

# THE Freethinker

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*Do right, not to deny yourself, but because you love yourself, and because you love others. Be generous, because it is better for you. Be just, because any other course is the suicide of the soul.*—INGERSOLL.

## The Underground Movement.

THIS is not to be an article on earthquakes and volcanoes. I am not an expert on such questions. What I want to write about is the underground movement of thought where open propaganda is impossible or at least extremely difficult. For a long time in Germany the Social Democratic movement was carried on in spite of stern repressive laws. It was driven below the surface but it was not destroyed; on the contrary, it gained new life and vigor, for every adherent became a missionary. The revolutionary movement in Russia has been entirely subterranean—and it has honeycombed the nation from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Pamphlets and leaflets had to be printed surreptitiously or smuggled into the country from abroad, and distributed quietly and carefully, with Siberia waiting for a single mistake. Even the printed propaganda was often impossible. The only alternative then was propaganda by conversation. That went on wherever two men could talk out of earshot of the police. And the result is—what we see.

Here in Great Britain the law and the police do not stop the propaganda of Freethought. But we have everything short of that against us. The Churches, the public press, "respectable" society, and all vested interests, try to frown or boycott us out of existence. We may smile at the frown, we may despise and defy it; but the boycott is a very solid obstruction. The press boycotts us, booksellers and newsagents boycott us. All the machinery of publicity is used for our enemies and against ourselves. I know there is a comparatively free market for sixpenny reprints of advanced books of a non-inflammatory character; books which had their vogue in educated circles, and did most of their work, a good many years ago. Such books are useful as far as they find fresh circles of readers as well as purchasers. But they are not, and cannot be, the vital propaganda of the day and hour.

Look for a moment at the press in relation to my Torrey pamphlets. The *Clarion* handsomely reprinted the one on "Dr. Torrey and the Infidels," and there was a brief reference to the other in *Reynolds'*. With those exceptions, as far as I am aware, the press has remained absolutely silent as to Dr. Torrey's abominable defamation of Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. As far as the newspapers are concerned, he may lie about great dead Freethinkers with perfect impunity.

Look next at our lectures. How seldom do the newspapers take any notice of our biggest meetings. I have seen a Birmingham Town Hall meeting dismissed with a few lines, or none at all, while half a column has been devoted to some insignificant orthodox gathering. Then look at the *Freethinker*. More honest brain work is put into it than into the vast majority of journals, but let the writing be ever so good, it must never be noticed. There is a tacit agreement that it is not to be mentioned. But that

is far from being the worst. That might be borne with a shrug and a smile. It is the trade boycott that does the greatest damage. Wholesale agents like Smith & Son will not supply the *Freethinker* in any circumstances; the bulk of the retail newsagents will not get it for their customers, or will not keep it on sale; every conceivable difficulty is put in the way of those who want to obtain it; and the result is that its circulation is not a half or a third of what it would be if it had a fair field and no favor.

I appeal to Freethinkers to fight the boycott by all the means in their power. Let them accept the present situation, since it cannot immediately be altered, and do their best in spite of it. Let them try the underground propaganda. Every one of them can do something. First of all, they should endeavour to get new readers for this paper. They can pass their own weekly copy into other hands when they have done with it, or they can buy an extra copy (or more) and pass it round directly it is published. They can order this paper through the newsagent who supplies them with other periodicals, and threaten to take all their custom elsewhere if he raises an objection. They can provide themselves with cheap pamphlets and leaflets, and distribute these wherever the opportunity occurs. Let them all become missionaries. If they can do nothing else but talk, let them do that. In the course of conversation with friends or acquaintances, or with strangers in trains, tramcars, omnibuses, or elsewhere, let them put in a word every time they can for Freethought. And if they can also manage, at the finish, to plant a bit of Freethought literature, so much the better. Sometimes it will live and grow, and bear fruit and seed in after days.

Freethinkers are not as active as they should be in inducing Christians to listen to a Freethought lecture. Now that we have so many "free" meetings in London there is no excuse for such inactivity. I feel sure that they could bring along some Christians to the meetings if they tried. Why don't they? Some of them do not care to be known as Freethinkers, for business or domestic reasons; but this is far from applying to all, and an effort should really be made in the direction I have indicated.

I am constantly receiving letters from readers of the *Freethinker* who have only recently become acquainted with it. Some of them say that they caught sight of it by accident, some that it was brought to their notice by a stranger, some that it was introduced to them by a friend. Some say they did not know that such a paper existed. I have known a man find a copy left in the train, read it, begin thinking, and go on reading fresh numbers purchased with his own money until he became an out-and-out "infidel."

These facts should encourage Freethinkers to continue if they have begun, and to begin if they have not attempted, the underground propaganda. It is their best means—I believe it is their only means—of fighting the boycott and the conspiracy of silence against their cause. What they can do in this way is beyond the power of mere money to achieve. Thousands of pounds spent in advertising would not be a tenth part as effective as their individual and unbought efforts.

G. W. FOOTE.

### The Future of Religion.

IT is the easiest thing in the world to offer a forecast of the future of religion, and it is necessarily difficult to quite disprove such predictions. The ease of the performance and the difficulty of the disproof are, I imagine, responsible for the number of prophecies one comes across, although there are, fortunately, some forecasts that one reads with pleasure and instruction. But in truth our knowledge of psychology, individual and social, is not yet exact enough for us to say with any great degree of certainty what the future of religion will be like. The vitality of error is remarkable, and beliefs, particularly those connected with the more primitive side of human nature, have an unfortunate habit of reasserting their influence in spite of the progress of civilisation. About the only thing we can be tolerably sure of in this connection is that supernaturalism, as such, will continue its decline. The forces against supernaturalism are to-day too widespread, too much bound up with the social structure, and therefore too powerful to be suppressed. But although religion rests on supernaturalism yet the decay of the latter does not mean that organised religion will disappear at the same rate. What is far more likely to take place is a certain humanising of religious beliefs which, while toning down their supernaturalistic aspects, will succeed in perpetuating a great many of the social ills inflicted by religion upon the community.

In an attractively written shilling booklet *Religion: A Criticism and a Forecast*, Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson has raised rather than discussed the question of the future of religion, and while there does not seem to be much room for doubt as to Mr. Dickinson's own religious belief—or rather lack of it—his essay is scarcely a criticism of religion in its fundamentals. Neither the belief in a future life nor in a God—which are the really two fundamental forms of religious belief are subjected to criticism, although there is a plea that these, in common with other beliefs, should be brought to the common test of experience. Still, an essay that discusses the value of ecclesiastical organisation and the validity of revelations does not furnish so complete a survey of the field as one would wish. This is the more regrettable as Mr. Dickinson announces that the object of his essay is to raise, definitely and unequivocally, the question of the relation of religion to knowledge." The object is a laudable one and a necessary one. It is quite time that some really serious effort were made to show the exact relation of religious ideas to present knowledge. In journals like the *Freethinker* this is, of course, done; but the fact of their being definitely Freethought organs discounts them with the religious world. Outside such journals there are numerous works, usually both bulky and expensive, which show clearly enough the origin and nature of religious belief; but these stop short at affiliating such studies to current religion, and so the average reader misses what is their chief value. The need is for someone in authority to bring together the results of the last fifty years of scientific research and to show how Christianity is a veritable product of primitive religious beliefs which are now known to rest upon a basis of misconception and misunderstanding, and to make plain the further and all-important fact that Christianity can have no greater authority or validity than the earlier beliefs from which they spring. As it is there are multitudes who read works on anthropology and the like, without ever dreaming of relating their reading to their religious beliefs.

Perhaps the best chapter in Mr. Dickinson's book is the first, on *Ecclesiasticism*, by which he means religion as embodied in an organisation claiming to be the depository of a truth not otherwise accessible to human reason. Dr. Dickinson says rightly that at present religion derives a great deal of its support not from the conviction that it is true, but that it is necessary. This is the only theory that will really

account for so many people, setting on one side those animated by self-interest, continuing to lend their support to current religion. Like Lord Eldon, they are not pillars of the Church, but buttresses. They prop it up from the outside; and their support is dictated by the feeling, not usually thought out, that in some way Christianity serves a useful function in contemporary civilisation. One might even compile a fairly lengthy list of utterances from preachers and writers who frankly commend Christianity on this ground. If Christianity is not true, they say it is at least very useful; therefore, let us pretend that we believe it to be true. Hypocrisy is thus circulated as an aid to morality; the simplest of the intellectual virtues renounced in the name of righteousness. There need be little wonder that religious belief is so seldom allied with a perfectly healthy character. Those who commence by recommending a belief on account of its utility while deliberately refraining from any inquiry as to its truth, are certain ere long to favor known falsity for the same reason.

Against this theory Mr. Dickinson makes a very forceful reply. And his reply is made the stronger by his granting, too readily perhaps, much that is urged in favor of the Churches as civilising influences. But when all has been said that may be said on behalf of the Church it remains true that "if it has preached peace, it has also filled the world with war; if it has saved life, it has also destroyed it; if it has raised the spirit, it has also degraded it; if it has kindled the intelligence, it has also extinguished it. Deliberately and in cold blood, in pursuance of a policy, it has tortured the souls and burnt the bodies of men. Deliberately it has struck at the root of virtue by evoking and fostering slavish fear and desire, by promising a material heaven and threatening a material hell. Deliberately it has arrested, so far as it could, the nascent growth of science, and thwarted the only activity by which man may alleviate his temporal lot, and set himself free for the triumphs of the mind and the spirit."

What Mr. Dickinson says on the question of revelation is well put so far as it goes, although it is accompanied by a quite needless apology for hurting the feelings of religious individuals. Criticism is either legitimate or it is not. If it is not, then Mr. Dickinson's book is out of place. And if criticism is legitimate, an apology is needless, if not harmful. Freethinkers really ought to rid themselves of the habit of apologising to religious people for criticising their beliefs as though they were something too valuable and too sacred to be so treated. No one dreams of apologising for criticising literary, scientific, or political opinions, and it is difficult to see why a different procedure should be adopted with religion. It is true that religious people look for such an apology, but the sooner they cure themselves of this expectation the better. And Freethinkers will be doing both their own cause and the religious world a service by dropping all such unnecessary apologies, and criticising religion as though—which is actually the case—they were simply exercising a right that belongs to all civilised individuals.

One may also offer a word of criticism of Mr. Dickinson's use of the word "religion." He believes that there will be a religion in the future, even though it eliminates Churches, the belief in revelation, and even the belief in God and the soul. To get this he of course defines religion in a sense different to the generally accepted one. Religion, he defines as "a reaction of the imagination upon the world as we conceive it in the light of truth and of the ideal." And he has a somewhat fanciful differentiation of science from religion. Truth, he says, is a matter of science, religion of imagination and feeling. One need only try to picture scientific work being carried on without imagination, or to attempt to divorce feeling and intellect to see how purely artificial is such a distinction. As a matter of fact, the history of science shows the exercise of a wider and more powerful imagination than was ever exercised by religion, and the same is equally true

of the creation of the ideal. But our feeling, our imagination, our ideals, must be conditioned by science if they are to be truly serviceable.

No one can question Mr. Dickinson's *right* to define religion in a new sense; or, rather, to take a certain aspect of human activity and call that religion if he feels so inclined; but one can point out its inadvisability. After all, religion has, historically, always meant something very different to what Mr. Dickinson means by it, and does still mean something different to all who are not specially concerned in clinging to the old name while rejecting all that it properly connotes. If anyone speaks of Mr. John Smith as being a religious man, we all understand that he has some sort of a belief about God, about a future life, and similar things, not that he is a believer in some elaborate moral code or a preacher of lofty ideals. And if anyone speaks of someone else as non-religious, we do not understand by the phrase that he has given up believing in honesty, or chastity, or any other of the virtues, but simply that he has none of the special beliefs mentioned above.

What, then, is the justification for clinging to a word which to the overwhelming majority connotes all the special ideas that Mr. Dickinson obviously regrets? There is none at all so far as I can see, except the feeling of dislike against being called non-religious. And here, again, in giving way to this the Freethinker is standing in the way of the development of his own cause. For reasons traceable to the conditions of primitive life the man without religious belief has been looked upon as more or less of an enemy to human welfare, and it is hoped to evade this odium by asserting that we have a *religion* minus supernaturalism. In my opinion it is better to frankly accept the description of non-religious, and at the same time to demonstrate that all the valuable aspects of life can exist with even greater strength in the absence of religious beliefs. Evil communications corrupt good manners, and there is nothing that so threatens the sanity of our mental lives as the use of words with inseparable evil associations. As Freethinkers our aim should be to transfer to science, to ethics, to life, all those feelings and ideals that have been *accidentally* associated with religion, and upon the strength of which accidental association religion, in a civilised country, lives. By so doing we shall be stripping a sham of all disguise, making plain the issue, and so hasten the inevitable end.

C. COHEN

### "The Inspiration of the New Testament."

IN one form or another, the Inspiration of the Bible is a subject which has often been considered in the lectures on Apologetics delivered, from time to time, at the Central Hall, Manchester. The Ven. Archdeacon Wilson, Professor Peake, Dr. Adeney, and the Rev. A. L. Humphries, M.A., discussed it in the first series, while in the second, it has already been taken up by Professors Moorhouse and Moulton, and the Rev. Dr. D. W. Forrest. From this it is legitimate to infer that the topic is regarded as one of great importance and difficulty. Its importance to the theologians and the Churches is self-evident, and its difficulty, judging by these lectures, is, at least, no less manifest. This week we propose to review Professor Moulton's lecture on "The Inspiration of the New Testament."

The first impressive feature of Professor Moulton's lecture is its exceeding candor. He admits at the outset that in the estimation of many Christians he is little better than an open Infidel. Dr. Torrey, for example, would doubtless pronounce him a great deal worse. This is how the Professor begins:—

"I have one serious difficulty in setting about my task. My main concern is with those of you who either disbelieve outright, or feel grave hesitation in believing, that there is any divine authority in the documents on which Christian teaching rests. But if I come out into the open to wage friendly conflict with

you, I am well aware that I have behind me a great army not all of whom will support me, and some may even consider my position little better than yours. The fact is that for seventeen or eighteen centuries the New Testament has held so supreme a position in the hearts of Christians that doctrines about it have grown up which have no warrant in the Book itself."

On this point every Freethinker is in full agreement with the sentiment expressed in that extract. Professor Moulton is a literary critic of some eminence, and with his critical deliverances we have no fault whatever to find. His critical candor compels him to make many concessions which cannot but prove fatal to any doctrine of Inspiration. It leads him to admit that the New Testament is "a perfectly human" book, fallible, containing many mistakes, and exhibiting all the limitations of the human intellect. Indeed, as far as critical questions are concerned, the Professor is justly looked upon as an Infidel. That is to say, he admits the accuracy of the data upon which Freethought builds its sceptical conclusions.

But in conjunction with this literary candor Professor Moulton makes a constant display of his theological prepossessions. He occupies a half-way house between Orthodoxy and Freethought, and sneers at such men as Dr. Torrey, Dean Wace, the Rev. Preb. Webb-Peploe, and all the Bible Leaguers and others who share their views, and he sneers at such men as Mr. Blatchford, Mr. Foote, and Mr. John M. Robertson. Common sense is found alone at the half-way house. Midway between Orthodoxy and Infidelity alone lies the truth. And yet Professor Moulton is in close touch with both extremes. Theologically, he is with the orthodox; but critically he takes sides with the enemy. In other words, he is a half-way-house Christian, looking sympathetically both behind and before.

He vigorously plants his foot on the ground and exclaims, "I occupy the purely common-sense platform." Let us see whether he does or not. He has already told us that the New Testament is "a perfectly human" production, a statement in which we heartily concur. But he adds a sentiment with which we are totally out of sympathy. He maintains that the Bible is "absolutely human and absolutely divine, as we believe Jesus Christ to be." Suppose we substitute "wholly" for "absolutely," which would be etymologically quite permissible. But if the Bible is "wholly" human it cannot possibly be anything else. Then the statement that it is "absolutely human and absolutely divine" is a tautology, because the human and the divine must be identical, the divine being an invisible duplicate of the human. Of course this is not what Professor Moulton means; but this is undoubtedly the meaning of his language etymologically construed. If Jesus Christ and the Bible are at once "absolutely human and absolutely divine," it follows that there neither is nor can be any difference between the human and the divine.

Professor Moulton appeals to common sense. So do we. Does not Professor Moulton believe that God is a supernatural being? And is not the supernatural also superhuman? Hence, if the Bible is an absolutely divine book, does it not follow that it is also supernatural and superhuman? To be "absolutely divine" means to be clothed with absolutely divine attributes, or to be on an equality with God. Furthermore, to be on an equality with God is to be infallible. Whatever is "absolutely divine" must be absolutely like God in every respect. Consequently, one is not guilty of uttering nonsense when one claims that an "absolutely divine" book must be "miraculously dictated by an infallible God," although one may be tempted to suggest that Professor Moulton does utter something uncommonly like sheer nonsense when he declares that the same book may be "absolutely human and absolutely divine." On the face of it the claim is preposterous.

Professor Moulton waxes hilariously sarcastic while dealing with Mr. Samuel Laing's suggestion

as to the way in which God might have imparted his words to men. This is how the theologian pokes fun at this champion of science:—

"He [God] might have assigned an angel to every one of us at our birth, whose work it should be to instruct us in unmistakable English on all the great problems of life and conduct and belief. The angel could hold a perpetual 'open conference' with us, answering with infallible certainty every question we could ask, and reading in our thoughts the nature of every difficulty we might feel. What a beautiful world that would be! No quarrels between Liberal and Conservative, Protestant and Catholic, Arminian and Calvinist, Socialist and Individualist; every man his own 'universal provider,' who will deliver the whole truth about anything, ready-made and free of charge, at his own mental door! Verily it is a pity that some of us were not consulted when the Laws of Nature were first set going!"

The banter is harmless, and may be excused. It is doubtless true that "a world in which there can be no differences of opinion on any subject must be a very dull world"; and yet Professor Moulton holds that the opinions he enunciates about the New Testament are the only opinions sanctioned by common sense. Is he not aware that the object of Mr. Laing's suggestion was to render the orthodox view of the Bible ridiculous in the eyes of all sensible people? Professor Moulton himself ridicules the same view; but to ridicule it, as he does, in the interest of progressive theology is allowable, while to ridicule it in the interest of Freethought is akin to a crime. But ridicule, while often very serviceable to a cause, cannot be construed into an argument. What we insist upon knowing is how a book which is admitted to be "absolutely human," can at the same time be also "absolutely divine." Dr. Torrey's position is at least intelligible. To him the Bible is "an absolutely divine" book; but he scornfully repudiates the view that it is also "absolutely human." We know quite well what an "absolutely human" book is like. But Professor Moulton either cannot, or omits to, tell us what it means for a book to be "absolutely divine."

Professor Moulton says that "God can only speak to us in our own language." Granted; but the point is how to identify the speaker. How do you know that it is God who speaks? It is easy to say that "only when God became Man, a perfect Man, could we understand him," and that "when the teaching of that Man was to be handed down to those who should afterwards tread his earth, the record must speak with human voice or it would be no more to us than the fabled music of the spheres." But, surely, a perfect man does not differ essentially from all other men. He may be better, and nobler, and more original; but if he is a perfect man he must be "absolutely human"; and if he is absolutely human he cannot be absolutely anything else. Granted that Jesus was a perfect character, a faultless example, a universal ideal, the very highest of men, which of course, Freethinkers do not grant; still, even on that supposition, you would not be justified in pronouncing him superhuman. You admit that before he came God was unknown, and "we could not understand him"; but by what earthly right, then, do you call Jesus God? If you did not know God before, how can you recognise God in him? You call him the image of the invisible God; but the invisible can have no image, or if it could you would have no means of verifying the truth of the image.

"Absolutely" is a favorite adverb with Professor Moulton. He accepts the New Testament as "absolutely and for all time true." But what does he mean by "true"? On several points that are susceptible of proof he admits that the statements of the book are or may be wrong; but on points that are not capable of proof he claims that they are "absolutely and for all time true." You cannot prove the Virgin Birth, and the same can be said of the Resurrection. You cannot prove that Jesus is God, because you do not know what God is; and yet on all these high points Professor Moulton declares that the New Testament is "absolutely and for all

time true." He believes it to be true because he has been trained from childhood so to do, just exactly as Mohammedans and Buddhists believe their sacred books to be true. All true scholars are Christians, while all Secularists are mere amateurs, who speak and write from ignorance and inveterate prejudice. Such is the sum and substance of the latter half of the Professor's lecture.

It is indeed marvellous to what lengths of absurdity a Christian will go in defence of his faith. Professor Moulton gives us a re-hash of the argument from the success of Christianity in the world, finishing up, of course, with "the miracle of changed lives." But the most conspicuous feature of Christianity has ever been and is now its colossal failure. That a religion spreads is no proof that it is a success, except, perhaps, as a going commercial concern. We do not deny that Christianity has done good; but even the fact that a religion has done genuine good is no proof whatever that its fundamental doctrines are true, or that the book in which it is enshrined is absolutely divine. Buddhism and Mohammedanism have done good; but the good done by them does not prove their divinity. It would be more accurate, however, to say that people who were Buddhists, Mohammedans, or Christians have been of service to their fellow-beings. Religion, pure and simple, has never been a reforming force in society. People who were religious have often brought about gigantic reforms; but they did it in the strength of their superior humanity, not because of the religion which they professed.

Professor Moulton is convinced that if Christianity were to die out the world would soon become a veritable hell. But is not the world a veritable hell just now while Christianity is in the midst of it as the Perfect Religion? Are the working-classes in Paradise? Has the ever-increasing army of the unemployed pitched its camp in heaven? It is sheer mockery to say that Christianity has transformed the world. As even the present Bishop of Carlisle admitted, only a few months ago, as reported in the Press, Christianity must be looked upon as a stupendous failure. The success of the Bible and Missionary Societies proves nothing except that when able and zealous men undertake any mission more or less success is bound to crown their labors. Some missionaries have left their mark beneficially upon savage races, but they would have done the same, and done it more effectually, without Christianity. The men who have achieved victories in the service of humanity have been men of exceptionally strong and magnetic personalities, who were bound, irrespective of their religion, to have left the people among whom they tarried better than they found them.

There is a *something* in the Bible, says Professor Moulton, which is not in any other book in the world. But had he been brought up in Turkey he would have said precisely the same thing about the Koran. As an Englishman and a Christian minister, the Professor is incapable of doing justice to other Bibles. He has never read and studied them as he has his own. He is a biased witness, and his evidence is vitiated. After all said and done, his being a Christian, and an advocate of the Bible, is a pure accident.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Book of Daniel.—III.

(Continued from p. 156.)

WE come next to the Babylonian king who is called "Belshazzar." This imaginary monarch, who is named as the successor of Nebuchadnezzar, is represented in the most unmistakable terms as the latter king's son. Thus, we are told that Belshazzar ordered vessels to be brought "which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple at Jerusalem" (v. 2); the queen in speaking to Belshazzar says "the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father"

(v. 11); Belshazzar addressing Daniel asks "Art thou that Daniel.....whom the king *my father* brought out of Judah" (v. 13); Daniel in his reply says "The Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar *thy father* the kingdom.....And thou, *his son*, O Belshazzar hast not humbled thine heart" (v. 18, 22). It is perfectly clear, then, according to the book of Daniel, that between the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, the Babylonian throne was occupied by a king named Belshazzar who was the son, if not the immediate successor, of Nebuchadnezzar. As a matter of history, however, the kingdom during this period was governed by three sovereigns, Evil-Merodach, Neriglissar, and Nabonidus, the last-named monarch being succeeded by Cyrus. The fictitious character of the book is thus clearly apparent, and such being the case, Christian apologists are called to the rescue. Since Daniel mentions a Belshazzar, a Belshazzar must be found; history must be distorted to support the credibility of the Hebrew scriptures. The Belshazzar of the book of Daniel was the king in whose reign Babylon passed to the rule of the "Medes and Persians," an event which points to the Babylonian monarch Nabonidus or Nabonidus. The latter king must therefore change his name. We are to understand, then, that when Daniel says "In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar" (viii. 1) he meant "In the third year of the reign of Nabonidus." But Daniel's Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, while Nabonidus was in no way related to that king. The change of name, therefore, does not go far towards reconciling the Bible fiction with history. Again, in the book of Daniel, the last evening in the reign of this Belshazzar is stated to be that of the impious feast when the mysterious hand wrote something upon one of the palace walls. "In that night," says the writer, "Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain, and Darius the Mede received the kingdom." In other words, Nabonidus was feasting in fancied security in his palace in Babylon when he was surprised by the army of Darius, and was slain "that night." Now, as simple matters of history, Nabonidus was not feasting in Babylon when that city was taken by a hostile army; he was not slain on the day (or night) when Babylonia passed from his rule; the city was not captured by "Darius the Mede," neither did this Darius "receive the kingdom." Babylon surrendered without a battle; the city opened its gates to the general of Cyrus before that king came to the city; it was Cyrus himself who "received the kingdom." The empire of Babylonia was not "given to the Medes and Persians"; there was no nation known as "the Medes"; Cyrus was king of Anshan, which Professor Sayce identifies with Elam. Nabonidus fled from Babylon on June 14, two days before that city was occupied by the army of Cyrus, and he died in prison on October 11 following.

In his account of the fall of Babylon the author of the book of Daniel followed Zenophon's unhistorical *Cyropædia*, in which romance the name of the Babylonian king was not mentioned. Knowing nothing of Babylonian history, the author of Daniel had to invent a name, and selected that of "Belshazzar." There is one point, however, in connection with the latter name which it is necessary also to mention. From some of the inscriptions of Nabonidus we learn that that king had two sons, Bel-sar-usur and Nabu-kudur-usur. Upon the discovery of the first of these names on the tablets Christian advocates waxed jubilant. The book of Daniel was now proved to be correct; Belshazzar was a historical character after all. Just so; there were, no doubt, scores of men in ancient Babylonia who rejoiced in the name of "Bel-sar-usur," but the Belshazzar of the book of Daniel is stated to have been king of Babylon and son of Nebuchadnezzar, while the son of Nabonidus was neither the one nor the other. We have proof conclusively both from royal inscriptions and dated contract tablets that Nabonidus's son never ascended the throne or was in any way recognised as king. Even were we to assume, as is now contended by

certain Christian advocates, that the historical Bel-sar-usur was associated in the government with his father, this fact would in no way affect the account in the book of Daniel; for in that fiction Belshazzar is represented as sole king of Babylon, and Daniel clearly knows of no other. We are told of visions seen in "the first year of Belshazzar, *king of Babylon*," and of visions in "the third year of the reign of *king Belshazzar*," as well as of the "great feast" which "Belshazzar *the king* made to a thousand of his lords." The writer, beyond all doubt, knew nothing of the actual reigning king, Nabonidus, and nothing of any historical event of that king's reign. The stories of the "impious feast" and of the handwriting upon the wall are thus seen to be silly Jewish fictions.

We next come to "Darius the Mede" who is stated to have succeeded Belshazzar as king of Babylon (Dan. v. 30, 31; ix. i). It was this Darius, who according to the story, appointed three presidents over the kingdom, Daniel being one, and who later on caused that prophet to be cast into the den of lions. Now, as one of the facts of history which have recently been placed beyond all doubt, it was Cyrus who conquered Babylon and who reigned over that kingdom immediately after Nabonidus. The Darius of the book of Daniel is purely mythical. There were, we know, three kings of the name of Darius who ruled over Babylonia and Persia; but they all reigned subsequent to Cyrus. The succession after Nabonidus to the first Darius is as follows:—

B.C. 538.....	Cyrus.....	Reigned	9 years
,, 529.....	Cambyses .....	,,	7 ,,
,, 522.....	Bardes .....	,,	1/2 ,,
,, 521.....	Darius I. ....	,,	35 ,,

The author of the book of Daniel had, no doubt heard of a Darius who had been king of Persia, but having no knowledge of Babylonian or Persian history, he made his Darius the immediate predecessor of Cyrus, and then boldly represented his hero, Daniel, as living in this mythical king's reign. To reconcile the Bible story with history Christian apologists are once more called to the front. According to these defenders, we are to understand that when Daniel said "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus" he meant "In the first year of Cyaxares the son of Astyages." We are thus asked to believe that Daniel did not know the name of the king who appointed him president over the kingdom, who upon one occasion passed a sleepless night when the prophet was in the den of lions, and who published a proclamation commanding all men to fear the God of Daniel. But, as a matter of history, the Cyaxares mentioned (assuming him to have been a historical personage) had nothing to do with the capture of Babylon, and never reigned "over the realm of the Chaldeans." It is established beyond all controversy by inscriptions, as well as by historians, that Cyrus himself, and no other, reigned over Babylonia immediately after Nabonidus, and that no king named Cyaxares or Darius occupied the throne before him. A governor, or civil magistrate, named Gobryas was placed in authority over the city of Babylon by Cyrus; but no one living in Babylonia at that time could have imagined this governor to be king, least of all Daniel who was himself a president like Gobryas. Yet this is precisely the line the latest attempt at reconciliation is now taking. It is contended that Daniel mistook the governor of Babylon for the ruling sovereign, and that "Darius the king" who issued an edict "unto all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth" was Gobryas, the temporary governor appointed by Cyrus.

To bring to a conclusion this portion of the subject, I need only say that the most direct and complete answer to the apologetic misrepresentations respecting the mythical kings, Belshazzar and Darius, is furnished by the Egibi contract tablets already mentioned, which give us the names and the length of the reigns of all the kings who ruled over Babylonia from Nebuchadnezzar to Darius I. These are perfectly conclusive, apart

from all other evidence. We have tablets dated in forty-three successive years of the reign of Nebuchadrezzar, tablets dated in two years of Evil Merodach, in four years of Neriglissar, in one year of Laborsoarchod, in seventeen years of Nabonidus, in nine years of Cyrus, in seven years of Cambyses, and in thirty-five years of Darius Hystaspes. Further evidence is unnecessary. There cannot, then, be the smallest shadow of a doubt as to the character of the narratives in the book of Daniel. They are, one and all, pure unadulterated fiction.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

## Acid Drops

The Salvation Army has been having its annual Self-Denial Week. Two lots of Salvationists hammered at our front door on the same day soliciting contributions. It was easy to see who were expected to do the self-denial. The public thought it was to be done by the Army. The Army thinks it should be done by the public. And when they apply at *our* door it is pretty broad cadging.

General Booth is off on another nice trip. He is bound for Australia, but intermediate places are to be visited on the way. "I land at Jaffa," he said at Exeter Hall, before leaving, "where, you know, Simon the tanner lived. I hope to look on Bethlehem and hear, in spirit, the angels' song. I want to see Olivet, where my Master wept over the city. I shall go down the Red Sea and pass the place where the Israelites passed over it dry-shod." What a wonder he did not say that he meant to have one of Pharaoh's chariot wheels fished up—and exhibited!

"Give me capital and give me time," shouted General Booth at that Exeter Hall meeting, "and I will reclaim the submerged Tenth of all Christendom." More swelled head! He hasn't saved the submerged tenth of a single London slum yet.

Yankee Torrey and Welsh Roberts are not to monopolise the glory of revivalism. A rival has started up in Devonshire. His name is Robert Perring, and he is a farmer, of Woodford, near Kingsbridge. Hitherto he has been a quiet, staid, and rather reserved person, but the Lord has roused him up, and he has taken to conducting revival meetings. According to his own account of the matter, which is all we have to go by, the Lord has been spending most of his time at nights lately in talking to him; and he declares that he has been selected to do for England what Evan Roberts has done for Wales. "I believe," he says, "the Lord is going to use me mightily." How soon these people suffer from swelled head! If there be a God, and he has anything to do, he will do it as easily without Robert Perring as with him. But this is an idea that never occurs to the swelled-head brigade.

Farmer Perring's message to the Free Churches is very simple—"Prepare for a mission and send for me." He doesn't say anything about the £2 a day, *à la* Evan Roberts, for expenses; but we suppose it is included, all the same.

Evan Roberts's week's silence was duly broken. He said 'good morning' to his host, and when the household assembled he announced that he had been in fierce conflict, and had to contend with all the powers of earth and hell. Swelled head again! If he goes on in this way he will soon want a hat like a beer barrel.

It is pretty certain that all the powers of earth and hell are not concerned about the doings of Evan Roberts. He may think they are, but that kind of idea is common in churches—and lunatic asylums. Even the great St. Paul, who was a singular mixture of good sense and mad extravagance, called himself the chief of sinners—which he knew very well he was not, only it flattered his self-conceit to fancy so. No doubt he felt that, being a sinner, he ought to be the biggest one, as there was a distinction even in that. Many a microcephalous, many a hydrocephalous, fool has fancied the same since. Of course the feeling at the bottom of it is a theme for comedy. It was beautifully satirised by James Thomson ("B. V.") in the following epigram:—

Once in a saintly passion  
I cried with desperate grief,  
"O Lord, my heart is black with guile,  
Of sinners I am chief!"

Then stooped my guardian angel,  
And whispered from behind,  
"Vanity, my little man!  
You're nothing of the kind!"

It takes a very big man to be the biggest sinner on earth. Little people may be bad sinners; they cannot be big ones.

Dr. Torrey's last day's mission at the Cannon-street Hotel was marked by what the newspapers call "disorder." The usual audience of the already converted was present, with a sprinkling of curiosity-mongers. In the course of his address the serio-comic revivalist, who has a great fund of unconscious humor, said that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was "a scientific, demonstrated fact." He repeated the statement several times—for this is one of his cheap tricks of rhetoric. Suddenly a gentleman in the gallery behind him challenged the proposition. "What evidence have you for that statement?" he asked. Dr. Torrey turned upon him with Christo-Yankee politeness, remarking, "I am here to speak, not you. What is your name?" The gentleman declined to give it; whereupon Dr. Torrey turned to the audience, saying, "I will have nothing to do with anyone who is ashamed of his own name." The gentleman then said, "As an Englishman I always expect an answer to a straightforward question." He put it again and again, and for five minutes there was a perfect pandemonium. Dr. Torrey then asked those who wanted to hear him to shout "Hi," and then there was a "Pip, pip!" close to the incident. One of our volunteer pamphlet distributors who was present—Mr. J. W. Sullivan—tells us that he cannot speak too highly of the way the questioner held his ground against the hostile mob clamoring for him to be thrown out.

Dr. Torrey's vulgar way of dealing with questions is so different from that of an infinitely greater speaker whom he loves to traduce. Colonel Ingersoll's last lecture was interrupted by a man who called out rudely, "What are you here for, anyway?" The great orator looked over the meeting broodingly for a few moments, and then said very quietly and seriously, "I wonder." Having said that he went on with his address. Years before that an interrupter was invited by the audience to retire, but Ingersoll asked them to let the man stop. "I'll explain it to him," he said, "the gentleman doesn't understand." So he went on making the thing as clear as daylight, and the audience accepted the lesson in charity, and the interrupter was shamed into apologising.

The Church Army ran a mission at Southend lately. The star name on the bills was that of the Rev. W. Carlile, the secretary of that organisation. During the whole period of the mission Mr. Carlile was occupying himself more pleasantly in the south of Europe. The star name upon the Southend bills was therefore a deception.

The Church Army has a *Gazette*, which we presume is conducted by this same Mr. Carlile. In the number for February 25, which has been sent us, there is an article by Mr. A. J. Waldron, which bears out the view that the Christian world is suffering at present from a perfect epidemic of lying. Mr. Waldron says, for instance, that "a great sceptic wrote, 'There is no fact in history better attested than the Resurrection of Christ.'" The name of that "great sceptic" was carefully withheld; and, on the face of it, the statement is absolutely foolish. But there is something worse (if possible) behind. Mr. Waldron mentions Mr. Foote, among others, as admitting (1) that Jesus Christ existed, (2) that he was crucified by the Roman government, (3) that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were published not later than A.D. 120, (4) that the epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians were undoubtedly written by Paul within twenty-eight years after the Crucifixion, (5) that Christian Churches were to be found in all parts of the Roman Empire at the end of the first century. Mr. Waldron is as impudent as he looks in fathering these statements upon Mr. Foote, who does not "admit" a single one of them.

Mr. Waldron, with Christian good taste, says that "A Jew is the last person in the world to tell a lie and lose by it." This suggests that Mr. Waldron does not tell lies for any interested motive, but purely for the love of lying. We suspect, however, that his motive is mixed.

The London *Evening News* got on the scent of a case which appears to have been carefully hushed up. Dr. Sandilands was quietly extradited at Bow-street Police Court, taken back to Bhandara, and committed for trial to the Bombay High Court. Dr. Sandilands was the Principal of the United Free Church Mission Orphanage of Bhandara, and the charge against him is one of abusing Mission girls in his room. He is further charged with performing an

illegal operation. We have no desire, on our own part, to discuss the case, which will have to be settled before the proper tribunal. All we desire to say is that such a case would not have been so neatly kept from publicity if the alleged culprit had been a Freethought lecturer instead of a Christian divine.

The Vicar of Beamish, Durham, is a remarkable individual, even for these days of revivals and religious hysteria. Presiding at a meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, this gentleman is reported as saying, "The savage attacks of Atheists on the Bible were blind, senseless, and stupid, and arose through ignorance." Perhaps the proof of this lies in the fact that nearly all that the Atheists of, say, fifty years ago fought against is now given up by nearly every educated Christian with a reputation worth talking about. If the Vicar will inform himself as to the views held by Christian scholars on inspiration, on biblical infallibility, and the origin of the books of the Bible, he will discover that the blind and ignorant Atheists have been all along instructing Christians in a truer conception of their own book. And as the Vicar went on to remark that "There were really no Atheists," the charge of their being blind, senseless, ignorant, etc., does not seem to amount to much. It is so like a Christian to spend his time in attacking Atheists, and then explain in the next breath that there are none to attack. Of course, if this very cultured gentleman really believes there are no such persons as Atheists, we could undertake to remove this doubt by ocular demonstration. Someone ought to provide the Vicar with a copy of the *Freethinker* for a few weeks. But, then, there would still remain the doubt as to his ability to appreciate its contents.

One is not surprised to find the same individual declaring that "Voltaire was an Atheist; there are no Voltaires nowadays." Ignorance and impudence usually run together; and it is certain that the vicar's knowledge of Voltaire, who was a Deist and who wrote against Atheism, is as extensive as his knowledge of Atheists and Atheism. There are no Voltaires nowadays, unfortunately; but, also, unfortunately, there are plenty of Vicars of Beamish. The crop of Carlyle's "most lies" is perennial.

"Gideon the Doubter" is the title of a sermon preached by the Rev. A. J. Campbell in Lerwick Church on Christmas Day. An apparently verbatim report of it is printed in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, which seems to be badly in want of readable copy. Mr. Campbell's philosophical capacity may be estimated from his talking of "Dishonest Doubt." We admit that he also talks of "Dishonest Belief." But two blunders do not make one accuracy. Neither doubt nor belief can possibly be honest or dishonest. Such terms are not applicable to intellectual processes. A man may dishonestly profess belief, or dishonestly profess doubt, but that simply means lying about his opinions, instead of telling the truth. His doubt is his doubt, and his belief is his belief—and there is an end of it. What he thinks he thinks because he must. Evidence might change his opinion, but a million pounds could not; neither could the hope of heaven or the fear of hell. The mind weighs like an automatic scale.

The Lambeth Board of Guardians has been discussing the communion wine question. It appears that the inmates of the workhouse are still allowed to drink the Blood of Christ in poor but honest port wine. This was too much for Messrs. Pritchard, Bennett, and Turner, who tried to get "unfermented wine" substituted. But why not abolish wine altogether and take the holy communion in cocoa? Where are you going to stop when you once get the thin end of the wedge in? Fortunately the majority stood up for the orthodox practice—though it was rather a narrow shave—eleven votes to nine. The Lambeth workhouse Blood of Christ will continue to have some taste in it.

The Lambeth communion wine discussion was reported in the *Daily News* under the heading of "Paupers and the Sacrament." The next heading was "Catering on the Great Western." Has a wag got into our solemn-faced contemporary's printing office?

The pious gang of exploiters who run Russia, with the Czar as their figurehead, engineered a lot of lies about the findings of the North Sea Inquiry Commission. These lies were industriously circulated by the Russian press. When the real report appeared it was ignored, and the Russian public believe that the report is completely in favor of Russia. Unless the revolution is successful they will never know otherwise.

"Thoughts for the Day" is a *Daily News* heading. The

other day it gave an excellent passage from "Mark Rutherford." This is how the passage ended:—

"Especially ought we to defend character unjustly assailed.

A character is something alive, a soul; to rescue it is the salvation of the soul."

Good! But when will the *Daily News* practice the preaching? It knows all about Dr. Torrey's vile slanders against Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll, but it does not utter a single word of protest.

Lying for the glory of God, and the profit of the Church—that is, of the liars—has always been a favorite pastime with the clergy. Of course there is nothing new in Dr. Torrey's lies about Paine and Ingersoll, nor is there anything new in the cheerfulness with which the Churches—and the religious press, for that matter—allow his lies to run round unchallenged. Hawks do not pick out hawks' eyes, and one Christian does not kick another for libelling "infidels." Even the Rev. J. Page Hopps, who is indignant at Dr. Torrey's bigoted nonsense about Unitarians, does not seem to feel his equanimity disturbed by Dr. Torrey's flagrant falsehoods about Freethinkers.

We were turning over the pages, the other day, of Henry Smith, who was called silver-tongued Smith, on account of his pulpit eloquence. He was a London preacher in the later part of the sixteenth century; and the first collected edition of his works was introduced by a Preface from the pen of the famous (and wise and witty) Thomas Fuller. One of Smith's treatises is entitled "God's Arrow Against Atheism and Irreligion." In the fourth chapter he tells a lot of unconscionable lies about Mohammed. The final lie is that "He committed"—we cannot complete the sentence in English to-day. It is too beastly to print. We mean in the *Freethinker*—for it is printed right out in the modern edition of Smith's works in "Nichol's Series of Standard Divines: Puritan Period," although the "Council of Publication" of that Series consisted of well-known Edinburgh divines. Smith flings this shocking filth at the character of "the false prophet" without the slightest idea that strict proof would be demanded. All he says is that "Bonfinius writeth it." That was enough for any decent-minded—that is to say, any Christian—inquirer. "Bonfinius writeth it" was quite sufficient evidence against a wicked infidel, whose followers had beaten the followers of Christ on hundreds of battlefields. In the same way, "Torrey says it" is quite good enough for the average Christian. Torrey lies about Paine and Ingersoll as Smith lied about Mohammed; and all the evidence the average Christian wants is "Bonfinius writeth it"—"Torrey says it." Hallelujah. Amen.

Dr. Gore has been "enthroned" as the first Bishop of Birmingham. It was a swell affair, patronised by the Lord Mayor and Corporation and "everybody who is anybody." What a change from the primitive days of the first Salvation Army! Jesus was lifted up—on the cross. He died on the cross. Bishop Gore lives on the cross. And it pays.

Mr. Chamberlain sent a letter welcoming Bishop Gore to Birmingham. It will be all right now. Mr. Chamberlain, who evidently thinks himself a judge of such things, referred to the new Bishop's "high character, distinguished abilities, and unselfish devotion." He did not display much high character in the way in which he hunted poor Mr. Beeby out of his incumbency at Birmingham. We have looked in vain for any distinguished abilities in his books. And we perceive that his unselfish devotion has brought him £4,000 a year.

Mr. George Lynch, the well-known war correspondent, in the course of an article in the *Westminster Gazette*, says that:—

"In the course of adopting things Western, a committee of investigation was appointed with the twofold object of selecting the most desirable Western religion that could be found, and the best beverage for the Japanese troops. For the latter British beer, or its nearest equivalent, was unanimously agreed upon, but the bewildered committee could come to no conclusion about the former; so that the religion of modern Japan may still be described as that of an attitude of politeness towards possibilities."

"Possibilities," however, can hardly include the adoption by Japan of the religion of the Power it has so signally defeated. Just hear what Mr. Lynch says of the Christian Church in Russia:—

"Contemplating the Russian Church, one cannot but be impressed with a profound sense of its failure. No priesthood on the planet's surface had the same opportunity of power, guidance, and uplifting, yet it is now nothing more than a parasitical bureaucracy that solemnly chaunts a lullaby of resignation beside a despairing bedside. Ignorant—astoundingly ignorant—these priests still hold spiritual

dominion over a people more ignorant still, and hold it with all the pomp and circumstance of a gloriously picturesque ritual. They summon their flocks with the clangour of great bronze bells that make the frosty air vibrant in calling them, and, arrayed in gorgeous vestments, their deep bass voices sonorously thunder forth the prayers, and clouds of incense rise, and even as it does so rises the soft and swelling harmony of many voices, until every pillar of the cathedral appears to have become an organ-pipe sounding a hymn of praise to God and the Czar."

Fancy an intelligent, self-respecting nation accepting a religion like that!

Another case of "Providence." There was a great gathering in the negro church, Myrtle-Avenue, Brooklyn. Nearly 1,500 colored ladies and gentlemen were attending a funeral service for their late organist. When they gave vent to their emotions by jumping up and down the floor collapsed. Hundreds were hurled into the basement, and many jumped from the windows. Ten were killed and nearly seventy injured. "He doeth all things well."

One result of the expulsion of the Religious Orders from France is that 80,000 French monks and nuns have settled in Belgium. Poor Belgium!

According to the *Tablet* there are some 7,000 nuns in England. These are all "spouses of Christ." What a harem he has! The Grand Turk is out of the running.

In 1851 there were 17 religious houses for men in England, in 1899 the number was 260, and in 1905 it is 303. There were 53 religious houses for women in 1851, in 1899 the number was 557, and in 1905 it is 751. How the drones multiply!

Ignorance and superstition go hand in hand. Sometimes they are tragic—and sometimes comic; witness the following extract from the *Daily Telegraph* report of a recent address by Mr. R. J. Mecredy to the members of the Automobile Club:—

"On a tour in Clare, Mr. Mecredy traversed districts where no car had ever penetrated before, and created terror, amusement, and astonishment. At one place he was seriously mistaken for 'Anti-Christ.' In the dusk he came round a corner suddenly on a cart containing four men. The horse apparently had no doubts as to his identity, but the four occupants of the cart, who were standing up, dropped at the sight of the baleful apparition. Afterwards he heard the sequel. It appears that the men had jumped out of the cart; some of them knelt on the road and prayed. The others, who, perhaps, realised that their case was hopeless, filled the air with profanity. Then the police appeared on the scene, and were about to arrest the quartet for being drunk, when it was explained to them that Anti-Christ had gone by in a fiery chariot, and that the end of the world was at hand. Another native whom he met in a narrow road after dark ran for his life to a neighbouring residence, and, terror stricken, informed the proprietor that he had seen an awful sight on the road. It was either the devil, or the West Clare broken loose. He could not tell which."

Good old priest-ridden Ireland!

What a row Nonconformists make over the obvious! They raised quite a rumpus on the London County Council over the case of St. Augustine's Church of England School, Kilburn, where a circular had been issued giving the children a list of the sins they had to confess—among them being that of attending a Nonconformist chapel, mission hall, or Sunday school. But do not Nonconformists tell children, plainly or otherwise, that it is a sin to have anything to do with "infidels"? And what difference is there between the two warnings? Is not the same motive operant in both cases—the desire to keep customers?

There is an old proverb to the effect that the fool of the family goes into the Church. This seems to be borne out by the admission of a distinguished Christian leader. "Dr. Horton's great regret," the *Daily News* says, "is that so few Oxford men enter the ministry otherwise than as a last resort." The ministry is the refuge of the failures.

*The Twentieth Century Child* is the engaging title of a new book by Mr. Edward H. Cooper. In the chapter on Religion there occurs a story which seems to corroborate the author's theory that religious feeling does not begin till the age of twelve or thirteen—and then (we add) probably under external pressure:—

"An enchanting but irreverent four-year-old friend of mine who, on being taken to church for the first time, studied the business for half an hour, and then demanded, in a clear, firm voice, 'Give me my hat,' had been brought up in a most devout atmosphere. Later on he came to grief on that rock which has caused the shipwreck of numerous juvenile theologians; he prayed for a large toy yacht, and did not get it, and declined to pay the slightest attention to the explanations

furnished by his mother. Having listened to and weighed them carefully he shook his head, over which seven summers had now passed, and said almost regretfully, 'I think I am too young to be religious.'"

That "Give me my hat" is delicious.

The orthodox Nonconformists—or, as we may call them, *the old gang*—scored another hypocritical victory at the annual meeting of the National Liberal Association at Crewe. Mr. A. M. Scott, on behalf of the Liberal Association, moved the following in favor of Secular Education:—

"That there can be no final solution of the religious difficulty in national education until the State lays aside all claim to interfere, either by support or control, with religious education, and freely leaves to parents and churches the responsibility for the provision of the same."

Mr. Fred Maddison, in seconding this resolution, declared that "undenominational religion" was impossible. Every man of sense knows this to be true, and every honest man would admit it. But, owing to a want of sense or a want of honesty, the old gang saddled the National Liberal Association with the humbugging policy in the following resolution:—

"That this meeting of the General Committee of the National Liberal Federation insists upon the two principles of public control and the absence of all religious tests for publicly paid teachers, but considers it unnecessary at the present time to lay down further principles of a final settlement."

Mr. Francis D. Acland, who moved that amendment, has brains enough to see, if he would look at the question fairly and squarely, that there *must* be religious tests while religion is taught at all. If they are not open, they will be surreptitious; in the former case they are relatively honest—in the latter case they are perfectly dishonest. Mr. Acland let the cat out of the bag when he objected to "abolishing the Bible from the schools." Mr. Percy Bunting was likewise "not prepared to strike the Bible out of the national system of education." Which simply means, after all, that he is in favour of the public schools of England being run on Nonconformist principles. When he talked about combining to "beat the denominationalists and the clericals" he must have known that he was talking to the Nonconformist gallery. This was substantially pointed out by Mr. Scott in his reply. After condemning the timidity which was paralyzing the Liberal party, he said that "Mr. Bunting was a frank sectarian," and declared that "simple Bible teaching was absolute sectarianism from the point of view of the High Churchmen, the Catholic, and the Jew." He might have added the Freethinker, but perhaps he wished to show that his argument was incontrovertible even between Christians themselves. Naturally (for the present) the "live" resolution was lost and the "official" resolution carried. But these sort of victories cannot be won for ever. It is obvious that the day of reckoning is at hand.

That singularly unsuccessful soldier and policeman, Sir Charles Warren, G.C.M.G., appears, from a remarkable pamphlet which has lately reached us, to have given an address at the Church Congress, of October last, on "How our Boys can help us." After pointing out that "the distinguishing characteristics of an Englishman are his love of field sports," Sir Charles proceeds as follows:—

"Strange to say this pursuit of animals in the chase led to our protecting and loving animals, and to the institution of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals—for in the early days we required the dog to run after and bring down our chase, and the horse to carry us to the front..... When we began to stock our farmyards we found it necessary to exterminate the fox and the wolf, the owl, and the hawk, and the rat..... It is this hunting instinct which has led us, as a nation, to be foremost in reading the Bible, for the Bible treats of primitive and hunting races in the dawn of history."

Certainly, "our boys" might help Sir Charles Warren in one way, viz., in writing less nonsensical papers for the Church Congress.—*The Humanitarian*.

The oracle of the City Temple has returned to his tripod. His health is said to have improved during his six weeks' holiday—which is very likely. In the course of his first utterance, in fresh form, he thought it advisable to say a good word for the Albert Hall mission. He said he was perfectly convinced (that settles it!) that a marvellous answer to prayer was being realised, not only in London, but all over the world. He quoted the terribly hackneyed text that "man doth not live by bread alone"—which is so far true that most men, including ministers, like butter with it, or a bit of meat. Finally, he saw in the revival movement, a sign that "the heart of England is turning back to the eternal truths"—namely, those which Mr. Campbell and his colleagues dispense for the usual consideration. We hear that Mr. Campbell's dispensary is worth about £2,000 a year.



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, March 12. Stanley Hall, Junction-road, Upper Holloway (near "The Boston"), at 7 p.m., "The Use and Abuse of the Bible." Admission free.

March 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.—March 19, Stanley Hall, North London; April 2, Victoria Park; 9, Glasgow; 16, Liverpool; 23, Stratford Town Hall.

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

A. STILL.—It may be useful.

F. DAVIES.—You will see that your questions are really answered in this week's "Acid Drops." Glad to hear you have found our *Bible Romances* so useful, and that you have lent one copy round till it is nearly worn out, so that you have to order another.

M. PUGH.—See the announcement in "Sugar Plums."

WALTER MORRIS.—Sent as requested.

TRUTH.—Pleased to hear how you challenged that blatant and libellous street-corner preacher. There is an excellent brief *Life of Voltaire* by the late J. M. Wheeler, which you can get from our publishing office for sixpence—by post, sevenpence. Parton's biography of Voltaire, in two large volumes, is the best and fullest we know, but it is expensive. With regard to the Christian statement that a printing press used to print Voltaire's books was afterwards used to print Bibles, we know nothing about it, and care as little. The fate of that particular printing press is of no importance. If it prints Bibles now, it must be a remarkably long-lived affair.

A. GLADWELL.—Practically you ask Mr. Lloyd to believe first, and tell him that he will find the evidence afterwards. You forget—or perhaps you do not know—that he did believe for ever so many years, and instead of finding the evidence, he had to recognise that there was none. That is why he became an Atheist.

EPICUREAN.—Too late for this week; in our next.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

H. S. DREWRY.—We are obliged, but the inquiry had better be concluded before we comment.

OLD FREETHINKER.—Do you mean that Dr. Torrey actually said that he had written to Mr. Foote and Mr. Blatchford, and that neither of them had the decency to answer his letter? Mr. Blatchford will answer for himself, if necessary. Certainly no letter from Dr. Torrey has reached Mr. Foote.

A. W. SNOW.—Thanks for your letter. Glad to hear you came across the *Freethinker* through an advertisement two years ago, that you have read it with pleasure ever since, and that you "look forward every week to its welcome appearance."

T. FISHER.—We have no copies of the Complete Ingersoll left at present, and we understand that the price has been raised by the American publisher. We can quite understand that you found Mr. Foote's Camberwell lecture "a rare treat" when you had the opportunity to run up to London from the sleepy West. We will think over your suggestions.

S. G.—No "presumption" at all; quite the contrary; thanks for cutting, and send more whenever the spirit moves.

J. MARTIN, sending another subscription to our Anti-Torrey Fund, says: "I can hear of your pamphlets in company where Freethought never entered."

W. GREAVES.—Shall be sent as requested. The clergyman's answer was insincere. The only reason he can honestly assign is that the Church is committed against marriage with a deceased wife's sister.

A. G. BEAL.—Pleased to hear that you have made such good use of the pamphlets sent you. As you have enquiries for more, we have ordered a further supply to be forwarded. Kindly write again if you wish for more.

THOMAS BENNETT.—We noticed that *Christian Herald* yarn last week. The man's story, if it is the same man, is not a bit like what you heard him say at the chapel. If his case is misleading hundreds, and perhaps thousands, in the district, by all means write the leaflet you propose, and we will pay half the cost out of our fund. By circulating it on the spot you will surely do good.

J. G. EAST.—Thanks for addresses. Glad you are doing your best to push the circulation of the *Freethinker* as "undoubtedly the brightest paper in the movement."

J. TRETHERWEX.—Sent as desired. Of course the "conversion" statistics are all nonsense. Everybody knows the value of accounts that are never "audited." It is pleasant in one way, though melancholy in another, to read that the *Freethinker* is one of the few friends you will leave behind you in quitting the old country. There is only one Freethought paper that we know of in Canada at present—*Secular Thought*, edited by Mr. Ellis, and published fortnightly at Toronto.

M. CORBETT.—Your letter attended to. We do not recollect receiving the old one.

J. WEBSTER.—Of course we have readers in the rural districts, but those who take the *Freethinker* do not need the propaganda you suggest, and the others are very difficult to get at.

J. M. DAY.—Cannot understand it. Have given fresh instructions.

A. E. BLACKMORE.—Shall be forwarded. Pleased to have your letter, and glad to hear your wife is a good Freethinker. It is gratifying to know, too, that you have found *Bible Romances* so useful.

PETER MOWLL.—If you receive a reply you might send us a copy.

V. C. MARTIN.—Pleased you think our "Acid Drop" struck the right note.

GUNNER.—We will keep your letter by us, with a view to using it in the intended article.

J. W. SULLIVAN.—Thanks. See paragraph.

R. MAYES.—Pamphlets sent as desired.

C. W. STYRING.—Pleased to hear that your little circle of Leeds acquaintances so much appreciate Mr. Lloyd's article on Hope.

OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged. £88 6s. 11d. Received this week: J. G. East, 2s., J. Tretberway, 2s. 6d., W. Dodd, 5s., J. Martin, 10s., P. W. Madden, £3 (second sub., making £5 in all), J. M. Day 1s., Walter Morris 2s. 6d., Truth 1s., E. Potter 2s., W. Allen 1s., Military Friends 10s., J. A. Davies 2s., R. W. Whitehouse 1s. 6d., Young 6d., T. H. Whitehouse 1s.

H. LEWIS.—We cannot insist on Dr. Torrey's replying. His own people will have to do that.

HUGH LLOYD.—We have not Mr. T. Bennett's detailed address by us. He is a Social Democrat as well as a Freethought lecturer, and is well known, we believe, for your letter to find him at Mountain Ash. Thanks for fresh list, which we have passed on to business manager.

J. McDONALD.—Have had the matter seen to. Hope it is right now. So you have read our writings, and feel you could "die happy" if you could only hear us lecture. We hope you may hear us and not die.

E. CHAPMAN, South Shields secretary, begs the Tyneside "saints" to make a special note of Mr. Foote's lectures on the first Sunday in April.

"INTERESTED" hopes some capable Freethinkers will attend at Toyndee Hall this evening (March 12) when a debate on "The Reality of the Unseen" will be opened by Sir Oliver Lodge.

A. K.—The "600 infidels" at Messrs. Sutton's, Reading, were not members of the N. S. S. There are probably not sixty "professed infidels" in the whole town.

W. ATKINSON.—We will try to deal with Dr. Barry's *National Review* article, but our hands are very full at present. We wrote a series of articles on Spencer's *Autobiography* at the time of its publication. Dr. Conway's *Autobiography* is published in two volumes at 30s. We do not know the other book.

F. B. (Warrington).—*Infidel Death Beds* would not help you in that matter. We shall have to include Bradlaugh and others in a new edition. Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner's pamphlet would help you. She nursed her father and knows Bradlaugh's brother was a stranger to him for many years and knows absolutely nothing about his deathbed. Our *Darwin on God*, price sixpence, would give you all you require on that head.

CLETON ADMIRER.—Thanks for your letter. We will think over your suggestion as to a series of articles on Bradlaugh, who should be better known by the new generation.

W. P. PEARSON.—Your letter is late; only room for one paragraph. If you want more Torrey pamphlets at Liverpool you have only to order them.

ONE OF THE DISTRIBUTORS.—No doubt Dr. Torrey's audience, night after night, consists largely of the same persons. The bigotry and ill-manners of these people to our distributors should not astonish them. Glad to have your opinion that this is the best bit of propagandist work for a long while.

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.

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.

### Sugar Plums.

In spite of the wretched weather there was an excellent audience at Stanley Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote began the special course of lectures there under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited. Many North London Freethinkers were present, but there was also a good contingent of strangers. Several questions were asked, but no formal opposition was offered, though it was pointedly invited by the chairman, Mr. Harry Jones. Mr. Foote occupies the Stanley Hall platform again this evening (March 12), and his subject is one that should interest Christians as well as Freethinkers. We hope the local "saints" will try to bring some of their more orthodox

friends or acquaintances along to the lecture. Stanley Hall is a handsome room, beautifully lighted, and in a commanding position in a great thoroughfare—and the admission is free.

Too late for notice in last week's *Freethinker*, we learnt that Mr. Cohen had a capital meeting at Newcastle-on-Tyne on Monday evening, February 27. There had been a spontaneous preliminary announcement of his lecture in the *Newcastle Chronicle*, and a good and fair report of it appeared in the next morning's issue of that journal. We are always delighted to see the newspaper conspiracy of silence against Freethought breaking down.

We beg our friends to continue circulating our Torrey pamphlets as briskly and extensively as possible. The distribution has been very well done so far, but we want it kept up. We have kept pace with all demands for the pamphlets from every part of the country, and we hope to do so as long as the Torrey-Alexander Mission lasts in London. To this end we still invite subscriptions to our Anti-Torrey Mission Fund. The first £100 we asked for is not made up yet, and we should like to issue another up-to-date pamphlet, say of eight pages, dealing with Dr. Torrey's ridiculous falsehoods about the "infidels" he has "converted" at the Albert Hall, including the mythical lady Freethought lecturer in Hyde Park. It is evident that Dr. Torrey is playing the game for all it is worth. Monday's *Daily Express* reported the extravagant statement that 600 infidels were found amongst the employees of Messrs. Sutton, of Reading, that they were all brought up by special train to the Albert Hall, and that many of them "accepted Christianity" on the spot. That such absurd lies can be told is bad enough, that they can be believed is worse; and it is the duty of Freethinkers to help along the exposure of these revivalists' tactics.

The Liverpool Branch has arranged for a public debate in the Alexandra Hall on March 28 and 29 between Mr. H. Percy Ward and a real live parson—the Rev. W. Reginald Horner, of Bradford-street New Church—who is to be congratulated on his courage. The question for discussion is "Is there a Future Life?" Admission will be by ticket (6d. and 1s.). Of course, the hall will be crowded.

The Birmingham Branch had a record gathering at its Tea and Social on Sunday. Over a hundred were present at the tea, and the number was largely augmented at the entertainment which followed. Mrs. Fathers, assisted by a good staff of lady volunteers, looked well after the festive arrangements. Mr. A. Davis had charge of the subsequent program, and the time was too short to allow of the "encores" that were demanded. Altogether the party was a grand success.

Mr. Evan Roberts said that the Lord told him not to go to Cardiff—probably because he is unable to address an audience properly in English. But the revival has been going on in the town and district, and one result of it is an increased interest in Freethought. The local "saints" communicated with Mr. Foote, who sent down a supply of his Torrey pamphlets for distribution, and a letter to be read at a meeting called for February 20, at the Victoria Restaurant. Some twenty friends were present at that meeting, and twelve of them signed declaration forms, and paid in their money, to become members of the N. S. S. The central Executive was then applied to for leave to form a Cardiff Branch. This was granted, and Mr. S. C. Hurford was elected the first secretary, and Mr. M. A. Hurcum, the first president, with Messrs. Parry, Stovin, Hill, Mends, Trimmall and Docton as vice-presidents, and Mr. E. J. Shea treasurer. Mr. Hurcum promised to find the Branch a meeting-place in the course of a few weeks. Meanwhile the new Branch is enrolling fresh members, and the secretary says they mean to surprise the first lecturer who comes down from London.

In his letter to the preliminary meeting Mr. Foote said he would do his best to send lecturers down from London, and also to visit Cardiff himself. The "saints" appear to look to him for assistance and encouragement—which is not unnatural; and he, in turn, must look to Freethinkers in general for their assistance and encouragement. They can render it by subscribing the sinews of war. From all parts of South Wales we hear that the revival is ploughing up the ground, and that the present moment is most opportune for sowing the seed of Freethought. We don't want to start a separate fund for this. The Anti-Torrey fund, as it is in the field, might be used to cover all the ground affected by the "revival"—of which Dr. Torrey is, after all, only one item. Now this fire is well lit, will Freethinkers supply fuel to "keep the pot boiling"? They really ought to be

active and enterprising when all the Churches are making such desperate efforts to recover lost ground.

Sir Hiram S. Maxim's brief letter in reply to Mr. G. K. Chesterton was "a clincher." The "old and trained engineer," knowing he could hardly expect a lot of space, took hold of the statement that if a latter can tell the truth, a religious person certainly ought to do so. Yes, he said, religious people "never have had the least trouble in telling the truth about hats; it is only on religious subjects that they fail." Then he skipped on to Dr. Torrey as an example, in relation to Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. "He has often attempted to tell the truth about these two great statesmen," Sir Hiram Maxim said, "and has as often failed utterly." With regard to the American "infidel," Sir Hiram Maxim asked Dr. Torrey to tell the truth in answering the following question: "Did Colonel Robert Ingersoll favor the repeal of the Comstock law against the sending of obscene literature through the mails, or did he oppose the repeal?" Thus the fatal question was worked in, notwithstanding the press conspiracy of silence. Finally, Sir Hiram Maxim remarked that "Dr. Torrey would not have the least trouble in telling the truth about hats. It is only when religion is involved that he fails."

Mr. G. J. Holyoake contributed an excellent article on the Pooley case to a recent number of the *Daily Chronicle*. Thomas Pooley was a poor illiterate man, a Cornish well-sinker, a good husband, a good father, and a good servant. Twice he descended a well and saved his employer's life at the risk of his own, when more orthodox persons held back. His ideas were rather eccentric, and that was his only crime. But a clergyman pursued him to the bitter end for scrawling some decent but "profane" words with chalk on a gate; and under the Blasphemy Laws he was sentenced to twenty-one months' imprisonment by a judge who rather prided himself on his humanity. Mr. Holyoake very honorably interested himself in the case at the time. He went down to Cornwall, collected all the facts, and published them in the *Reasoner*. This led to Buckle's noble denunciation of Pooley's prosecution and sentence in a *Fraser* article. Mill and others interested themselves in the case, and poor Pooley was released after four months' imprisonment, just in time to save him from being driven irrecoverably mad by his tormentors. This shocking case of "Christian charity" has just been revived by Ernest Hartley Coleridge in his *Life of his father, the late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge*. Mr. Coleridge seeks to minimise the ease, and to throw cold water on the enthusiasm of Buckle and the investigations of Mr. Holyoake. Perhaps he did not know that Mr. Holyoake was alive. He knows it now. Mr. Holyoake's article, in spite of his great age, is one of the best things he has written for many years; animated by the right spirit, dignified but brave, and admirably felicitous. There are things that ought never to be forgotten, and the Pooley case is one of them. It is a warning against ever giving the least encouragement to the wild beast of bigotry. And we congratulate Mr. Holyoake on seizing the opportunity to bring it prominently into view again.

Mr. Holyoake admits that he was not quite just to the late Lord Coleridge, whose share in the Pooley case was that of counsel for the prosecution. Mr. Holyoake's impression that he was mistaken was "strengthened when he, as Lord Chief Justice, gave judgment in the case of Mr. Foote, in which he clearly stated, and confirmed by his concurrence, what amounted to a new charter of the public right of conscientious discussion."

We have called Buckle's denunciation of Pooley's treatment noble. "Since Voltaire's intrepid defence of the Calas family," Mr. Holyoake says, "there has been no instance in Europe of a brilliant man of letters turning aside from his pursuits to vindicate the right of individual opinion in a poor, obscure, and friendless man." We are loth to interpose a word of criticism. But was not Voltaire's defence of Calas something more than *intrepid*? Was it not sublimely *heroic*? It was Voltaire against the world. And Voltaire won. One warrior sword flashed and gleamed against the banded hosts of wrong. Behind it were the bold determined heart, the potent arm, the supple wrist, the tense fingers, the lynx eyes, the keen and tireless brain. The memory of that fight is one of the great possessions of Humanity.

Branches of the N. S. S. should bear in mind that the Society's Annual Conference takes place at Liverpool on Whit-Sunday. The morning and afternoon business meetings will be held in the Alexandra Hall. The big Picton Hall has been engaged for the public meeting in the evening. Notices for the Conference Agenda should reach the secretary not later than May 1.

## Pray Without Ceasing.

THE Bible is full of prayer because it is full of superstitious errors. It is full of superstition because it is mostly the concoction of wily interested priests who have from time immemorial exploited the ignorance and credulity of the people to keep wealth and power in their own hands. And it is the priests who keep superstition alive, and always will do, until society rescues the children from their deadly grip. I know these sayings are hard; but truth demands their clear utterance. The rational world does not seem to be half conscious enough of the monstrosity contained in priestcraft. Without destroying this monster a new world of plenty, peace, and happiness is impossible.

Children almost everywhere from the cradle are in the grip of priests. Even in Britain, Nonconforming ministers are at bottom as much priests as the clergy of England and Rome, or the monks and priests of any heathen nation. And everywhere prayer, praise, and rites are the tools by which they inoculate the plastic minds of children and wrap their intellects in the coils of credulity and superstition. So completely have the priests got the human mind under their control that they have now no difficulty to perpetuate it. There is no check to their power, except from the comparatively few Rationalists who have succeeded in escaping from their thralldom. Even if the priests were got out of the way, the people are so demoralised and saturated with superstitious credulity that they would continue to pray, praise, and debase themselves without them. I verily believe if God from heaven gave a new command not to pray at all the people would disobey his command and continue the absurd devotion as before.

But let us go to the text. If there is a God and the Bible is the Word of God, there cannot be a doubt that it is the duty of Christians to pray. A verse or two will be sufficient to prove it. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. v. 17). "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. ii. 8). The Bible is so full of precept and example on prayer that any dispute against it on Biblical grounds is impossible. The only thing, therefore, I can do is to shift the question to the arena of reason, to discuss the precept and practice in the light of common sense.

In treating the subject we must assume we are dealing with men of average intelligence and moderate education and knowledge. Arguing with boys and girls with immature minds, who shriek, cry, and sing, and with emotional, hysterical young women, is a waste of time and breath. Nor could any good be done by discussing the practice with men whose minds are debased by ignorance and superstitions and warped by the torture of long-endured poverty and misery, and who in the enthusiasm of a moment jump and shout and rave like maniacs, and make themselves suitable candidates for an asylum, where many of them will end their days.

Prayer implies the possibility of changing and of altering the unalterable. If you cannot get something by praying you could not get without it, what is the good of praying? If what you ask for would come whether you prayed or not, is it not a folly to pray? If prayer for the possible only can be answered by using natural means to secure the blessing asked for, would not the use of means secure the good without the praying? When a man wants a good crop from his garden, he digs deep and well pulverises the soil, picks out the weeds, and manures it with suitable materials in due season, and never dreams that praying over it would do it any good.

Surely there is no intelligent Christian silly enough to think he can change the course of nature by praying. Much less likely is it that any educated man would pray to nature to change its fixed working in answer to prayer. And why? Because

science has convinced the educated world that all nature works by fixed, unalterable laws. For untold ages ignorant and superstitious man thought otherwise. He made gods of almost everything, and in worship prayed to trees, rivers, fountains, stars, moon, and sun, for he thought his prayer could induce them to do what he prayed for. And in many countries, where dense ignorance and nothing but priestly superstition is allowed to live, praying to nature is as active as ever. But nature takes no notice of them, and never answers, however loud the deluded devotees cry.

If nature cannot be changed by prayer, is it likely the Creator of nature can be changed by praying to him? Either nature or God, or both, will have to be changed in some mysterious and miraculous way if prayer is to be answered. Unless prayer can change God and cause him to change nature there is no reason to justify it. Without supposing that prayer has some magical power sufficiently great to influence and overcome the Almighty, praying is as ridiculous as a dog baying at the moon. The very idea that man can by praying cause God to alter his ways seems to me the acme of blasphemy.

A more serious consideration still is forced upon us, for prayer makes God an imbecile autocrat, or a cruel monster. If God is all-wise, all-good, and almighty, he knows everything and will do all that can and ought to be done. But prayer assumes that God does not know what his children want and must be told, and roused and instructed what he ought to do, and when and how to do it. Prayer is a kind of indictment of the Creator by the creature—a rebellion of imperfect vessels against the potter—a curtain lecture against the Heavenly Father by his unsatisfied children. When analysed, most prayers resolve themselves into vain impudence and insane arrogance against God.

In fact, prayer makes God a monster. What is a fault in man cannot be a virtue in God. What is a sin in man must be a greater sin in God. If a man acted as God does all the world would condemn him. Suppose a wealthy, powerful father had a child in want and in ill-health. The father knows his child wants food, clothing, medical aid, nursing and fellowship, but he neglects him, gives him nothing unless he asks for it, and allows him to suffer, starve, and die, because he was too weak even to pray for help. What would you think of such a father? Would you not call him a cruel monster? Would you not say he was a murderer of his child? Of course you would. And what is the difference between that father and God, to whom you pray and get no answer?

God being all-wise, all-good, and almighty, is therefore omniscient. He sees all, knows all, and has wisdom and power to do all. Nothing can be hidden from him. There is nothing he could not do if he liked. But according to the doctrine of prayer, this all-good God, sees his child in danger and suffering and never offers him help unless he prays for it. He hears his child cry in agony and takes no notice of him unless he prays, and leaves him alone to die when he does. He sees his child rushing headlong to destruction and never warns him or tries to stop him. He sees the enemy coming to murder one of his children and never interferes to save him. If he had a mind to do it, he could remedy all the ills of life, but he leaves all to riot unchecked unless his children struggle and pray against them. That is the picture of God drawn by prayer. If some mighty man acted like that would you not call him a cruel monster? If the mighty man had knowledge how to cure all the ills that afflict his fellow-men, and withheld his knowledge from them, would you not say he was a fiend in human form? That is what God does. He knows what would cure all the ills that flesh is heir to, but he withholds his knowledge from his children and leaves them to grope in difficulties and dangers to find what he could communicate at once. If a man guilty of that conduct is a fiend in human flesh, what name will you give to a God that does the same thing?

Prayer makes God a conceited vainglorious being, or makes men who practise it fulsome, fawning flatterers. In all prayers you will notice how lavishly devotees praise and flatter God. They tell him how great, how good, how majestic, how old, how wealthy, how clever, how excellent, how superior, and so on, he is. Would any sane king stand such a volume of flattery without being sickened with disgust? Or, if he took all in with satisfaction, would you not say he was a conceited, vainglorious king? If God does the same how can you give him any other name? On the other hand, if praying devotees fawn on God against his will, they make themselves into despicable sycophants. Thus prayer insults God and debases man at the same time.

Then, what good does prayer do? As far as I can see, no good whatever. It is certain that it can have no effect on nature, and if there be an infinite personal God it can have no effect on him. An impersonal God without ears to hear and eyes to see and mouth and voice to answer would not satisfy the craving of prayer. If men thought, they could not pray to a nebulous impersonal idea, any more than to a vanishing dream. A personal God must be believed in to enable men to pray.

Two classes of men will always approve of prayer—namely, employers and priests and their class. If workers tried to hold a meeting during dinner hour, to discuss their grievances and advocate their rights, the meetings would be forbidden. But they can hold prayer meetings and religious services every day in the week, with approval. Why? Because the masters know that such meetings will tend to make the hands servile, lamb-like, obedient slaves. Praying workmen will not be apt to find fault, or strike, or agitate for better conditions. They will look upon their masters as the servants of God appointed to provide a livelihood for them, and be content with the position in which Providence has placed them. Socialism will never be realised whilst workers continue to pray.

The interest of the priests in prayer is obvious. It is of priestly origin. It is absurd to suppose that any God instituted prayer as a devotion. The priests did it, and told the people it was God. Throughout the ages it has been their most valuable stock-in-trade, by means of which they have exploited the ignorance and credulity of the people to aggrandise themselves and keep their slaves in subjection. As long as the masses continue to pray they will be led by the priests, and mental and social emancipation will be impossible.

To the masses of all countries, prayer is not only useless but harmful. It hypnotises and stupefies their minds; it keeps them gazing on the sky, expecting something to fall from heaven, instead of looking after their rights in things here below. It makes them credulous and superstitious slaves to the priest and exploiter. It blocks the way to social reform, and makes emancipation almost impossible. To the child it is positively injurious, for it inoculates its mind with superstition, and gives it a twist that will remain for life. No child should be taught to pray. The precept should be reversed. Pray not at all, pray never, pray nowhere. The only useful, effective and sensible prayer is work and effort. Word-prayer is only a bubble. But work and sustained effort is a prayer that will lift humanity and place it in circumstances where goodness and happiness will be possible.

R. J. DERFEL.

#### WISDOM AND LOVE.

Wisdom is the lamp of love, and love is the oil of the lamp. Love, sinking deeper, grows wiser; and wisdom that springs up aloft comes ever the nearer to love. If you love, you must needs become wise; be wise, and you surely shall love. Nor can anyone love with the veritable love but his love must make him the better; and to grow better is but to grow wiser.—*Macterlinck*.

## Correspondence.

### "FRIENDSHIP AND FREETHINKERS."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—Like Mr. Randall, I want "Freethought"; but, unlike him, I want a friendly co-operation between "Freethought" members. I agree with him on many points, but he is a theorist with Utopian views and impracticable ideals. He wants us to begin at the top of the ladder. If you wish seed to fructify you must prepare the soil. If you wish Freethought to spread you must work steadily and perseveringly to train and encourage the wavering or the doubtful. All cannot rise a full grown Phoenix of Freethought from the ashes of Christianity, as doubtless Mr. Randall has done. He will help no one; he does not believe in it. I do. That is the difference between us. He may be a very Hercules of Freethought and may think he can clean out the Augcan stables of Christian superstition, cant, and hypocrisy unaided. Well, I am not going to pat him on the back. He may be one of those giants among men who rise up once in a generation. We cannot hope to emulate his lofty aspirations. We must content ourselves with commonplace, work-a-day motives. He does not want love or sympathy. Well, he need not worry; he shall not get any. He may if he likes become a modern Simon Stylites and sit on a pillar all his days. "Set him up on high, ye gods! and bow before the majesty of"—Egotism. That he has splendid fighting qualities I can well believe. I am sure he would conduct an assault and lead a "forlorn hope" as valiantly as any Freethinker, but he must not have the "Almighty Ego" blazoned so broadly on his banner. I am sorry I cannot oblige him by going to—church. By the way, was that only an euphonious name for somewhere else? I was never at a Dorcas meeting in my life, and I detest curates and stale buns; so he must excuse me. I am quite sure I never proposed any adoration of masculine heroism—that sort of thing is not in my line. I do not want Freethought to become a morose Calvinistic sort of doctrine—a species of misanthropic sentimentality such as Mr. Randall describes. He may criticise this sentence if he pleases, but I declare it is my honest conviction that if Freethinkers banded together in practical, steady, friendly determination, as the members of the Roman Catholic Church do, there would not be a Christian left "to tell the tale" in a hundred years. There will be heaps of "anæmic men and sentimental women," and *vice versa*, among Secularists as long as no effort is made to prepare the average women of to-day to become competent wives and mothers for future Freethinkers. This can only be done by the interchange of thought and intelligence between the sexes.

It is hardly fair that Mr. Randall should "empty the vials of his wrath" on my head. Men (Freethinkers) have in these columns proposed a friendly alliance between men and women of similar views. Some have even proposed a "Matrimonial Bureau"—a thing I decidedly object to—but Mr. Randall has not said a word against them. He seems to have learnt my letters off by heart, and occupies himself by shooting little quotations from them at me on all occasions. Well, I am a very good-tempered person with a keen sense of humor, so I shall not quarrel with him. Perhaps if we met we should find many things to agree about; as it is, we must still differ.

A Freethinker of a different type is "One Who May Miss the Post." He is thoroughly practical. His sensible, well-thought-out letter, pleased me very much, and if I can help him in any way in his desire for "co-operation, hard work, and practical application to the matters under discussion" I shall be glad to do so.

Some of the things he suggests are very desirable, and I should like to sift the question thoroughly. Want of time prevents me entering more fully into the matter this week, but I shall hope to have a talk soon again with "One Who May Miss the Post," when we may be able to devise some plan for a more friendly and social intercourse between Freethinkers. I do not know if so much amusement is necessary; so many abuses creep in. But certainly something is needed to keep us in touch with each other. Now, I live in a country place, and have never met a Freethinker here. I have only my own thoughts, my reading, and the letters of a few friends to help me, so that I should be really glad to know some intelligent Freethinker whose views might enlighten me and whose arguments might sharpen my wits, even if on points we differed.

JUVERNA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—If the following note on this subject will add anything to the correspondence, and is worth printing in that column, kindly insert; but I may trust your good judgment, and if

it will but "fill up" your valuable space, and be of no service, then do not insert.

I should like to add something to the correspondence re "Friendship and Freethinkers."

There is a great deal of sound reason in the letter of Alfred E. Randall. No, we Freethinkers do not want "anæmic men and sentimental women." We have a splendid destiny before us; we are to become a mighty force in the future history of the human race. We ought, indeed, to be imbued with the idea of the intense importance of our aims; to be exalted by the magnificence of our objects. Surely foul superstition, hypocrisy, and the abominable false conventional rules of "Society" have reigned over and influenced the world long enough! This gigantic structure (the prison of the noble, god-like mind of man) is, as we know, crumbling and tottering; but Freethinkers must not rest; they must not be "passive Resisters." If "Elise" realised the very deeply-rooted and terrible evils which we have to combat, and the strenuous and great work which will be ours to perform in the not very distant future, would she so lightly advocate dances, socials, etc.? And yet these things are all very well in their proper place. I suppose "Elise" only means these things to be a means to an end. But would they help us much? Now I agree that all Freethinkers should be friends—(absolutely independently of sex, nationality, and so-called social position). We ought, indeed, to understand how necessary it is, and will be, to stand "shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart." Yes, brethren, whatever may be the state of the Christians, let us have unity; let us grasp one another's hand with the joyous frankness of truth and honour! We shall need this sturdy friendship; we shall fear no one; nothing will be able to stand against us if we but stand firmly by one another.

I think all Freethinkers (all who advocate absolute freedom of the human mind and its unrestricted development) should seek out one another wherever they may reside and, as it were, "club together." We might have some sort of club or society in every town or village where there are Freethinkers. These, of course, should be open to all, without regard to sex or nationality. Lectures would be given, literature supplied, and, in short, we might each help one another in the study of religion, religions, theology, politics, etc.; in fact, in all subjects and all writings which will aid us in the winning of a glorious victory. Of course many societies already exist all over the country, but we need to have them much improved, to have more of them, and in very many ways their usefulness might be considerably enhanced. The object of any Freethinking club, association, or whatever it might be called, must always be the magnificent triumph of our great principles, and most decidedly *not*, as some would seem to think, an evening's enjoyment. That great object must never be lost sight of. Let us not forget the end in the means.

I should like to say, Mr. Editor, but fear I am encroaching too much on your space, that I myself do not enjoy the companionship of any avowed Freethinker whatever. Also, I had perhaps better admit, that I belong to the same sex as "Elise" and "Juverna." I do not want any foolish "Aunt Marjory" columns in your admirable paper, nor am I anxious for those amusements which "Elise" would like. At the same time I believe I should derive much benefit from associating with Freethinkers, and especially from a Freethought reading-room. I am an ardent supporter (in theory, and do not despair of becoming one in practice) of all those who earnestly desire to clear away the terrific amount of refuse and rubbish which has through centuries accumulated around the glorious statue of Truth, and reveal to the world the Perfect Image. But I have not as yet been able to declare myself on your side, being still many months distant from attaining my "majority," and am, indeed, quite a new recruit (but I hope not a recruit *pro tempore*) to your ranks, owing much to your worthy periodical (may success attend it!) a fact which I am not likely to forget.

E. B.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—Though not claiming to answer to the full description the "someone" appealed to by Mr. A. E. Randall, nor yet hoping to satisfy that appeal in all its comprehensiveness, I should like to suggest a middle course between the somewhat severe standoffish position adopted by Mr. A. E. Randall and the giddy "social and literary amenities" or Freethought "decked with ribbons" which he ascribes to "Juverna."

You have, in the same issue which contains Mr. Randall's letter, a report of what appears to have been a highly successful and jovial dinner enjoyed by the members of the Liverpool Secular Society. Now, if Freethinkers may so far unbend themselves at a dinner, surely the same enjoyment may be had without the dinner at more frequent intervals.

In these country parts we are few and far between, and when we meet may only have time to exchange views on passing events; but in the towns it is very different, especially where there is any sort of an organisation.

I doubt very much Mr. Randall or any other worthy "saint" being overwhelmed with the "adoration" of Freethinking females. On the other hand, "dances" and "amateur theatricals" are matters of taste, and often require a large circle of friends to be successful.

But "friendship," "amusement," and "thinking for themselves and saying what they think" are all good, and as such are entitled to a share of our composite existence.

I do not like the suggestion of an "Aunt Marjory" column in the *Freethinker*; but the marriage of Freethinkers must be a vital question with many. Happily, my wife and I view religion in the same light, and harmony at home is a desirable attainment. Without proper opportunities many Freethinkers must decide between marriage with a Christian and single blessedness, and I am sure that neither state is very good. I submit for Mr. Randall's and Secular Society's officials' earnest consideration that something more informal than lectures would provide the opportunities.

Had Mr. Randall thought for a moment he certainly would not have advised "Juverna" and "Elise" to go to church, knowing how impossible that would be for Freethinkers.

H. ALLEN.

### Torrey the Infidel.

Dr. Torrey has written in the Press that "*Infidelity and Immorality are 'Siamese Twins.'*"

AN "infidel" is one who slights his creed,  
The creed he calls *his own* by word or deed;  
But not another's creed, ignored or known;  
He only can be *faithless to his own*.

To Torrey's God, *no* "infidel" am I,  
Because the God of Torrey I *deny*;  
And so, to Zeus, or Asteroth, or Bel,  
A "Christian" ne'er can be an "infidel."

But Torrey is an "infidel," because  
He violates his God's commands and laws;  
The precepts of the "Savior," whom he lauds,  
His conduct contradicts, and treats as frauds;  
With blatant voice he preaches Christ as Lord,  
The while his Lord's commandments are ignored.

As Christ declared that certain "signs" would show  
The true believer from the false, we know  
That Torrey is "unfaithful" to his creed;  
He, therefore, is an "infidel" indeed.

What Torrey is besides, I do not know;  
But, writing in the Press, he claims to show  
That "*infidelity*" 's the worst of sins,  
Since it and "*immorality*" are "*twins*."

An "*infidel*," undoubtedly, is Torrey;  
And if he is the *other*, I am sorry.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

### HEAVEN.

Even thy name is as a god,  
Heaven! for thou art the abode  
Of that power which is the glass  
Wherein man his nature sees.  
Generations as they pass  
Worship thee with bended knees.  
Their remaining gods and they  
Like a river roll away:  
Thou remainest such alway.

—Shelley.

### Mr. George Meredith and Women.

THE following letter has been sent by Mr. Meredith to Mr. Hugh W. Strong, managing editor of the *Cornish Leader*:—

"Since I began to reflect I have been oppressed with the injustice done to women, the constraint put upon their natural aptitudes and their faculties generally, much to the degradation of the race. I have not studied women more than I have men, but with more affection, a deeper interest in their enfranchisement and development, being assured that women of the independent mind are needed for any sensible degree of progress. They will so educate their daughters that these will not be instructed at the start to think themselves naturally inferior to men because less muscular, and need not have recourse to particular arts, felicitous chiefly, to make their way in the world. I have no special choice among the women of my books. Perhaps I gave more color to *Diana of the Crossways* and *Clara Middleton of The Egoist*, and this on account of their position."

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

### LONDON.

STANLEY HALL (Junction-road, Upper Holloway): 7, G. W. Foote, "The Use and Abuse of the Bible."

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, J. Ramsey, "Who is the King of Glory?"

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Coffee House, Bull Ring): Thursday, March 16, at 8, H. Lennard, "Materialism and Man's Psychic Self."

FALLSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Home Service.

Huddersfield BRANCH N. S. S. (Brighouse, Borough Market): C. J. Atkinson, Freethought Address.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, The ex-Rev. J. Lloyd, "Sir Oliver Lodge as a Theologian"; 6.30, "The Romance of Science."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): 6, Business Meeting; Tuesday, March 14, at 8, City (Saloon) Hall, John Lloyd, "The Message of Evolution."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Alfred Milnes, "A Permanent Shadow from the Fourteenth Century."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, H. Percy Ward, "The World's Religions—Buddhism"; 7, "Christianity Doomed by Science." Monday at 8, Rationalist Debating Society: W. Cain, Literary Paper.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): No Lecture.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, William Dyson, "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Arrangements for Mr. Foote's Lectures April 2.

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