much as they wished, they liked to see the stick hanging up behind the door. When they had to pass Charles Bradlaugh's

"Oaths Bill," making oath or affirmation optional everywhere, they revenged themselves by refusing to pass his Bill for abolishing the Blasphemy Laws. Only forty-five members of the House of Commons followed him into the division lobby on that occasion.

All that is perfectly true. Yet the disadvantages of Freethought are not as great as Mr. Holyoake imagines. What he says was quite true seven years ago. It is not so true now.

While I was giving the old Liberty of Bequest Bill all the support I could, I did not feel inclined to stake everything on its success, and I told Mr. Holyoake that I believed there was a way of defeating the Blasphemy Law on the financial side, even if that measure were not carried. He asked me what it was, but I did not answer his question. I had not thoroughly thought the idea out then. Besides, I was willing to give it to the world, at the proper time, but not to any individual.

It is known that I did think the idea out subsequently, and the result was the Secular Society, Limited—of which Mr. Holyoake does not appear to have heard.

In the inception of that Society I met with little but opposition. Even a first-rate solicitor and an eminent counsel were against its feasibility, but both were converted after longer and more careful reflection. The very novelty of the idea stood in its way at first. Old judgments on the Common Law of Blasphemy still held the field in most minds. What I saw, because I had given the matter great attention, was not perceived by others, who had naturally given it less. The fact was that Lord Chief Justice Coleridge's judgment at my trial had inaugurated a new epoch. The Statute Law of Blasphemy did not count; there had never been any proceedings under it in two hundred years, and it was plain that there never would be. It was the Common Law of Blasphemy that counted; under it all proceedings had been taken, including Mr. Holyoake's own prosecution in 1842; and this Law had been laid down afresh by Lord Coleridge, who declared that, whatever it had meant in the past, which was a controverted point, it now meant that even the very fundamentals of Christianity might be assailed, provided the attack were carried on in a proper spirit. I put it to counsel, I put it to that great jurist the late Dr. Hunter, "Would any judge think of going behind that decision of the Lord Chief Justice of England?" and they answered "No." Whatever else they said did not matter. That "No" was a steadily burning light in the darkness.

The Secular Society, Limited, has given security for funds devoted to the purposes set forth in its Memorandum of Association. It constitutes a real trust without the disadvantages of a formal trust. And I utterly deny that executors, or inheritors, or beneficiaries, could contest a legacy to such an Incorporation on the ground suggested by Mr. Holyoake. The point he indicates could not be raised in that way.

"A theory has been started," Mr. Holyoake says, "that by registering an association, under the Friendly Societies Act, it would legalise its proceedings and virtually repeal all the laws confiscating bequests. No case of this kind has ever come before the higher courts." A theory, indeed! The Secular Society, Limited, is a fact. And the oddest thing of all is that Mr. Holyoake is himself the Chairman of an Association, copied in all essentials from the Secular Society, Limited; and that this Association actually invites its members and friends to leave it bequests in their wills, assuring them that such bequests are perfectly secure.

Mr. Holyoake's statement in this new book, or his statement as Chairman of that Association, must be wrong. In my opinion he is wrong in the book. Freethinkers can leave funds or property for the promotion of their principles, if they avail themselves of the instrument I fashioned for them. Further than that I am not at present concerned.

G. W. FOOTE.

Lying for God's Sake.

NO one who has made a careful study of Christian records is likely to form a very lofty notion of Christian veracity. Yet with all that has gone before, recent events in connection with the Albert Hall Mission come with something of a surprise. One would have imagined that a carefully and plainly-written pamphlet like the one now being circulated, exposing the nature of Dr. Torrey's slanders on Ingersoll and Paine, would have before this have called forth some notice from reputable Christians, or from the more respectable organs of the press. From the evangelist himself no reply was to be expected. A preacher whose lies form the most striking portion of his stock-in-trade is not likely to make public confession of his mendacity by courting inquiry. His wisest policy is silence; and while this may be cowardly, it is the safer course. But when a pamphlet like the one named is circulated by tens of thousands, when editors of papers, religious and secular, receive copies and no notice whatever is taken, one is tempted to ask whether genuine honesty in a Christian is quite an unknown quantity?

The matter is the more serious when it is remembered that the press has been puffing this crusade on account of the *moral* benefit it would confer on London. Yet when it is pointed out, plainly and unmistakably, that the chief agent in this revival is a deliberate liar, not a single Christian voice is raised to call upon Dr. Torrey for an explanation. In no other department would such an attack have been allowed to pass unnoticed. An M.P. would have been called upon to resign, a scientist would have been told that he was a disgrace to the world of science; a public man of any other description would have been held up to scorn. Religion is the one cause in which a man may lie, and lie, and lie again, if not with applause, at least with silent approbation.

In truth the whole campaign of Dr. Torrey has been bolstered up by wholesale lying. More than one of the morning papers has changed its reporters until a man was found who would write up accounts of the meetings with the necessary amount of sympathy; thus imposing upon the public the account of a selected person as the unprejudiced impressions of an onlooker. The hall has been reported as "crowded" when there was room for thousands more, and the evangelists have accentuated the lie by hanging out printed notices that the place was full. The usual lies about the number of converts have, of course, been told; and it is due to the credit of the *Daily Telegraph* to say that they openly asserted that the people picked out by Dr. Torrey in various parts of the meeting as "saved" were invisible to all but Torrey himself. He probably saw them with the eye of faith.

Lying of so unmistakable a character as that connected with these revivals can only be tolerated by the average Christian on the grounds that he does not expect his religious teacher to confine himself to the truth. There is a poetic licence and there is a religious licence; and it seems the case that these falsehoods and slanders are regarded by the mass of believers as religious "trimmings" that are inevitable to the situation. That very large numbers of Christians do not believe these stories is certain; others may have kept on telling them—

Till their own lies deceived 'em
And, oft repeating, at length believed 'em.

But why do not those Christians who appreciate these tales at their proper value protest against their circulation? There's the rub; and there is in their silence, properly appreciated, the clearest and most emphatic demonstration of the *immoral* nature of Christianity. I use the word "immoral" advisedly; for it is really time that we ceased to limit the application of such a term to one who picks a pocket or commits a burglary. Nothing can be ultimately more degrading than the neglect of the elementary

intellectual virtues; and that believers in Christianity, who would refrain from slandering a fellow-citizen under ordinary circumstances, will either assist at circulating lies about an unbeliever, or stand idly by while others do so, is a striking instance of how independent religious belief is of moral restraints, and how demoralising a force Christianity has become.

And the more one studies the history of Christianity the more one realises that it has been one long riot of lies—doctrinal lies, documentary lies, personal lies—and that the modern revivalist liar is only carrying on a practice hallowed by tradition and sanctified by custom. Let any Christian reader of this article recall to mind the fact that the orthodox Canon rejects pretty well *one hundred* documents that were fabricated during the first three centuries of Christian history and palmed off upon the people as inspired revelations. And of those accepted as inspired let him also recall the controversies as to *their* genuineness; their demonstrated falsification as in such passages as that relating to the Trinity and the concluding verses of the gospel attributed to Mark; and he ought to realise with what amount of deliberate lying Christianity commenced its career.

Nor does the lying end with Christian documents. It is not too much to say that there is scarcely a document that has passed through Christian hands that has not been "doctored" whenever it paid to do so. Pliny, Tacitus, Josephus, Suetonius have all been treated in this manner. Indeed, every student of ancient writings has to be always on his guard against the Christian forgery and falsification. No writer of any repute will receive the testimony of the early Christian writers without the clearest proof they are speaking the truth, or that it was not to their interest to tell a lie. In ordinary matters we judge a writer to speak the truth until he is found to be speaking falsely. With the early Christians it is far safer to assume they are telling a lie in the absence of proof to the contrary. The mental condition of this "carnival of lies" during the early centuries would form an interesting psychological study; and Dr. Torrey may at least comfort himself with the reflection that if he is not reflecting credit upon his Christian ancestry he is doing nothing to disgrace it.

The doctrinal lies of Christianity are, like the details of a tradesman's catalogue, too numerous to mention. But, again, let a Christian bear in mind the number of doctrines that have already been given up by believers and the number that are in process of surrender, and one thing will be clear. This is, that whole generations of believers have been fed upon what are now admittedly falsehoods. This plain state of the case is disguised under such expressions as "a clearer perception of Christian truth" or "growth in spiritual insight"; but the plain unvarnished truth is that the surrender of such beliefs as hell, Biblical infallibility, demoniacal possession, miracles, etc., are so many confessions that the Christian Churches taught lies for truth, that they fought against the truth as long as they possibly could, and that generations lived and died believing in lies that but for the lack of morality of the Christian Churches they might never have entertained.

The same story is continued in the treatment of non-Christian and pre-Christian civilisation by Christian writers. For centuries the Roman civilisation was, and is still by some, held up as little else than vice and villainy. People have been taught that the Romans glorified infanticide as a virtue, and promiscuous sexual intercourse as the most commendable of practices. The truth being that Pagan Rome at its worst was probably not worse than Christian England under Charles II., that it was considerably purer than Rome under the Christian Popes, and that the streets of Pagan Rome were certainly safer for unprotected females than were the streets of Christian London in the eighteenth century. Within the last 150 years something has been done to clear away the misrepresentations of Christian writers, and this has shown pretty clearly that

to the last the representatives of sane morality and mental culture were to be found among the Pagans, and that the triumph of Christianity meant mental, moral, and social decay. To one who knows, the mere idea of the Antonines being *improved* by the early Christian writers outdoes absurdity in its extravagance.

In vilifying personal opponents Christians are, therefore, only acting up to the traditions of their faith. One expects such, although their sameness becomes tedious. With a monotony that in itself is evidence of unintellectuality, the same charges are transferred from Bruno to Spinoza, from Spinoza to Voltaire, from Voltaire to Paine, from Paine to Ingersoll or Bradlaugh, or to some other Freethinker who has been guilty of the anti-Christian offence of intellectual honesty. The sameness of the charges does not prevent their being accepted by an uncritical community; on the contrary, it helps. These are what they expect, and their expectations are realised to the full. And even those believers who see through the lies have, evidently, not the honesty to denounce them as such.

Yet Christianity stands forward to-day with the claim of effecting moral reform. It has forged documents and invented false doctrines. It has slandered and lied about civilisations and individuals. It has fabricated passages for insertion in the works of writers of repute, and built up established lies by burning writings when interpolation was not possible. Is it any wonder that with such an heredity, and such an environment, that the modern Christian should be so dead to the first demands of intellectual straightforwardness? He is what centuries of Christian control have made him. And it is this control that stamps Christianity as fundamentally immoral. For a religion that fails to insist upon the duty of mental cleanliness destroys all healthy morality by cutting away the conditions of its existence.

C. COHEN.

A Mischievous Fallacy.

PROTESTANTISM denounces Catholicism, and Catholicism anathematizes Protestantism. Each is a deadly heresy in the estimation of the other. But outsiders can see little to choose between the two, although, from a purely logical point of view, it would be necessary to award the palm to Catholicism. Moreover, Protestantism is not in practice what in theory it claims to be. After all said and done, it cannot be denied that in religion authority is all-essential. "So says the Church" is an expression which, in the opinion of the majority of Christian people, settles all disputes, solves all problems, and allays all fears. Incalculable has been and is the force of tradition. It is incontrovertible that practically all Protestants become Christians in early childhood; and it is equally clear that the process takes place under the direct influence of parental or ecclesiastical authority. Whatever may be said to the contrary, the Protestant Church, in reality, relies quite as much upon authority as the Church of Rome does. As a matter of fact, no Protestant Christian is allowed to swallow any theology he likes. Is not this the reason why Unitarians have been and still are ostracised by all the so-called evangelical Churches? Indeed, each denomination marches under the banner of an exclusive creed. A minister may protest, "I am proud to say that I have never signed a creed in my life," but let him depart, in his preaching, from certain clearly marked doctrinal lines, and he will soon find himself persecuted in the name of a very distinct creed.

This point needs elaboration. The other day the Rev. A. Herbert Gray, M.A., Minister of Grosvenor-square Presbyterian Church, Manchester, delivered the fourteenth of the present series of Wesleyan lectures on "What is Christianity?" and entitled it "Principles of Protestantism." One merit of this lecture is that there is no possibility of misunder-

standing its teaching. Mr. Gray does not mince matters in the least. He has the courage of his convictions, and his language is simple, direct, and strong. He evidently belongs to the school of progressive theologians, and is not afraid to express his admiration of the Higher Critics. But his whole argument, in this lecture, is based upon a pernicious fallacy. He repudiates the authority both of tradition and of the Church, and puts his whole reliance upon what he calls the authority of God himself. These are his own words:—

"As a Protestant, I entirely and utterly deny that the authority on which we rest in matters of religious belief is either tradition or the Church. I so far agree with Mr. Blatchford that I feel we need an authority more living, more personal, more august and infallible, before we can feel sure. It may then be asked who is our authority; and I reply, it is God himself. I am accused of believing simply because men have spoken; and I reply that I believe, as a matter of fact, because God has spoken, and spoken not only in the remote past and to others, but *in the present* and to *me*. And that I say, not claiming in any sort of way to be an exceptional sort of person, but simply as a Protestant Christian."

Again he says:—

"It is well to have our issues clearly defined to begin with. Mr. Blatchford writes that we 'have no direct divine warrant for the divine authorship of the Scriptures.' I am here to insist that we *have* direct divine warrant, not indeed for the divine authorship of every word in the Bible, but for the truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the only matter essentially worth caring about. Our whole position is based upon our claim that God does give now to the individual soul assurance of the essential and saving truths. There is for me and many others no possible intermediate position between that and Mr. Blatchford's. With him I refuse to stand merely upon man's testimony, which may be mistaken. The issues involved are too tremendous, the truths in question too sublime and important. If I cannot have testimony from God himself I feel belief to be impossible. On such a matter only the surest grounds will suffice."

No statement of the Protestant position, as understood by Mr. Gray, could be clearer. It is satisfactory to notice that, were it not for the Protestant position, Mr. Gray would be an Infidel, like Mr. Blatchford. To our lecturer, so utterly preposterous are the claims of the Greek Church, of Catholicism, of the Church of England, and of Dr. Torrey, that rather than accept them he would avow himself an Atheist, like the Editor of the *Freethinker*, or like Mr. John M. Robertson. This is really most interesting. One begins to wonder what is coming next. For the authority of tradition and the Church Mr. Gray substitutes the authority of God himself. A magnificent substitution! This modern preacher knows that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true because God himself has told him that it is. But how are Freethinkers, to whom God has not spoken, to know that the Gospel is true? Mr. Gray warns them against believing in the Bible on the testimony of others, because their testimony "may be mistaken." In other words, when Mr. Gray assures us that God has spoken to him we ought to look upon his testimony with suspicion, because it "may be mistaken." He *believes* that the Father in heaven has addressed him, but he "may be mistaken." Therefore, since the Divine Being has not addressed himself to them directly, Freethinkers are not to blame for not believing in the truth of Christianity. As Mr. Gray says: "If I cannot have testimony from God himself I feel belief to be impossible."

"On such a matter only the surest grounds will suffice." Well, then, how does Mr. Gray know that God has spoken to him? He does not tell us. He cannot tell us. No one else can tell us. It is definitely stated in the New Testament that salvation is possible only through Christ. "In none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). And yet, although it is contended that God *can* and *does* speak to individuals to-day, we are face to face with the problem suggested by the fact that the spread of Christianity keeps pace with that of the Bible

Where the Koran is supreme there are no Christians. We will take Luther, as the lecturer does. Everybody knows that Luther was exceptionally imaginative and emotional. I would not utter a single word in depreciation of the great work accomplished by the illustrious reformer; but Mr. Gray cannot have forgotten that the Devil frequently appeared and spoke to Luther, and that Luther believed in the personality of the Devil quite as firmly as he did in that of God. Hence if that great man's testimony is of value in the one case, it must be of equal value in the other. The number of those who believe in the objective existence of the Devil to-day is extremely small. And yet, in the teaching of the New Testament, and in the theology of the Church until very recently the Devil is fully as real a being as God.

With reference to Luther and others like him, Mr. Gray says: "Not on the Church, not on the Bible merely as a book, not on any mere tradition did they rely, but upon the work which God did in their hearts, confirming the gospel promises." But Luther was as conscious of the Devil's work in his heart as of God's. Consequently his consciousness of the one work proved as much or as little as did his consciousness of the other. For all we know his knowledge of the Divine Being may have been quite as imaginary as his knowledge of Satan.

Mr. Gray is most unfortunate in his choice of analogies. He maintains that we apprehend many things without reasoning. I doubt it, although admitting that the reasoning may not always be conscious and formal. Were it necessary, I could easily prove by argument that a sunset is beautiful, and there would be no difficulty whatever in demonstrating the beauty of love. But the point I wish to make emphatic is, that the sense of beauty is within the limits of the natural, while the so-called consciousness of God infinitely transcends those limits, and introduces an element of incongruity. To know the supernatural, man would have to transcend his own nature, which is a natural impossibility. The so-called "fundamental and central Christian truths" concern themselves with supernatural beings and supernatural activities, respecting which, if real, we, who are natural beings and capable only of natural activities, can have no knowledge whatever.

We do not know, we have no means of knowing, what a Divine Being is. Of course, "if Christ was divine the Gospel is true, and our religion has divine warrant"; but what an "if" to build upon. We can conceive of nothing higher than ourselves. In order to know a supernatural being we would require to be endowed with supernatural faculties, or, in other words, to become supernatural beings ourselves. Granting that Jesus really lived, and possessed the beautiful character attributed to him, it would be the height of presumption to call him God, because neither his contemporaries nor any of their descendants knew or could know what God is, not even whether or not there be one. You cannot liken the known to the unknown, nor the finite to the infinite. Mr. Gray tells us "that the witness of the Holy Spirit is still vouchsafed to individuals"; but neither Mr. Gray nor anybody else knows whether or not there is a Divine Spirit. Thus the whole argument is built upon the sand, and is bound to tumble headlong into ruins.

Mr. Gray is an enthusiastic disciple of the Higher Critics, and consequently he is prepared to sacrifice large portions of the Bible. "There may have been no Abraham," he says, "Moses may have never written anything, and every narrative in Genesis may be mythical, but I shall be not less certain that to know Jesus of Nazareth and God through him is eternal life. Some of the Psalms may contain barbaric sentiments; but the Sermon on the Mount is none the less the highest ethical utterance of history. St. Paul even may have made many mistakes, but the Christ in whom he lived is not thereby less clear to me." But is he not aware that the Critics, who, he candidly declares, have come to

stay, are gradually but most surely undermining the historicity of the Four Gospels themselves, and are thus being irresistibly forced to the conclusion that even Jesus is a largely if not wholly mythical character? Is it possible that, like the Rev. R. J. Campbell, Mr. Gray is determined to cling to Christ as God incarnate, even if he were convinced that his faith rests on no basis of history?

Like many more of the divines of to-day, Mr. Gray is an *emotional* believer. He *feels* that God speaks to him, that Jesus was divine and still lives and acts in the world, and that the Holy Spirit is present and vocal in human hearts, and then, in the most illogical manner, identifies this *feeling* with *knowledge*. But feeling is not knowledge. In this case, it is the product of faith, and has no connection whatever with knowledge. If there is a God, why does He not speak to all alike? If Christ is the Savior of the world, and if there is salvation in none other, why is it that more than two-thirds of mankind do not believe in him? If God yearns to make himself known to all the sons and daughters of men, how is it that there are so many millions in total ignorance of him? Why does He speak to some and not to others? Why does He make an all-important communication to A and B, and allow C, and D, and E to perish for the lack of it? Why does the Holy Spirit fill some people to overflowing, and do absolutely nothing for others except through the former? Believers are dumb in the presence of such questions. On the assumption that God exists as depicted in the New Testament, such questions are unanswerable.

To those who believe in the evidential value of feeling or experience two additional questions may reasonably be put. The first is, Why do you systematically ignore the experience of non-believers? Have they not as good a right to be heard as yourselves? Their experience is that Nature is a sphere ample enough for the full exercise and perfect satisfaction of all their faculties. What Christians give to God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and the unseen world, they give to society in order to purify its motives, exalt its ideals, and improve its actions. By the application of perfectly natural means, they succeed in making drunkards sober, thieves honest, gamblers industrious, and wretched homes happy. Why call such noble unbelievers "blind," "prejudiced," "perverse," and "unregenerate?" Is it fair, is it just, is it kind, is it brotherly?

The other question is, What explanation can you offer of the gigantic failures of what you call the Perfect or Absolute Religion? You proudly point to what you describe as "the miracle of changed lives," and then ask, Who seeing this wonder can be in doubt about the Truth of our religion? But we beg to point you, though not with pride, to the greater miracle of *unchanged* lives, and to ask, What explanation can you offer of this mighty wonder? Has not *this* miracle its evidential weight? We cannot possibly reconcile it with the existence of an all-powerful, and all-wise, and all-loving Heavenly Father, and of a Savior of an all-consuming compassion, with a Holy Spirit of inexhaustible energy at his disposal. We conclude, therefore, that the case for the Bible and Christianity, from the Catholic and Protestant points of view alike, has utterly broken down.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Welsh Revival.

THE Welsh Revival continues to spread and to receive widespread attention. Public opinion differs as to the merit or demerit of the movement. Some very weighty words by expert men have been spoken against it, contending that the effects of it will be transient, producing a speedy reaction, and leaving behind it results deplorable in their nature and lasting in their course.

It is very natural for certain classes to welcome and approve the revival. For instance, priests of

all descriptions will hail it and bless it as a boom in their craft. All ministers and clergy are as real priests at bottom as Roman priests or the monks of India and other heathen nations. Not that all ministers and clergy approve of the revival; there are honorable exceptions in Wales and elsewhere, men who are honest enough and courageous enough to avow their belief that the wild enthusiasm will do more harm than good. But the bulk of clerics of all sects, churches, and denominations will smile approvingly on the wave of enthusiasm rolling over the country. The excitement for a while will fill their chapels and churches, increase the number of their members and swell the wealth and influence of the priestly office.

Employers and their class will also naturally approve and encourage the revival. If the workers attempted to hold meetings in the works during dinner hour to discuss grievances, or measures of reform to improve the condition of their class, the meetings would be quickly forbidden. But they may hold religious services and prayer-meetings every day in the week, and welcome. And why? Because masters and those in authority have a keen eye to self-interest. They know that the converts and those under the influence of the revival will be like broken horses, easier to manage. They will become lamb-like slaves, willing to submit to the powers that be. They will not be so ready to find fault and complain and strike. They will look upon their masters as appointed agents of God to provide livelihood for them, and feel content in the conditions where Providence placed them.

It is also natural for the religious press to exploit the revival in a pious way, to increase the sale and profit of the papers. No one can justly blame them for availing themselves of the wave of excitement to improve business.

But the amount of room given to the revival in the secular press is almost a riddle. It is not easy to account for it. True, it makes an abundance of easy copy, but that does not seem to explain the matter satisfactorily. The thought has struck me many times that the root of support given to the revival in the secular press is class interest, conscious or unconscious. Freethought and Socialism are spreading amongst the masses, and their tendency is to make them class-conscious, independent, and aggressive. Religion and revivalism will keep the people contented and loyal to their superiors, and will check the growth of revolutionary Freethought and Socialism.

The Welsh people seem to be very proud of the revival. But if they thought a little logically on the matter, I doubt whether they would not be more sorry than pleased at the manifestations. To me it is a sad sight. It makes me almost despair of a thorough intelligent and emancipated humanity. In a community thoroughly educated and trained to think logically, and weigh evidence in a scientific way, these insane revivals would be impossible. No missionary or preacher could ever produce the excitement in a congregation of scientists, professors, doctors, chemists, lawyers, and suchlike. No revival will succeed without a crowd of ignorant, unthinking, and credulous listeners to operate upon. The Welsh, like all Kelts, are an excitable race, easily roused to enthusiasm, as the many revivals during the last sixty or seventy years clearly prove.

But these religious crazes—revivals are nothing else—so prevalent in Wales, indicate a backwardness in intelligence, ignorant and credulous minds, and sentiments securely bound in the coils of priestly dominion. Knowledge has been withheld from them, wilfully or from incapacity. Neither pulpit, school, nor press make any attempt to keep the people up to date with scientific knowledge. If scientific knowledge, up-to-date, was given—say, anthropology, geology, astronomy, evolution, history, biology, philology, mythology, economics, and so on—these insane revivals would be impossible. Revivals can only flourish where ignorance and superstition reign

supreme. It is a sad fact that in the whole of Wales there is no real free press where all views and opinions, on all subjects, can be discussed. No wonder revivals flourish in such a country.

It is claimed that the revival is the work of God, a downpour of the Holy Ghost. I wonder whether it ever dawns on the minds of those who make the claim what a guy they make of God and the Holy Ghost, and what a muddle they make of man's intelligence? What has God been doing since 1859? Has he been asleep and has only just awakened? Why has he visited Wales and not England, Scotland, or Ireland? Are there no sinners in the other countries? Are they not in need of awakening as much as Wales? Why has he not visited the Torrey meetings and convulsed England with a revival? Why not revive the clergy and ministers? What is there in raw, unripe youth and bubbling hysterical girls and women to attract his attention? How is it he passes the Universities, colleges, and schools? Why does he pass the cathedrals and churches, and confine himself to chapels and meeting rooms? Is he a Dissenter? Why choose a chapel? Are there no sinners outside? Why not visit a market, the racecourse, the theatre, the football field, where he would have a chance to convert twenty or thirty thousand people in one meeting? And why not go to the public-house, hotel, drinking dens, betting and gambling and thieving clubs? Why pass the haunts of the greatest sinners out? Why not go to prisons and workhouses? Are there no sinners there? How is it he passes the great works where thousands are employed? Is he afraid of the boss? How is it that most of the converts are boys, girls, and poor working men and women? Why does he not tackle the millionaires, landlords, money lords, exploiters of labor, sweaters, brewers, publicans, and politicians?

A downpour of the Holy Ghost is a metaphor I cannot understand. I have not got a spiritual eye that can see the invisible, as some Christians seem to have. I thought the Holy Ghost was a personal God like the Father and the Son. How a God can be poured down like a sheet of water from a cloud and fill a chapel like an escape of gas passes my comprehension, and I give it up.

I cannot help thinking these revivals are deplorable events. They take the people's attention from their grievances and wrongs. If the Welsh people showed the same enthusiasm to mend their temporal circumstances, to have more and better food, better clothing, better houses, and better conditions of life for all the people, they would do some good. But as long as they keep gazing at the sky they will continue to be the miserable slaves of capital, as they are at present.

Some time ago, an article of mine appeared in the *Freethinker* entitled, "Danger Ahead." The danger I anticipated was a reaction and a revival of fanaticism. It has come sooner than I expected. It has been precipitated by the attack of Blatchford on Christianity, and the persistent war of the *Freethinker* on Christian superstition. The great success of the cheap reprints of the Rational Press has also awakened the Churches to the dangers surrounding their faith. Superstition is not dead. Fanaticism may become dangerous by combination of the sects any time. Church and Chapel are already fraternising in face of their determined assailants, the Rationalists. And it would not surprise me to see the Catholic Church, or a portion of it, joining the Protestants in defence of their common superstition. It would be no difficult task for priests who are leaders of all Church sects to turn a blind eye on differences, and an open eye on agreements.

In an open encounter, Rationalists have nothing to fear from all the apologists of all the Churches. Reason, facts, science, are all on our side. Our weakness is want of organisation. We are only a mob fighting against trained armies. For want of organisation and better methods we lose the women and children. We can never win the battle till we get the women and children in our ranks. The

strength of the Churches is not in their doctrines and arguments, but in their organisation and faculty to secure votes. Add to that the immense wealth they have at command, and the help they can depend on from the classes, and apparently from the capitalistic press. Till we are able to marshal our forces under able leaders, employing all the arts of the Churches in our propaganda, we shall always be at a disadvantage against the foe. Singing, fellowship, and more enthusiasm of humanity would double our force and make it invincible.

R. J. DERFEL,

Acid Drops.

There is a silly weekly paper—perhaps the silliest in all England—called the *Christian Herald*. It is the organ, and we suppose the property, of Prophet Baxter, the unspeakable charlatan who coins money out of ignorance and credulity by prophesying the end of the world, and shifting the date forward every time his prophecy is falsified by the event. Prophet Baxter has been at this little game for a great many years, and it seems to pay as well as ever. He declares—and we dare say there is some truth in it—that he has hundreds of thousands of readers, which reminds us of a certain epigram of Thomas Carlyle's about the population of this country—"forty millions of people, mostly fools."

The last number of Prophet Baxter's paper announced that "an infidel attack has been made upon Dr. Torrey" and asked its readers for £100 to "counteract the baleful influence of the atheistic literature now being scattered broadcast." Perhaps we ought to feel that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

No fable is too gross for Prophet Baxter to believe—or rather to retail, for it is very doubtful if he believes a tenth part of what he prints. He says that "at Trecynon, four infidels, who were the most prominent men of that secular clique, have definitely come over to the side of Jesus, and are daily witnessing for him." On another page there is a picture of an infidel burning his books. His name is given as "Tom Hughes," and he is described as being "the most noted of Agnostics in the club at Trecynon." When he found Jesus at a revival meeting he went home and "took down from his shelves one by one the books he had so prized as a member of the local Ethical (Agnostic) Society," threw them on the table, tore them to pieces, and "made a bonfire of the whole lot in his own grate." Probably the only particle of truth in this story is the Christian fondness for burning books instead of answering them. Still, we ask one of our readers, if we have any in that locality, to make inquiries about this "Tom Hughes" conversion, and let us know the result.

The Portmadoc ghost, who has had a six weeks' innings, turns out to be a servant girl named Mary Hughes. The magistrates have fined her £3 15s., including costs, for malicious damage to property while playing the spook.

Mr. Vincent E. Martin, seeing by the Rev. Frederic Spurr's reply to Mr. Foote in the *Daily Chronicle* that he was a professed follower of Jesus Christ, took the trouble to put the reverend gentleman to the test. Quoting the Lord's command to "Give to every one that asketh, and from him that would borrow turn thou not away," Mr. Martin intimated that he wanted £25, and relied upon Mr. Spurr to supply it. Mr. Spurr replied, not too civilly (civility does not appear to be in his line), giving a number of reasons why he could not oblige Mr. Martin. One of them was that he had not got the money. That would have been a sufficient reply, but Mr. Spurr tried to be clever, and gave himself away by quibbling. He admitted that Jesus had said "Give to every one that asketh," but pointed out that he did not say "Give to every one *what* he asketh." This reminds us of the man who would not show forgiveness, and was told to remember the text "Thou shalt forgive thy brother, not seven times, but seventy times seven." "That's all right," he replied, "but she's my sister."

Mr. Arthur Henderson, Labor member for Barnard Castle, has been assisting the intellectual reactionists at the Central Hall, Manchester. In the course of his address he said that "he did not think the workers were inclined to join the ranks of unbelievers." But what does it matter what he *thinks*? What are the *facts*? Look at the Labor leaders—How many of them are orthodox Christians—or Christians

at all in any proper sense of the word? Is not Mr. John Burns an "unbeliever"? Is not Mr. Keir Hardie an "unbeliever"? And, to go a little further, are not Mr. Hyndman, Mr. Quelch, Mr. Bernard Shaw, and Mr. Robert Blatchford all "unbelievers"?

Mr. Henderson went on to talk a lot of nonsense about applying religion to every department of human life, and improving the social conditions of the people. He did not explain, however, why "insanitary dwellings" could not be dealt with, even if religion disappeared and the name of Jesus Christ was forgotten. No doubt the Churches are very glad to get men like Mr. Henderson on their platforms, and to pat them on the back in the name of the working classes. But these Churches will take the "sweaters" money quite as cheerfully—or even a present of gold communion plate from financiers like Mr. Terah Hooley. The Churches are not particular. They are on the make. Indeed, they are something like the gentleman who declined to speak disrespectfully of either heaven or hell, as he had friends in both places.

Frederick Murly, solicitor, aged sixty, who has just been sentenced at Bristol to five years' penal servitude, was notorious for his piety, and particularly great at prayer meetings at the residences of the people he was swindling. We commend this case to the attention of Dr. Torrey. It ought to give him a fine text for a really fresh sermon at the Albert Hall.

Some time ago we reproduced an American report of the Rev. Isaac Selby, the infidel-slayer, who paid a not very successful visit to England in the early nineties, having got into serious trouble. Since then Selby has shot at Judge Hebbard while seated on the bench at San Francisco for deciding against him in his divorce case. He seems a bad egg altogether. But was there ever a good one in his line of business?

Selby's wife, whom he married in the eighties, was a Roman Catholic. Into the greedy maw of the Great Lying Church she paid sums of money for the release of a relative's soul from purgatory. At last she refused point blank to make any further payment, on the ground that after so protracted a residence in purgatory her deceased relative must have become inured to the climate.

The success of the Torrey-Alexander mission—as far as it is a success—is just a triumph of hustling, advertising, and astute business management. When these gentlemen paid their first midday visit to the City of London, and held a revival meeting at the Cannon-street Hotel, they pursued arts that might make many a City speculator squirm with envy. The *Echo* pretty plainly said that the audience was brought there to fill the room before the advertised time, and that it was "full up" when the City men arrived to sample the show. Even the *Daily News* admitted that "the great majority were not typical either of the business men of the City or of the members of the Stock Exchange." The *Daily Chronicle* was still more outspoken. "A very large proportion of the audience," it said, "were strange to the City, having taken their seats long before a quarter past one, the hour at which the meeting commenced." The *Chronicle* reporter added that "the appearance of the place suggested Exeter Hall rather than the Cannon-street Hotel."

This precious pair of revivalists, who went to the Cannon-street Hotel ostensibly to save souls, were simply doing a "deal" in their special line. Everything was judiciously arranged beforehand; in fact, the whole affair was worked like a travelling show, and there does not appear to have been a trace of earnestness and sincerity from beginning to end.

Dr. Torrey's address, at this first City meeting, was worthy of all the other features. He talked against the clock with wonderful volubility, and the subject of his discourse was as far away from what Bacon would call the "business and bosoms" of his auditors as could well be imagined. He gave his reasons for believing the Bible to be the Word of God—as though scepticism on that point were the besetting sin of persons who are occupied during the day in the City of London. He said that Strauss was played out, and Renan was played out, and the Higher Critics were played out; everybody and everything was played out, apparently, except Dr. Torrey and the Bible. It was a case of "We two against the world."

Dr. Torrey started a new game at this first City meeting. He told his audience that he—yes, he, he himself—had been an agnostic once, though not an atheist. Now we will not waste time on Dr. Torrey's inability to understand these

two terms. Our object is something very different. We want to point out that this boast of having once been an agnostic is a fresh trick on Torrey's part. And it is a trick that all the sensational soul-savers are working for what it is worth. It is now common to the whole profession. And the fresh lie seems to catch on as well as any of the old ones.

We have a type-written letter before us from Dr. Torrey to Mr. J. W. Sullivan, dated from 135 Gloucester-road, South Kensington, February 18, 1905, in which he concludes with the statement: "I was once an unbeliever myself—not an infidel, but an agnostic." Why did he not say *when*? He might also have said *where*. It would be interesting to learn if anybody knew him as an unbeliever at any time or place. It would also be interesting to learn what he considers to be the difference between an unbeliever and an infidel. He appears to run a dictionary of his own.

Dr. Torrey is working the "converted Agnostic" lay wherever he sees an opening. Being challenged to produce one of the many "unbelievers" he claims to have converted, he exclaims, "All right, here you are, I'm one myself." He now tells the world through the pages of *M. A. P.* when and where he was an Agnostic. He places the phenomenon far back—which is fairly safe. He says it was when he was nineteen years of age. He was then studying in "the theological department of Yale." He says that he "doubted everything—the inspiration of the Bible, the Deity of Christ, and the existence of God." But out of this "maze of doubt" he came at last "into an assured faith in the Bible as the Word of God, and Jesus Christ as the Son of God." This is Dr. Torrey's precious bit of autobiography. Nobody is in a position to deny it. On the other hand, we have only his word for it; and what that is worth the readers of our "Dr. Torrey and the Infidels" pamphlet can judge for themselves.

It is admitted by Dr. Torrey that he has no humor. But there is humor in what follows. He says that he was "a thorough-going Agnostic, and an honest one"—of course! Then he adds this pretty little statement:—

"My own experience made it easy for me to believe that others who are Agnostics are as honest as I was then, and I suppose that this had a good deal of influence in shaping the character of my ministry."

How is one to keep within the bounds of parliamentary language and yet deal with this man as he deserves? After saying all the infamous things he could think of about Deists like Thomas Paine and Agnostics like Colonel Ingersoll, he now rolls up the whites of his eyes and pretends to feel deep sympathy for the poor dear Agnostics, who may be as honest (bless you!) as he is himself. What is the reason of this change? Is it not clear that our exposure has startled him? Is it not obvious that our exposure is telling generally? The myriads of copies of our pamphlets already in circulation, and the reproduction of one of them on the front page of the *Clarion*, have given this fellow pause.

Personally we think that Dr. Torrey is more disgusting in his new rôle than he was in his old one. His slaver is worse than his bite. Just let us print again what this revivalist ruffian said at Dublin, as reported in the *Irish Times*:—

"There might be an honest sceptic to-day, an honest agnostic, an honest infidel. He did not question that, but he could not remain an honest one."

The man who said that, and has printed twenty similar things is now frightened; and he sails on a different tack for a while, and pretends that his own experience has given him a great tenderness for these same Agnostics. What a detestable creature! And this is the man who comes to save London!

When there is a grain of sincerity in Dr. Torrey's "tenderness" for Agnostics he will recant his lies about Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. These are *proved* to be lies; they have not even a little color from the facts—they are absolutely the opposite of the facts. And until he recants those lies Freethinkers should wage remorseless war against him wherever he goes.

Mr. F. Howard informs us that he also had an informal conversation with Dr. Torrey outside the Albert Hall. Mr. Howard was distributing our "Dr. Torrey and the Infidels" pamphlet when the evangelist came out of the "Area" door. Accosting him, and getting into talk with him, Mr. Howard asked him why he didn't play the game fair and square; and, being desired to explain himself, he asked why Dr. Torrey did not reply to Mr. Foote's pamphlet, and either maintain his charges against Paine and Ingersoll or

honorably withdraw them. Dr. Torrey answered that the matter was not worth noticing. Now, we beg our readers to note the following points:—

- (1) Dr. Torrey accuses Thomas Paine of having run away with another man's wife, and Colonel Ingersoll of having tried to break down the law against the circulating of obscene literature through the United States mails.
- (2) Mr. Foote proves that both these statements are absolutely and entirely untrue, and that the latter statement is the very opposite of the truth.
- (3) Dr. Torrey is asked why he does not sustain or withdraw his accusations against Paine and Ingersoll.
- (4) Dr. Torrey replies that it isn't worth his trouble.

Is it possible for a human being to fall into a more abjectly immoral condition?

How the Jesusites follow their beloved Master. Here is Mr. Alexander, the revivalist, for instance, who was probably not quite poor before he married a cocoa heiress and became, directly or indirectly, a rich man. Being interviewed by a *Daily Chronicle* representative, he was asked: "Supposing the Spirit voice told you to give up your money, and remain in England working among the slum population, would you obey?" Mr. Alexander looked deep in thought for a minute. No doubt he was seeing how he could turn the edge of this awkward question. When he did speak he had found a convenient answer. "Of course I should obey," he said, "but I should be quite sure first that I was receiving divine guidance." Of course he would! Who on earth doubts it? Most of the gentlemen who listen for "divine guidance" never hear it when it conflicts with their personal interests. The word "call" has become a source of laughter to the lay public. When a man of God receives a "call" from the Lord, people know that, in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, he is simply taking a better job.

The *Daily News* is still very fond of reminding its readers that it was started by Charles Dickens. It must know very well, however, that its present policy would not be approved by the great novelist. Anyone who will take the trouble to read Dickens's papers on the Sunday question will see how he loathed a lot of the religious movements which are now persistently puffed in Mr. Cadbury's organ. After such a lapse of time, and so much talk about progress, it may seem a strange thing to say, but it is nevertheless true, that the *Daily News* would be vastly improved if it returned to the spirit and policy of its founder.

Mr. W. Copeland Bowie reminds the *Daily News* that Unitarians like Sir John Robinson, Mr. Frank Hill, and Mr. P. W. Clayden had something to do with "making it a power in the land." He also remarks that Dr. Torrey "betrays a woeful lack of knowledge of the most elementary facts of modern Biblical criticism." He further observes that Dr. Torrey's methods are sometimes very discreditable. "It is an ancient and familiar device in theological controversy," he says, "to charge those who differ from you in opinion with possessing a canker of wickedness in their hearts; but the use of such discredited weapons had surely better be discarded by a man whose avowed mission, we are told, is to convert London from falsehood to truth, from sin to righteousness."

Dr. Yeatman-Biggs, the new Bishop of Worcester, is to be enthroned on the Thursday in Easter week. What a precious follower this man is of the meek and lowly Jesus. The only time the meek and lowly one was enthroned—or anything like it—was when he rode into Jerusalem on a jackass. Dr. Yeatman-Biggs rides asses too, but not four-legged ones.

No less than 44,899 Churchmen, including 3,959 clergymen, have signed a memorial seriously deprecating "any alteration in the Athanasian Creed, or in its use as now enjoined in the Book of Common Prayer." This reminds us of Frederic the Great's reply to those who wanted him to be intolerant and favor one sect to the disadvantage of others. "Every one of my subjects," he said, "shall go to hell in his own way." Far be it from us, therefore, to interfere with those who enjoy the Athanasian Creed. If they like it, let them have it. Our objection begins when they want to share it amongst outsiders.

The Rev. Dr. Jessop is a champion joker. Speaking at the annual meeting of the Norfolk Branch of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, at Norwich, he "acknowledged that we were moving upward in regard to our treatment of animals, thanks to a Christian sentiment which the gospel had spread among us." This is clerical imagination. The truth is that humanitarianism of all kinds, including the better treatment of animals, has

grown steadily with the progress of Freethought and Democracy. The Church comes in last as usual; and, also as usual, claims all the credit of other people's labors.

Mr. Evan Roberts, the Welsh revivalist, is reported to be suffering from "excitement and excessive strain." He has cancelled engagements and remains quiet and silent in his room. "He sees no one," the report says, "but his host and hostess, with whom he communicates only in writing. He states that the Spirit has forbidden him to speak." It reads like a report from Bedlam. These things are common enough in lunatic asylums.

The Metropolitan Free Church Federation—no doubt with an eye to business—has resolved to cultivate the prevailing lunacy. At a Conference on the subject of "Religious Revival," held in the Rev. F. B. Meyer's church at Westminster, it was decided to hold "united prayer meetings for ministers," together with "public-house visitation, combined midnight marches and meetings, and aggregate meetings of working men." One part of this program ought to be stopped by the public authorities. We fail to see why religious bodies should be allowed to "make night hideous" with processions in the streets at an hour when peace and quiet ought to be encouraged.

Captain Simpson, a Liverpool Passive Resister, is a very jocular gentleman—though his humor may be chiefly of the unconscious variety. Addressing the magistrates recently, on behalf of himself and a number of the Passive Resisters, including the Rev. C. F. Aked, he declared that their treatment "made the blood of Englishmen boil, and they felt that they were being trampled on by a tyranny as bad as that of Russia." The Liverpool-Russian magistrates ordered the blood-boiler and his friends to pay their rates. How long, O Lord, how long!

The *Bury Times* reports a speech by Colonel Mellor at the opening of the new Wesleyan Methodist schools at Radcliffe Bridge. This gentleman talked a good deal of absurdity. He pointed out that 480 death sentences were passed in 1833, while the death sentences hardly average 20 a year at present; and he attributed all this change to the influence of the Christian religion. But he overlooked two facts; first, that criminals are only sentenced to death now for murder, whereas they incurred the death penalty for other felonies in the early part of the nineteenth century; second, that the Christian religion was as much in possession of the field then as it is now—indeed more so, for men and women were sent to prison by the dozen for daring to question the truth of Christianity. Colonel Mellor's talk about juvenile crime in France and in England, and the superiority of religious education here over godless education there, is very much of the same character. He does not take a broad view of the facts; and he has left out of sight altogether the most important fact of all—namely, the existence of military conscription in France, and its non-existence in England. The fact is, that we derive an immense advantage from our insular position. If we were joined to the continent of Europe, instead of being cut off by that "ditch," we should have military conscription too, and all its attendant evils.

Rev. Walter Abbott, for nearly thirty years vicar of Paddington, left property amounting to £27,169. If there be any truth in the New Testament, or any authority in Jesus Christ, there can be no mistake as to the reverend gentleman's present residence.

An episcopal story is going the rounds which looks like one of Mr. Ben Trovato's. The story-teller is said to be the Bishop of Chichester, who stated that the Bishop of Mashonaland once vanquished three lions by reading aloud to them the Thirty-nine Articles. When he reached the Article concerning justification by faith the lions turned tail and fled. It seems a pity that so many men show less sense.

The following is from the *Hong Kong Press*:—

"Many Chinese are becoming Christians because they have discovered that the provincial magistrates, in disputes between Christians and non-Christians, incline to favor the former."

Why the magistrates do this is not stated, but the real reason is that the missionaries take the part of the natives who will call themselves Christians, and move heaven and earth, and the other place too, to secure them advantages, even at the expense of their fellow countrymen. Mr. George Lynch, the war correspondent, says that this game was carried to extraordinary lengths in Korea, where the missionaries, in some parts, got the administration of the law almost entirely into their own hands.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, March 5, Stanley Hall, Junction-road, Upper Holloway (near "The Boston"), at 7 p.m., "Is There a Future Life?" Admission free.

March 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.—April 9, Glasgow; 16, Liverpool.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—March 12, Glasgow; 19, Liverpool; 26, Stanley Hall, N.; April 30, Stratford Town Hall; May 7, Merthyr Tydfil; 21, Failsforth.

F. HOWARD.—See "Acid Drops." We have made use of a part of your communication. Thanks for your share in the distribution of the pamphlets.

HENRY SPENCE, secretary, West Ham Branch, wishes us to announce that Mr. R. Rosetti is willing to lecture for Free-thought societies in London or the provinces on anti-theological subjects, and on the Russian revolutionary movement.

F. CALVERT.—The Freethought distributors outside the Albert Hall would be very ill-advised to have any "quiet talks" inside with Dr. Torrey. Dealings with such a man should all be public. His false accusations against Paine and Ingersoll were publicly made, and they are publicly reported. Dr. Torrey must now publicly withdraw them, or publicly bear the brand of a moral assassin. There is no middle course. Glad to know you are helping in the distribution.

T. W. KINGHAM.—We do not know of any complete edition of Ingersoll's works being published in 3 vols. at 10s. 6d. The only complete edition we know of is "The Dresden Edition," which now costs over £5.

J. VERNA.—You evidently mistake our time of publication. The *Freethinker* is dated Sunday, but is on sale on Thursday, and leaves the editor's hands on Tuesday evening.

W. L. R. (Johannesburg).—We think the best way is to give your initials only. We have read your letter with pleasure, and shall be glad to hear from you at any time. Your generous references to Mr. Lloyd are appreciated. He certainly gave up a comfortable road for a hard one, but self-respect goes with him all the way, and that is the chief consideration to a man of his character.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your welcome cuttings.

FRANK SMITH, who has already subscribed eight guineas to our Anti-Torrey Mission Fund, writes: "I send you herewith another two guineas, just to give the thing a little push. It makes me tired when I read the list of subscriptions: you must need the fighting qualities of Hercules to enable you to keep cheerful."

W. WAYMARK.—A very pertinent question. As people in Christian London find their way about by making landmarks of public-houses, we may state that Stanley Hall, in the Junction-road, Upper Holloway, is quite near "The Boston." We note your intimation, for the sake of A. Hopkins, that Voltaire's *Candide* is in Morley's "Universal Library," bound up with Johnson's *Rasselas*, price one shilling. It is probably doctored, though, after the manner of the late Professor Morley; and the Rabelais in that same series is sure to be. Thanks for cutting.

EDWIN NEVILLE.—The best, at least the most complete, Life of Shelley is Professor Edward Dowden's, in two large octavo volumes. It contains a good deal of matter supplied by the Shelley family. We do not consider it an ideal biography of the poet; that biography has yet to be written. It is pleasant to know that you so much enjoyed our articles on "Shelley at Rome." Our statement as to Shelley's great drama cannot, of course, be reconciled with Mr. Sharp's statement that "The *Cenci* was begun and finished at the villa near the busy Tuscan seaport." But it is perfectly clear that Mr. Sharp is wrong. Shelley left Rome early in June, 1819. He was at the Villa Valsovano, near Leghorn, for some time afterwards; and he undoubtedly got the *Cenci* largely, but not entirely, ready for publication there. It was certainly not begun there. Dr. Dowden says that an entry in Mary's diary shows that he was "at work upon his tragedy by May 14." We can only repeat that, by a careful weighing of all the facts, and with a special view to Shelley's references to the *Cenci* in his letters, we can only come to one conclusion; namely, that the play was substantially written at Rome, and revised (or rewritten, if preferred) at Leghorn and Livorno.

A. J. WILKINS.—Settled and sent as requested. Glad to hear you have "been delighted with the *Freethinker* ever since you have taken it in."

G. W. GLASSBOROW says that he has received the *Freethinker* for six weeks post free, and is now arranging to get it through a local newsagent. "As an old reader of the *Clarion*," he adds, "I was rejoiced to see the way in which you and 'Nunquam' have co-operated in exposing Torrey, and am sure it is a delight to all sincere men when they see two good men and true standing together to defend the reputations of some who have done an infinite amount of good to the cause of freedom."

DUNCAN McLEOD.—Our "Dr. Torrey and the Infidels" pamphlet

was reproduced in the *Clarion* published on Friday, February 10. It filled the front page of that number, and had a big displayed heading. We don't know how you could have missed it. Samuel Laing's definition of Atheism is of no particular importance. If your quotation is accurate, as we dare say it is, it proves that he did not understand Atheism. Glad to hear that your mother went to hear our last lecture at Liverpool, and is looking forward to hearing us again at the end of April. Nothing gives us greater pleasure than to see women becoming Freethinkers.

H. COOPER.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops." Always glad to receive cuttings.

R. W. WOOD.—Of course it is far greater pleasure to write on Shelley than on Dr. Torrey, but pleasure and duty are sometimes wide apart; and perhaps we ought not to be ashamed of being able (in our degree) to do both. We hope to find time for more *con amore* work presently.

D. CARTWRIGHT.—We published Colonel Ingersoll's lectures twenty years before those you mention thought of doing it. If you look all round you will find that we have been a pioneer in most things connected with Freethought; and we have not the slightest doubt that this will be recognised in due time—after we have answered "Here" to the call of Death.

F. S.—Much obliged for cuttings.

OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £80 2s. 7d. Received this week: A. J. Wilkins 1s., Frank Smith £2 2s., H. Allen 2s., Hugh Hotson, £1, H. W. Matthews 5s., George Etherton 14s. 4d., R. B. F., 2s., Jas. Woodhull 5s. 8d., A. Webber 2s. 6d., Miner 2s. 6d., P. Rowland 5s., H. Thorp 2s., John White 3s., E. P. Cardiff 1s. 6d., T. Fisher 3s. 10d., Geo. Dixon 5s., W. J. McMurray 2s. 6d., W. R. Fitton 2s., Liverpool Branch collection at Mr. J. M. Robertson's lectures £1 13s., Secularist 1s. 6d., F. R., 2s. 6d., C. H. Weln 3s. 6d.

J. BLUNDELL.—Mr. Cohen will deal with the subject shortly. Thanks for getting us new readers.

J. SHUFFLEBOTTOM.—Too late for insertion this week; stands over therefore till next.

W. G. McINTOSH.—Much obliged, but the matter cannot be dealt with till next week. Thanks for good wishes.

H. G. SELLARS.—Shall have attention.

J. MARTIN.—Already answered; still, thanks.

W. P. PEARSON.—A further supply of Torrey pamphlets has been sent to Liverpool as requested. Collection acknowledged in list. Thanks.

S. C. HURFORD.—Sorry our paragraph on the new Cardiff Branch, which we heartily welcome, has to stand over with other matter, in consequence of great pressure on our space.

SOME answers to correspondents stand over for want of room, together with several letters on the "Freethinkers and Friendship" question, most of the writers being too long.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

North London Freethinkers should do their utmost to make the March special course of Sunday evening Freethought lectures at the Stanley Hall a triumphant success. We want to get an audience mainly from that part of the metropolis, and to that end we have gone in for free admission to all seats. Of course there will have to be collections, and it is hoped that they will not be ungenerous. The lectures are the best the Freethought party can put forward, and their subjects are attractive. What more, then, can be done to secure a favorable result? Only the advertising. That will be done as far as possible by the secretary of the Secular Society, Limited, under whose auspices these meetings are arranged. The rest will have to be done, if at all, by the local Freethinkers, who should advertise the Stanley Hall lectures by word of mouth amongst the people they meet in personal or general intercourse. Those who can also circulate printed announcements of the lectures should apply to Miss Vance for the same at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

Mr. Foote leads off the Stanley Hall course of lectures. His subjects are announced on the bills, in our advertisement columns, and under the head of his "Engagements" at the top of the first column of the ninth page of the *Freethinker*. Mr. Foote will be followed by Mr. Cohen, who in turn will be followed by Mr. Lloyd.

Stanley Hall is near the famous "Boston" Tavern, at the junction of Tuffnell Park-road, Fortress-road, and Junction-road. Trams pass the door from Highgate, Camden Town, and Euston-road; also an omnibus from Charing Cross. The nearest station is Kentish Town-road (Midland), which is four minutes' walk. From the North London Railway (Camden Town station) a penny tramcar passes the door. It will be seen, therefore, that the place is easily accessible. There is seating accommodation for 600, and more can be provided if necessary.

Mr. Victor Roger, one of the N. S. S. special delegates to the Rome Congress, is a man of considerable versatility. Being well known as a political and social reformer in Lambeth, it was not unnatural that some of his fellow-citizens should wish to hear an account of his travels and experiences in Italy. Mr. Roger accepted their invitation, and armed himself with some seventy beautiful lantern views of Rome, Naples, Pompeii, Florence, Venice, and Milan. With the aid of these he gave a most interesting lecture on Italy, in the fine hall of the North Lambeth Liberal and Radical Club, on Tuesday evening, February 21. There was a capital audience and the lecture was highly appreciated. Mr. Dadabai Naoroji, the well-known Oriental gentleman (the late Lord Salisbury's "black man"), did Mr. Roger the honor of going to hear him, and complimented him on the manner in which he had dealt with the subject.

The Glasgow Branch has a vocal and instrumental concert this evening (March 5) at 6.30. The fine program, from the first composers, promises a great treat. Mr. J. F. Turnbull conducts, and is to be supported by several well-known local musicians. As the price of admission to this splendid entertainment is only the proverbial "saxpence" the "house full" notice ought to go up early.

Bishop Knox, of Manchester, formerly of Birmingham, presiding at the local annual meeting of the Religious Tract Society, said that "there could be no question at all that there was an active propaganda of infidel literature," which had "become increasingly active of recent years." "Many of them, he added, "could remember the time when, if they wanted to procure such literature, they had almost to hunt for it. There were one or two shops where it could be had, but if they did not know of those shops it was exceedingly unlikely that they would come across it in the ordinary way. Now, on bookstalls and in various places, anti-Christian literature was freely and openly published." We are glad to hear the Bishop's lament. It has some justification, though not as much as he imagines. Sixpenny editions of (say) works by Huxley, Matthew Arnold, Grant Allen, and Haeckel, certainly make the Freethought of such writers more generally accessible. But this has broken down no boycott—for there never was a boycott against those writers, whose works were always obtainable at "respectable" bookshops. The boycott was always wielded against popularly written Freethought publications—and that boycott, we regret to say, is as close and vicious as ever.

Freethinkers in the West Ham district should note that the Stratford Town Hall has been engaged for three special Sunday evening lectures by Messrs. Foote, Cohen, and Lloyd, on April 23 and 30 and May 7. These meetings are being organised by the Secular Society, Limited, in co-operation with the West Ham N. S. S. Branch.

"Nemo's" letter in a recent number of the *Coventry Herald* on "Dr. Torrey and Local Ministers" was a very good one. "The most pressing need of our time," he concluded, "seems to me to be a mission to educate revivalists, and to convert them to something like decent behavior." Extracts from Dr. Torrey's utterances are given in support of this statement. Such letters as "Nemo's" are of great value to the Freethought cause.

We are still open to receive addresses of persons who might become regular subscribers to the *Freethinker* if they were fairly introduced to it. Perhaps we should say if it were fairly introduced to them. We are prepared to post free copies for six consecutive weeks to such addresses. Readers who can oblige in this direction would be doing something to counteract the disgraceful boycott against this journal. Addresses should be sent direct to "The Pioneer Press," 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

A Visit to a Church.

THE occupants of the Glasgow pulpits—in common with their *confreres* elsewhere—are largely engaged just now discussing the details, and the moral, of the Welsh Revival. It may be questioned if the clergy really grasp the moral of the present Welsh religious outburst, but at any rate in Glasgow they are busily working up their congregations in preparation for the advent, in March, of the new Savior from Wales—God's answer to modern atheistic propaganda.

Chancing to hear, however, that one at least of Scotland's spiritual guides had not succumbed to the seduction of the latest religious sensation, we wended our way, on a recent Sunday evening, to hear the Reverend Dr. Adamson, of the United Free Church of Scotland, discourse to his congregation on Secularism.

The particular church in which Dr. Adamson holds forth is situated in an aristocratic and intellectual quarter of the city of Glasgow. It stands almost within the classic shadow of the University, and we hasten to say we should be sorry to think the quality of the lecture we listened to affords any measure of the intelligence of the congregation. If so, then the Churches are the refuges of the mentally incompetent to an extent that even we could scarcely have believed possible.

On entering the church and taking a seat we were treated with courtesy by those in the immediate neighborhood. One young lady handed us her Bible, and a young lad in front furnished us at a later stage with his hymn-book. Your correspondents are right. They do study the social side in the churches. But—though it may sound ungracious—we cannot but reflect that had we been obviously poverty-stricken and in rags we would hardly have received the like attention.

The opening psalm was by way of being appropriate to the subject for the evening, and must have had an encouraging effect on any Secularists present. There were some present. The psalm was the fourteenth of David (the thirteenth according to the Roman version), beginning, "The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God." And it was gratifying and comforting to be mellifluously and harmoniously assured that they who live without God are become corrupt and abominable in their ways; that their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; that their feet are swift to shed blood, and that there is none that doeth good, no not one. All of which is a fine sample of Biblical veracity.

Then the prayer was "put up." We never listen to that bombastic performance—extempore prayer—in a Protestant church without feeling that the Church of Rome evinces a modicum of wisdom in dispensing with the vernacular and rigidly insisting on a set form of words in her Divine worship. Apostrophes to the Deity couched in redundant periods, strung together more or less coherently and amplified at the sweet will of the officiating clergyman, would sound less absurd in a foreign language. Especially if you were ignorant of the language.

And what an amount of superfluous information is offered to God by the average Protestant clergyman! One would imagine he was addressing Infinite Ignorance instead of Infinite Knowledge. Clearly it should be unnecessary in prayer to inform God—with or without clerical unctuousness—that we have not made ourselves. And it is difficult to see what ethical end is served by pelting the Deity with all the complimentary superlatives in the language. Yet that sort of thing is typical of what passes for prayer in the Protestant pulpit.

Can it be that the clergyman addresses his petitions to the Great White Throne with one eye on God and the other on his human auditors? It can surely only be for his own satisfaction and for the edification of the occupants of the pews that he airs his magniloquence in the fashion so common. Any intelligent God would be long ago sick of the fulsome hypocrisy of it all. But we digress.

We were immensely tickled on the evening referred to, in view of the locality of the church and the quality of the worshipers, by the tenor of the Biblical selection which had been made for the service. Fancy reading to a gathering of people who had plainly made the most of this world those choice passages in the Sermon on the Mount that counsel Christians to lay not up to themselves treasure on earth, and to take no thought of the morrow, what they shall eat or what they shall put on. There was not a woman present, we daresay, who had not that day taken considerable thought as to what she should put on; while the majority of the men had probably desisted only a few hours previously from laying up earthly treasure to themselves, and a few hours subsequently would be whole-heartedly engaged in the same pursuit. Verily God is not mocked.

We came ultimately to the lecture. It was disappointing in every way. We had hoped to hear the case against Secularism presented with some degree of strength and skill. Instead of which we were mainly treated to a rather feeble examination of one or two passages from the writings of Charles Bradlaugh and George Jacob Holyoake. The reverend lecturer was good enough to differentiate between these two Secularists. Mr. Bradlaugh, he said, although the follower of Mr. Holyoake, had been much more daring, and had gone far beyond his one-time leader. Dr. Adamson also magnanimously allowed that the Secularism of last century had been a natural, and in some respects praiseworthy, reaction against the apathy and slothfulness of the Church at that period.

But the lecturer's knowledge of the modern Secular movement may be gauged from the fact that he asserted, not only that Bradlaugh and Holyoake had left no successors, but that Secularism is an extinct force, and there are no Atheists now in this country worth mentioning. If he would but step down to the Glasgow Secular Hall some Sunday evening he might have his eyes opened regarding the latter point. Quite recently a writer in a popular Glasgow weekly commented upon the seemingly contented attitude of the clergy, despite their knowledge that by far the greater bulk of the inhabitants of Glasgow never, or seldom, pass inside a church door. (The city's ancient motto, by the way, is "Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word.") We would say to Dr. Adamson that if he is satisfied with the prospects of Christian belief in this country, so are we. So far from Secularism and Atheism being defunct in Glasgow, they were never more alive. For one thing, whether we agree with it or not, Socialism was never so strong in Glasgow as now; and, notwithstanding some amiable nonsense about *Christian Socialism*, Socialism is, first and foremost, a secular movement.

Dr. Adamson advanced a charge against Secularism that has been made repeatedly, and has often been dealt with. He argued, in effect, that Secularism, which teaches that men and women should live according to nature, and not in accordance with any higher or supernatural law, could not logically hold any individual responsible for his actions. Secularists were therefore committed to the theory of man's complete freedom to do as he likes. But this by no means follows.

Theologians and philosophers—both amateur and professional—have of late been displaying some anxiety to attach all sorts of awkward consequences to the holding of the Determinist position. But is belief in individual irresponsibility for conduct a necessary consequence of Determinism? Or is it necessarily a tenet of Secularism that you can no more call a thief to account for stealing your watch than you can blame a table for hurting you if you run your head against it? Both the thief and the table, so Dr. Adamson argues, would be acting according to their respective natures, and would therefore be equally blameless from the point of view of Secularism.

Well, we have often seen a man display considerable anger towards an inanimate object with which

he had come into painful contact. This, Dr. Adamson would say, is unreasonable. And so it is. But it would also be unreasonable to *blame* any individual or get angry with him for acting according to his nature (for which he cannot be responsible, as he did not make it), or punish him for not rising superior to his environment—which is not under his control. Yet this is what Dr. Adamson would do, and what Dr. Adamson's God is supposed by Christians to do. Here, then, is where we differ—in the imputation and apportionment of *blame*.

Secularism says, indeed, that man is not responsible to *God* for his actions; but that does not imply that organised society is not entitled to protect itself against the inimical idiosyncrasies of the individual. Dr. Adamson, in crediting Secularism with the recognition of no other authority save natural law, surely forgets the old axiom that the first law of nature is self-preservation. We dislike the use of the term *law* when nature's methods are referred to, but in the present instance it will serve.

If, therefore, self-preservation be the first law of nature, and if Secularists live according to natural laws, it should seem that Secularism is not likely to surrender incontinently to the criminal. *Blaming* the criminal is another matter. There are many Secularists who hold that society is even more responsible to the criminal than the criminal is to society. Certainly the criminal is as much the evolutionary product of the cosmos as the clergyman is. As such he should be dealt with reasonably and scientifically. So far he has been largely left to the operations of spasmodic philanthropy and misguided religious zeal.

Dr. Adamson's confusion of thought regarding the degree of blame or responsibility attaching to those we call criminals is principally due to his adhesion to the Free Will delusion, and to his belief that moral conduct can only rest securely on a supernatural basis. Whereas our best hope for the future betterment of the human race is bound up with the truth of the Determinist doctrine, and with the belief that the well-spring of all morality has its source in the human heart.

In the course of his lecture Dr. Adamson quoted a sentence each from Thomas Paine and Professor Tyndall. In neither case can we accept the quotation as accurately reflecting the views of the respective authors. Of course, a single selected passage divorced from its context may easily be made to misrepresent a writer's attitude on any question. But we think few people who are acquainted with Paine's scathing attack on the Bible in his *Age of Reason* will readily accept the statement that he held or expressed the opinion that the modern conception of the rights of man was based upon or could be deduced from the Scriptures.

Then as regards Professor Tyndall. The lecturer cited Tyndall as having admitted that the man who dispensed with prayer suffered "material moral loss." Now, undoubtedly Tyndall recognised, as others do, a certain *subjective* value in prayer. Further than that he did not go. The passage which Dr. Adamson probably had in mind, but did not correctly repeat, occurs in Professor Tyndall's remarks on Prayer as a form of Physical Energy, and is as follows:—

"Often unreasonable, if not contemptible, prayer, in its purer forms, hints at disciplines which few of us can neglect without moral loss. But no good can come of giving it a delusive value, by claiming for it a power in physical nature" (*Fragments of Science*, page 471; 1876 edition).

It will be seen that the reverend lecturer's interpretation of Tyndall's deliverance makes that scientist appear a stronger witness for the utility of prayer than the text really warrants. And it is always well to be precise in quoting authorities.

Dr. Adamson's sneer that if we search for Atheists to-day they are to be found on the second floor of a public-house and have their London headquarters situated opposite a madhouse is almost beneath notice. It is one of those gratuitous slurs upon an

opponent that seem nowadays to be employed exclusively by *gentlemen* in black and the baser type of party politician. The pulpit is such a safe place for—shall we say hyperbole? It was his solitary attempt at the humorous, and we had looked for something better from Dr. Adamson.

G. SCOTT.

The Book of Daniel.—II.

(Continued from page 140.)

As we have already seen, the prophet Daniel claims to have lived in Babylon during the reigns of four kings—Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus—and he records certain marvellous events which he says occurred during those reigns. Now, most of these events are simply incredible, and bear all the marks of silly fabrications. Such, for instance, are the stories of Nebuchadnezzar among the beasts, of the three men in the furnace, of the hand writing on the wall, and of Daniel in the den of lions. If we ask upon what grounds we are expected to believe such tales, the answer is: we have none whatever. We have nothing but the bare word of the writer who is implied to be the prophet Daniel named in the book; to which may be added the fact that in the first century, A.D., if not earlier, the Jews themselves received the book as genuine history. The historian Josephus, for example, says of Daniel (Antiq. x. xi. 7):—

“And now he is dead, he retains a remembrance that will never fail, for the books that he wrote and left behind him are still read by us till this time; and from them we believe that Daniel conversed with God,” etc.

In the absence of all evidence, then, we have but to ask, Which is the more probable: that the supernatural events narrated in the book really occurred? or that the narratives recording such events are Jewish fictions? To this, of course, there is but one answer—the second alternative. And this conclusion receives full confirmation from Babylonian history, from which we learn that the writer of the book of Daniel knew nothing whatever about Babylonian affairs during the periods he professes to record.

In the first place, though it is but a minor point, the name of the first king named by the writer was not Nebuchadnezzar, but Nabu-kudur-usur. Jeremiah, who does not appear to have ever visited Babylon, is more correct, for he gives the name as Nebuchadrezzar.

In the next place, the author of the book did not know the names of any of the kings who reigned in Babylon between Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, and to fill up this gap he inserted the names “Belshazzar” and “Darius,” after which he fraudulently represented his hero, Daniel, as living in the reigns of these four monarchs. He says that Belshazzar reigned after his *father* Nebuchadnezzar; that “Darius the Mede” took the kingdom upon the death of Belshazzar; and that “Cyrus the Persian” followed this Darius. As a matter of history, Nebuchadnezzar was not succeeded by Belshazzar. There was no king of Babylon named Belshazzar, and there was no “Darius the Mede” who took the kingdom and reigned before Cyrus.

The following paragraph, quoted by Josephus from the Chaldean historian Berosus, contains a record of facts which were unknown to the prophet Daniel:—

“Nebuchodonosor departed this life when he had reigned forty-three years, whereupon his son Evil-Merodach obtained the kingdom. He governed public affairs after an illegal and impure manner, and had a plot laid against him by Neriglissar his sister's husband, and was slain by him when he had reigned but two years. After his death Neriglissar succeeded him in the kingdom, and reigned four years; his son Laborsarchod obtained the kingdom though he was but a child, and kept it nine months; a plot, however, was laid against him by his friends, and he was tormented to death. After his death the conspirators got together, and by common consent put the crown upon the head

of Nabonidus, a man of Babylon, and one who belonged to that insurrection” (Apion i. 20).

The foregoing statement is corroborated and proved to be substantially correct by Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions dated in the several kings' reigns. Amongst the latter are the records of a Babylonian banking firm bearing the family name of Egibi. These consist of a series of business transactions extending over several generations from the time of Nebuchadrezzar to that of the third king after Cyrus. The documents are all dated in the year of the reigning sovereign, so that the succession of kings and the lengths of their reigns can be ascertained with exactness. These all agree with the fragment of history quoted by Josephus from Berosus, save that in the latter the Greek form of the names is given. The following, then, are the kings who reigned during the period covered by the book of Daniel:—

B.C. 605...	Nabu-kudur-usur (Nebuchadrezzar)...	Reigned 43 years
„ 562...	Avil-Marduk (Evil-Merodach)	„ 2 „
„ 560...	Nergal-sar-usur (Neriglissar).....	„ 4 „
„ 555...	Labasi-Marduk (Laborsarchod)	„ 3 „
„ 555...	Nabu-nahid (Nabonidus)	„ 17 „
„ 538...	Cyrus (king of Anshan and Persia)...	„ 9 „

The great prophet and interpreter of dreams of the book of Daniel claims to have been living in Babylon during the whole of the foregoing period, yet we have proof from his own statements that he knew nothing of the kings who reigned between Nebuchadrezzar and Cyrus. Absolutely ignorant even of the names of the sovereigns, he filled up the interval with two imaginary monarchs, Belshazzar and Darius, and fraudulently concocted all the wonderful events he records. He doubtless thought he ran little risk of detection, for at the period at which he wrote (B.C. 165) nearly four centuries had elapsed since the death of Nebuchadrezzar.

Here I might bring to a conclusion the examination of the so-called historical portion of Daniel, were it not for the fact that the majority of Jews and Christians still cling to the Bible account, their faith being fortified by the perversions of unscrupulous Christian advocates who claim to have reconciled the fables narrated in the book with the historical facts recorded in the cuneiform inscriptions. Under these circumstances it will be necessary to examine some of the statements ascribed to Daniel, and compare them with Babylonian history.

First, as to Nebuchadrezzar. We have monuments and inscriptions executed by order of this king, recording the various works in which he was engaged—his fortifications, drainage, canals, erection of palaces, and repairs to and decorations of temples—but we find no record of the making or the setting up of a colossal golden image (105 feet high, and 10½ feet broad) as related in the book of Daniel, nor, of course, any mention of the prophet Daniel. Again, we know from the inscriptions that there was no interregnum in the reign of this king; tablets have been discovered dated in every year of his reign. Setting aside the story of his living with the beasts and feeding on grass, it is perfectly certain that had this monarch been deprived of his kingdom for seven years, he would never have regained it. The new occupant of the throne would not have vacated it unless compelled by force of arms to do so, and, as already stated, we have documentary proof that no such deposition and restoration ever occurred.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

LIVELY MISSIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—I have attended no less than three missions this week, and cannot refrain from letting your readers know the “blessing” experienced therein. The first was Gipsy Smith's mission at Islington, where I heard the Gipsy tell the story of his life. From his own account, it amounted to this: that the Almighty Creator and Sustainer of the Universe strained every nerve to secure the conversion of

Gipsy Smith. When that was effected he imparted the glad tidings to Jesus and the Holy Ghost, who said "Pip-pip," or words to that effect. The firm trading under the name of the Holy Trinity was then wound up, and the stock and goodwill were handed over to Gipsy Smith. So *that* was all right.

The second mission was that of Leonard Weaver, at Holloway. He was a decided improvement upon the Gipsy, and is, I should say, a sincere and likeable man. One of the speakers, whose name I do not remember, dealt faithfully with Mr. Blatchford; such relentless and devastating logic I have never heard. In reply to Mr. Blatchford's contention that there is no proof of the existence of a God, the reverend gentleman pointed out that the income of the London Missionary Society for last year was £400,000! He did not make it clear whether this was a refutation of Mr. Blatchford's contention, or whether he thought it did not matter what anyone said as long as religious organisations could still get money. The verdict of the meeting was stated by one of the speakers, and was, "The Gospel is a power of salvation unto him that believeth." This, of course, was the opinion of the sheep. The opinion of the goats was not heard.

As a wind-up to this week of grace I went to the Torrey Mission at the Albert Hall. Dr. Torrey started by reading a letter from a man who, he said, had something on his brain. Personally, I thought it was water, but the revivalist diagnosed it as "sin." The letter stated that the writer had committed so great a sin that he did not feel able to ask forgiveness of God, and asked the prayers of the audience. Apparently the man believed firmly in God both before and after committing the sin. So much for the value of Theism as an aid to morality. I think the revivalists have made a mistake in taking so large a hall—at no part of his address did Dr. Torrey hold the outlying parts of his audience. In the gallery, where I was, the people had to strain their ears to catch his words, and naturally their attention soon strayed. I only saw three people in the gallery "accept Christ"; but I was edified and amused to observe that Dr. Torrey "converted" several from among his own choir! As I was going one of the attendants said to me, "Brother, have you taken Christ?" "No," I replied; "is it a patent medicine?" And before he had recovered I walked out.

Now, Sir, would it not be a good idea for Freethinkers to attend the Albert Hall *en masse* one night, preferably a Saturday or Sunday? At all the missions I attended I sat down during the hymns and took no part in the prayers, and people looked at me as though they expected me to go off in a flash of blue flame. But the effect produced was small, for what is one amongst so many? How much greater would be the impression produced if the Freethinkers arranged to go all on the same night and into the same part of the hall, and showed their opinions by taking part in the service. I think the suggestion merits consideration.

Before I close I really cannot resist the temptation to give a choice specimen from the hymn-book. It runs thus:—

It's the old religion,
It's the old religion,
It's the old religion,
And it's good enough for me.

It was my mother's religion,
It was my mother's religion,
It was my mother's religion,
And it's good enough for me—

the object apparently being to combine the maximum of words with the minimum of meaning.

February 12, 1905.

STILL A GOAT.

A MEEK REVIVALIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—On Wednesday evening last the writer attended at the Albert Hall with the intention of asking Dr. Torrey a question relating to his statement that Agnosticism leads to immorality.

The service commenced at about 8 o'clock, when Mr. Alexander led off with a hymn, which he first called upon the choir to sing, then he sang it himself, and then he requested various sections of the audience to sing; so that it almost seemed as if that hymn was going to be sung for all eternity. However, there was no such luck for those who longed to be in glory. Dr. Torrey interrupted the discord, and, mounting the rostrum, he proceeded with his "talk." He first congratulated his audience on the excellent attendance. Then he said he had received a letter from a drunkard who pleaded to be prayed for. Dr. Torrey requested all to stand up while he prayed, and then offered up a prayer that the drunkard might have strength to keep sober. After the bustle caused by the people resuming their seats had subsided, the writer got up and, in a clear and deliberate tone of voice, asked the evangelist this question:

"Will Dr. Torrey state where, in the writings of Agnostics, immoral teachings are to be found?" All that could be distinctly heard in the gallery of the reply to this question was, "These people have come here to listen to me, not to you." Thereupon the writer, still standing, said: "You have made a public statement, Sir, that in the writings of Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, and such men, immoral teachings are to be found. I ask you where?" By this time the chief steward appeared and demanded to know whether further interruptions were contemplated; if so, the police would be called to the scene. The writer declined to give any undertaking, and the chief steward seemed disinclined to resort to force, so that the matter ended for the time being. Dr. Torrey then explained the ten commandments with illustrations, and at the end of his harangue said: "Now I want any man, woman or child who has accepted Jesus Christ to-night to stand right up where they are." There was some hesitancy on the part of would-be confessors, and then two or three rose up mechanically and received a "God bless you, sir," "God bless you, madam," "God bless you, my child," from the evangelist. He addressed the same request to people in other parts of the hall, and received about a dozen responses. Then he said: "Now I want all those people who have accepted Jesus Christ to-night to say these words after me, 'I accept Jesus Christ as my Savior, my lord, and my king.'" Finally the exalted one descended from his pedestal, and moved to leave the hall, Mr. Alexander being left to give a final display of his powers as musical director. The writer had, some few minutes previously, made his way from the gallery to take a closer view of the revivalists' antics, and seeing the chief showman making his way out of the hall, determined to meet that worthy face to face and endeavor to get a reply to the question put from the gallery. This is the dialogue that took place:—

Writer: "I am the gentleman who asked that question."

Evangelist (very excitedly, and with a sort of Torquemada fire in his eye): "You had no right to interrupt. What do you mean by coming here to interrupt my meeting?"

Writer: "You had no right to make such a statement as you did from a public platform."

Evangelist: "If you come to my meetings and interrupt again I will have the law on you. What is your name?"

Writer: "I decline to give you my name."

Evangelist: "Then you are no gentleman, and I decline to talk to you."

Writer (as evangelist turns down a corridor with several of his admirers): "But you can revile the characters of good men."

Having carried out what he considered a public duty, and feeling that he had at least given many people food for thought on the methods of a mountebank, the writer left the building, and not wishing for any cheap notoriety, subscribes himself

PRO BONO PUBLICO.

National Secular Society.

REPORT of Monthly Executive Meeting held on Thursday, February 23, the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair.

There were also present:—Messrs. J. Barry, C. Cohen, H. Cowell, F. A. Davies, W. Leat, Dr. R. T. Nichols, J. Neate, V. Roger, S. Samuels, H. Silverstein, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting was read and confirmed, monthly cash statement received and adopted. Five new members were received for the Coventry Branch.

An application was received from Cardiff for permission to form a Branch of the Society in that town. The Secretary produced the signed declarations of the intending members, and reported that the necessary requirements had been fulfilled, and permission was granted.

Correspondence from the Coventry Branch was read, and the President was asked to deal with the matter.

The Secretary reported that the sisters of the late Mr. Charles Bradlaugh had received, and acknowledged, the present (per cheque) ordered to be made to them at the last Executive meeting. It was resolved to send out the usual circular to Branches *re* the Conference Agenda, and the meeting closed.

EDITH M. VANCE Secretary.

Men deceive themselves in this, that they think themselves free. Now, in what consists such an opinion? Solely in this, that they are conscious of their actions, and ignore the causes that determine them. The idea that men have of their liberty comes, then, from this, that they know not the cause of their actions, for to say that these depend on the will is to use words to which no meaning is attached.—*Spinoza.*

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.

STANLEY HALL (Junction-road, Upper Holloway): 7, G. W. Foote, "Is There a Future Life?"

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, Religious Freethought Parliament: G. Viggers, "Christianity and Progress"; 7.30, Conversazione for Members and Friends.

FULHAM ETHICAL SOCIETY (Fulham Palace-road Council Schools): 7, G. E. O'Dell, "Sorts of Religion."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, W. Gregory, "By the Waters of Babylon."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 5, Tea and Social. Thursday, March 9, at 8, Coffee House, Bull Ring, H. Lennard, "Some Criticisms on a Narrow Materialism."

FAIRSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, J. Shufflebotham, "Secular Education v. Passive Resistance."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class. Open Discussion; 6.30, Instrumental Concert.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): 6.30, J. Blair Smith, "Individualism and Collectivism."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Twenty-fourth anniversary of the opening of the hall.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, H. Percy Ward, "The Revolution in Russia"; 7, "Do We Believe?" Monday at 8, Rationalist Debating: "Should the Drink Traffic be a Free Trade?" Affirmative, W. C. Schweizer; Negative, Alex. C. Wilson.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, R. Parkes, "Hobbies: How to Select and Enjoy Them." Lantern Views.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, George Berrisford, "Christianity: Its Origin and Evidences."

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

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