

THE Freethinker

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*Temperance the best physic, patience the best law,
and a good conscience the best divinity.*—BISHOP
SANDERSON.

Dr. Horton on Labor and Religion.

DR. R. F. HORTON, of Hampstead, is chairman of the Free Church Council, which is now holding its annual gathering at Manchester. As a sort of preparation for his duties there, he preached a sermon to his own congregation on "Labor and the Free Churches" before leaving for Cottonopolis. And, having delivered himself of the usual pulpit gush about the lot of the working man, sympathising with his hardships—which is cheap—and preaching charity and kindness—which is easy—Dr. Horton evidently felt that he had offered a very weighty contribution to the general question of Capital and Labor.

It must not be supposed that Dr. Horton's interest in Labor is founded upon the mere fact that the lot of the working man might be, or ought to be, improved. His interest in the subject is founded upon the fear that the "English working people may sheer off entirely from Christianity." That is, to put the matter upon a simple footing, he looks at the problem from the point of view of trade. It is probable that, unless the Churches show some interest in labor questions, working-men may outgrow the belief in Christianity; therefore, he says, in the interests of trade in the present and in the future let us who are in command of the Churches do our best to avert such a calamity. It is not the fact of the Labor question demanding study that inspires the parson to interest himself in it; it is that unless some interest is shown in the matter that working men may desert the Churches, and the wealthier members, realising that religion is no longer powerful enough to instil obedience and humility, and all the other "lickspittle" virtues of orthodox Christianity, may desert also. For the truth is, whether it has been consciously recognised, or only "sensed" in the way in which class interest scents danger, the truth is that the churches and chapels have been the chief preservers of things as they are, and the greatest obstacles to rational reform. And it is only fair to point out, and also confirmatory of what has been said, that at the Manchester Conference the Rev. J. E. Rattenbury plainly told the audience that many of the Free Churches "were simply limited liability companies run in the interests of the middle classes by the middle classes." Mr. Rattenbury might have said *all* instead of many, for no church or chapel can become a progressive agency without losing its character as a religious organisation.

Dr. Horton does not believe that the English people are intrinsically irreligious, but rather that deep down in them there "is a religious instinct of a very astonishing and potent kind," which is as silly a statement as could well be made. People are neither "instinctively" religious nor irreligious. Instinctively, if the word must be used, they are *non-religious*, but all possess, to start, an unformed nature that may be *made* religious if circumstances are favorable to development in that direction. And

these circumstances Dr. Horton and his like, so far as they can, provide. It is this fact that explains the clerical anxiety to retain religious instruction in the schools, and by various methods "jockey" adults into the fold. And the religious cry that unless children are innoculated with religion we shall have a nation of unbelievers is a fine commentary upon Dr. Horton's discovery of a deep and potent religious instinct in the English people. An instinct to be so easily got rid of must be "potent" indeed.

Dr. Horton is sanguine that "the Church of Christ might win the whole labour of England if only it could be secure of the right ideas." One can quite agree with this, and it need not be limited to the world of labor. If the Church of Christ can but get the right ideas it can capture not only Labor, but even the National Secular Society, and command the support of every Freethinker in Great Britain. Of course there is the trifling drawback that in that case it would cease to be the Church of Christ, and this will certainly have to happen before it can impose itself for long upon level-headed people as a friend of progress. Not only are the traditions and present interests of the Christian Churches opposed to any such plan, but there is something in the very nature of supernaturalism that acts as a bar to rational development. In actual life people do succeed in keeping their religious folly tolerably distinct from their practical affairs, yet the human organism is a unity, and the mental debauchery of religion must react generally. One cannot have a population looking for its mental and moral food to neurotics like Evan Roberts, or unscrupulous revivalists like Dr. Torrey, or to literature of the *Christian Herald* class, without feeling its effect in the social and political world. People who, in what they regard as the higher things of life, allow themselves to be ruled by prejudice, and exalt crude emotionalism over reason, are not likely to be too careful or too particular in other matters. When folly rules in the Church it is apt to have a large "sphere of influence" outside.

One reason why Dr. Horton believes the Free Churches might capture Labor is that they are made up chiefly of working people. This may easily be so; and I imagine it holds as true of the Church of England, and is certainly true of the Roman Catholic Church. The absurdity of the reasoning is, however, apparent if one reflects that the vast majority of the inhabitants of the country are necessarily working people. What Dr. Horton ought to show is that the Free Churches have more than a fair proportion of working men among its members. This he does not, and cannot, show. And even if he did it would not be conclusive; for it is a mere political accident that leads Nonconformists to appeal to the masses against the classes. The Church of England is the Church of the established order of things; and of necessity anyone who is against that Church must appeal for support to those who wish to change the established order. It is this simple fact that accounts for Nonconformist appeals to "the people," while the kindred fact that the political fight has hitherto been very largely a fight of the middle against the upper classes has made the Nonconformists an essentially middle-class body.

Remove this political accident, and how much

better, politically or socially, is Dissent than Episcopalianism? If Dr. Horton does not know, others are well aware of the fact that Nonconformity is as well represented as any body in Great Britain among such as drive hard bargains with workpeople and tenants, and avail themselves of the shady trickeries of commerce and speculation. And if Dr. Horton will consult the *Daily Chronicle* of March 6 he will find a lengthy article describing how that great American Baptist and Sunday-school teacher, Rockefeller, has, by the most unscrupulous methods, crushed out—financially—smaller men in the task of building up his oil monopoly; how he discovered nothing, invented nothing—save a still more unscrupulous plan of using unscrupulous methods, and, having built up a monopoly, sacrifices hundreds and thousands of lives rather than raise the flash point of his commodity. American workmen would open their eyes if they were told that Baptists, Congregationalists, etc., were better friends to Labor than Episcopalianism.

Another reason Dr. Horton has for his belief is that when working men want leaders they take Free Churchmen. Well, it would indeed be strange if, with a population overwhelmingly Christian one could not cite the names of working-class leaders who were Christians. And it is worthy of note that Dr. Horton's half-dozen names are all either members of Parliament or candidates for that honor, where one has to angle for votes, and when known Free-thought opinions would act as a disqualification. I am not suggesting that the gentlemen cited do not believe in a Christianity of a sort, but only that the bigotry of Christians prevents Freethinkers standing in the same position and number as Parliamentary representatives.

And having said this, one would make two observations. First, one would ask what is, or what was, the religious opinions of men like Burns, Blatchford, Quelch, Hyndman, Bax, Bernard Shaw, William Morris, or Charles Bradlaugh? All of these have surely some claim to be counted as working-class leaders. And these are only samples from the bulk; for, as a matter of fact, an overwhelming proportion of the working-class leaders in Trades Union, Political, and Labor and Socialistic agitations of the past seventy years have been Freethinkers. No doubt Dr. Horton knows this as well as I do, but it suits his purpose to ignore a fact that is fatal to his case. In his presidential address at Manchester, Dr. Horton expressed his horror at priests who taught the legitimacy of lying. Well, there is more than one way of telling a lie. One can suggest a lie as well as state one. It is to be wished that Dr. Horton's horror of falsehood extended to both kinds.

And, next, with all due respect to the labors and sincerity of men like Mr. Crooks, will Dr. Horton be good enough to inform the world how many of the men he names are leaders in the sense of *leaders* on a new line of action? Of course he will not, because a perfectly honest reply would disclose the fact that these Christian leaders were themselves generally led by non-Christians. For the last century, at least, social reforms have been mainly started by Freethinkers. Had Robert Owen, for instance, been a Christian instead of a Freethinker, Dr. Horton would scarcely have got through his sermon without a reference to the debt the working classes owed him. Had the French Revolution been a Christian movement we should have been told how much the world owed that upheaval for the ideas it disseminated. Why, the modern labour movement is practically a Freethought creation. If working men only recall the names of men like Marx or Lassalle, or the names of Gabor leaders abroad and at home, they will soon realise the absurdity of Dr. Horton's position.

But why this sudden anxiety for the working man? There have always been plenty of that class in the world; yet so long as they paid respect to religion, ordered themselves reverently before their pastors and masters, and were content where God and the sweater were pleased to place them, the

Churches showed no great interest in Labor movements. This won't-you-come-into-my-parlor business only begins when it is seen that the working classes are dropping religion, that they will not walk into the parlor, and those who maintain the parlor begin to ask, "If the fly will not come in what is the use of maintaining a black-coated attendant?" Or, to put the matter quite plainly, churches and chapels are, and always have been, maintained for the purpose, as some parsons express it, of "keeping the people in order." And so long as they were kept in order nothing else mattered. For centuries the people sweated and starved and *prayed*. And the Churches never found they had a mission to the poor save to preach contentment and dole out charity—on a commission. But the wind of Freethought begins to play over the world. Discontent takes the place of swinish submission; people pray less and think more; and thinking begets action. And so the Churches discover that they have a mission to the world of Labor. And this mission is, stripped of all subterfuge, that having failed in crushing the rising aspirations of the people, the next best thing is to control it. Many there are who fall into the trap, but there are some who are more wary. And these see that the Labor movement that opens with prayer is doomed to failure. It is not to the clergy, the least intellectual, the least straightforward, the least reliable, of any class in the community that Labor, if it is wise, will look for guidance and wise counsel.

C. COHEN.

"Some Moral Difficulties of the Old Testament."

SUCH is the title of the twenty-first of the present series of Manchester Lectures on "What is Christianity?" It was delivered by the Rev. D. W. Forrest, D.D., Minister of North Morningside United Free Church, Edinburgh. Dr. Forrest is an eminent divine, a popular preacher, and an extremely able man. Intellectually, he is a pronounced evolutionist and a Higher Critic; but religiously he is an orthodox Christian. In this lecture he comes before us as an ingenious compromiser between old and new views, between conservative and liberal opinions, or between theology and science. The "Moral Difficulties of the Old Testament" which he discusses are purely theological problems. From the evolutionary point of view, the Sacrifice of Isaac, the Massacre of the Canaanites, and the Psalms of Cursing are easy to understand and explain; but from the theological point of view they are puzzling enigmas or perplexing problems. Dr. Forrest goes about his work very cleverly, but fails to accomplish it to our satisfaction.

We will start, as he does, with the Sacrifice of Isaac. This is an ancient theological conundrum upon which innumerable divines, both Jewish and Christian, have exercised their ingenuity. The story, as told in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, is most realistic. Having once read it no one can ever forget it. It is dramatic in the extreme. But what does it mean? Did God, at first, order the sacrifice, and did He afterwards forbid it? Dr. Forrest has no hesitation in saying, and we all agree with him, that "if a father to-day were to seek to take away his son's life we should call it a crime," and that "if he claimed that he acted under the authority of heaven we should declare him to be a victim to some form of religious mania." But why should a different declaration be made in the case of Abraham? Is not all religion a form of mania? Abraham loved Isaac with all his heart. If God exists He was the same then as He is now, and so could not have demanded such a sacrifice. Therefore, if Abraham imagined that God told him to immolate his son he must have suffered from delusions, he must have been more or less mad. It may be pointed out that human sacrifices were common in that age; but that is no proof that the

offerers of such sacrifices were not victims to "some form of religious mania." Nothing short of "some form of religious mania" would have convinced the most primitive parents that there lived a God who feasted on their slain sons. And yet Dr. Forrest, being a professional theologian, and so a believer in the inspiration of the Bible, teaches that, in some way inexplicable to us, God *did* try, or prove, or discipline Abraham by requesting him to part with his only begotten son, and that, afterwards, He *did* reward his faith by arresting his hand at the psychological moment. Other divines are bold enough to maintain that the patriarch was mistaken when he thought the sacrifice was required at his hands, and that God only spoke to him when the sacrifice was prohibited. Freethinkers go a step further, and hold that Abraham was mistaken both times. Their comment on the incident, supposing it to have had any basis in history, would be that the first voice symbolised the *religious* impulse of the age, and the second, the natural, unperverted *human*, or *parental* impulse of the same period; and the narrative represents the latter as grandly triumphing over the former.

Dr. Forrest takes too much for granted. He is supposed to be arguing with sceptics, but in reality he is only preaching to devout believers. To sceptics the story under consideration is nothing but a *relic* from a dead and buried past, and the lecturer adduces no argument to convince them that it is more. This is his conclusion:—

"Just when Abraham was about to make the sacrifice, the divine command prohibits it. It was a divine impulse that inspired him to keep nothing back from God, but it was working through a mistaken conception of the lawfulness of taking away life, and this mistaken conception is now corrected. God accepts the spirit of the patriarch's surrender, but pronounces the form in which he was about to express it illegitimate. He first deals with Abraham through the defective primitive ideas of human life, which he shared with his age, and then having taught him through them a great spiritual lesson, lifts him to a higher level by proclaiming the sacredness of human personality. God is present in both stages of his education; first, in bearing home to him the necessity of sacrifice and self-abnegation as the heart of the religious life, and then in freeing this truth from the perverted expression of it sanctified by the morality of the time."

That is always the style of the pulpit, and to believers it proves highly edifying; but to sceptics it is utterly unconvincing. Dr. Forrest reads *into* the story infinitely more than it contains, and all that he reads into it is drawn from his own imagination.

But let us proceed to the wholesale massacre of the Canaanites. Unlike Dr. Torrey, Dr. Forrest admits that the extermination was brutal in the extreme; and his only explanation of it is "that the ancient Oriental world had no such conception as we now have of human individuality. It did not regard man as a person, with definite and inalienable rights as such, but as a member of a social whole, of a family, tribe, or nation. The unit of life was the corporate body, and every member of it was involved in the action of that body as represented in its head, whether father or king. When, then, the father or king committed any crime, those who owed him allegiance as children or subjects were viewed as implicated in the act, and rightly liable to the same punishment. This was possible only because Eastern peoples had no proper idea of personality." This explanation is scientific and satisfactory, and Freethinkers accept it as such. But, being a theologian and a believer in the inspiration of the Bible, Dr. Forrest must go on to excuse those horrible butcheries on the ground that the Canaanites were savages, "sunk in the most abject idolatries and the grossest immoralities," while the Israelites were Jehovah's chosen people. In no other way can he account for the fact that the indiscriminate slaughter is represented as having been commanded by God. Joshua was doubtless mistaken; but he *believed*, *imagined* that Jehovah would have approved of it, if He did not formally order the utter destruc-

tion of the moral lepers who previously inhabited the land of promise. But perhaps Joshua was not mistaken; indeed, he could not have been mistaken, because "a nascent faith such as the Israelites possessed 's' in peril of perishing altogether if it is not allowed to fight for itself with the weapons which alone it can use. In their own internal affairs—as between Jew and Jew—the discrimination of individuals might be possible. But if they had carried out these distinctions in their struggle for their national existence and their national faith against a debased and corrupting heathenism, the Israel that we know as the chosen race of religion might have been lost to history." After all, the difference between Dr. Forrest and Dr. Torrey, on this point, is very slight, only the former half states the true doctrine, while the latter is blind to it. Dr. Forrest is an evolutionist, and has a right conception of the meaning of history. But his theology persistently intrudes upon his science, and his faith gives a strange twist to his natural knowledge.

It is the same problem that meets us in the Psalms of Cursing, only here it is reversed. In the former instances God is represented as commanding men to do things which are now regarded as morally wrong. In the present case it is men who are represented as entreating God to do similar wrongs himself. Dr. Forrest is clearly mistaken when he says that here the moral problem is of a different character. It is the same problem from the opposite point of view. In the first two instances men commit crimes at God's bidding, while in the Cursing Psalms God is invited to commit crimes at men's bidding. Here, again, Dr. Forrest takes us within sight of the true explanation. He makes the proper excuses and allowances for the chosen people. He tells us how essential it was that they should be protected, delivered, and made universally victorious. But just here theology slips in again, and gives a false color to everything it touches. We are assured that the national ascendancy of the Israelites was an indispensable condition of the triumph of the only true religion. It was on this ground that they besought God to avenge them upon all their enemies, their enemies being his also. Their cause was God's, and God was necessarily on their side and so the sworn enemy of all outsiders. God had chosen them as his own peculiar people, and was therefore under an obligation to befriend them. They were the earth's highest and best, and all who opposed and persecuted them deserved to perish.

Do we not now see that God is man objectified? Jehovah was simply an objectification of the national character, or, in other words, a personification of the national purposes, aspirations, and ideals. Consequently, his character invariably reflected that of the people. He grew along with them. He shared all their risings and their fallings, all their good works and all their brutal crimes. They made him responsible for all the latter and praised his name for all the former. He was only an idealised copy of themselves. Read the Bible from beginning to end, and you will find that all the way through God's character corresponds to that of the persons who represent him. Isaiah's God, for example, was that prophet's ideal of what the nation ought to have been. Isaiah denounced the people for what they were and did in the name of his ideal of them. The same thing is true of the Christian God. He is the personified ideal of character as formulated in the Christian Religion. All must and will admit that He is at least this, and no one can prove that He is anything more. I am aware that Dr. Forrest still clings to the old belief, that what we have in the Bible is the gradual revelation which God graciously gave of himself to his chosen Israel. But even Dr. Forrest is conscious of the difficulties which necessarily attend such a belief. When asked why the Divine Being should not have disclosed himself fully at the beginning, he can only say: "Such is not God's method of dealing with man in any part of his being, intellectual, moral, or religious." In another part of

the lecture he waxes bolder, and says: "It was not possible for God—we may say with all reverence—unless He were to reverse the educational conditions of our human life which He himself has laid down, to vouchsafe as clear a knowledge of himself to Abraham or to Moses as to the prophet Isaiah." But why was such a thing impossible? Why are the educational conditions of our human life such as they are? Dr. Forrest cannot answer in terms of theology. It is only in terms of evolution that the problem finds its solution. Reading history in the light of modern science, we can trace the evolution of the idea of God from its first inception to its final form in Christianity; and what we see all along is, not a Supernatural Being bending down and making himself known to man, but, rather, man intently gazing upwards in wonder and fear and uncertainty, and imagining or creating a Supernatural Being. *That is all we can see, and this vision is true.* Is there more to see? No mortal man can tell. Do some people see more? Do Christians see more? Even the Bible teaches that no man has ever seen God. Dr. Forrest, or Dr. Warschauer, may claim that religious people are far-sighted, while Freethinkers are short-sighted, and that all must report according as they see. As a matter of fact, however, what theologians report is, not a deeper vision specially vouchsafed to them, but their own interpretation of the vision seen by all who care to open their eyes and look.

Let it be born in mind that *reporting* and *interpreting* are two radically different things. What all alike can see is the gradual evolution of the idea of God. Theologians *assume*, but cannot *prove*, that this gradual evolution was the outcome of a progressive revelation of a Being actually existing. Now, if such a Being exists, He must be capable of making himself known; but if He is capable of making himself known, it is sheer presumption on the part of anyone to say for him that He could not have fully revealed himself at once to the man He had made in his own image and after his own likeness. Why, a missionary of to-day goes to a raw savage, who is as low down in the human scale as primitive man could have been, and in ten years communicates to that raw savage as minute and complete a knowledge of God as the Archbishop of Canterbury claims to possess. And yet we are calmly told that God could not have fully or even accurately revealed himself to Joshua, or to any other Old Testament character. What we see, then, is, not God making and revealing himself to man, but man making and setting his own image upon God. And is it not strange that the idea of God originated and was developed during the infancy of our race? And is it not stranger still that, as knowledge grows from more to more, there should be a growing tendency to drop God from thought and life?

J. T. LLOYD.

Freethought Bequests.

READERS of this journal will perhaps remember that I wrote an article, a fortnight ago, on "The Rights of Freethinkers." That article was largely a reply to some observations of Mr. G. J. Holyoake's on Freethought Bequests. By way of rejoinder the veteran sends me, as editor of the *Freethinker*, the following communication—which is printed in smaller type, not because it is less important than what I have to say myself, but merely in pursuance of a printing rule that distinct things should be kept visibly separate:—

DEAR SIR,—Thank you for the friendly notice of my new book and for your remarks (March 12) on my article in the *Daily Chronicle* on Lord Coleridge and Pooley. I agree with you that the heroism of Voltaire in the matter of the Calas family cannot be too highly estimated.

You say in the *Freethinker* (March 5): "The oddest thing of all is that Mr. Holyoake is Chairman of an Association copied in all essentials from the Secular Society, Limited" [This is the first time I have heard

that], "and this Association actually invites its friends and members to leave it bequests in their will, assuring them that such bequests are perfectly secure."

The Rationalist Press Association gives no such assurance in their notice concerning bequests. All they say is that "money may be bequeathed for the purposes of philanthropic inquiry or educational enlightenment." The Association gives no "assurance" of security in doing it—nor ought they to assume it. I do not know in what terms the Secular Society express their objects, but if the terms are the same as those of the Rationalist Press Association (taken from the bill I drew) the Secular Society may have as good a chance as the Rationalist Press Association. If you have registered the Society with a distinct avowal of its anti-Christian objects, you may have repealed all the prohibitory acts and silenced the common law. If so you will, on your statement, deserve all the credit of the discovery. But until some anti-Christian bequest has been contested by the family of the testator and decided against them, no one is entitled to say that testators are safe. The only security is for the amount of the bequest to be given absolutely to some person who would be likely to use it as a testator himself would.

I did once see a notice (not issued by me or with my knowledge) stating that money might be safely left for Rationalist purposes. I objected to its appearance, as it might be deceptive to testators, as there was no authority for giving any such assurance; and therefore I do all I can to get a short bill passed in Parliament which will make absolute the legality of Freethought bequests.

I think it most useful to keep before the public three facts: (1) A testator whose family is not likely to dispute his will may feel sure that his bequest will be secure. (2) He may leave without condition the money to a friend. (3) Better and safer than all, he may give the money while he lives and superintend its uses if he pleases.

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

I will deal with the subsidiary points of this letter first, and with the overwhelming important one last.

Mr. Holyoake says he had not heard before that the Rationalist Press Association was "copied in all essentials from the Secular Society, Limited." This involves the truism that he has only heard what he was told. I do not suppose for a moment that those to whom he might have looked for information told him any more than they thought necessary. But if he had done me the honor of making himself acquainted with what he must have known I had labored upon—for it was not only written about frequently and at great length in the *Freethinker*, but also referred to several times in very laudatory terms in another journal with which Mr. Holyoake might be better conversant, besides being made the subject of discussions and resolutions at N. S. S. Conferences—he might have learnt the facts for himself, and saved me the trouble and unpleasantness of an explanation at this time of day.

While I was devising the Secular Society, Limited, my printing was done—as it had been for some years before, and as it was for some years afterwards—at 17 Johnson's-court. The fact was not generally known because my name appeared on the *Freethinker* as printer and publisher. This weekly announcement began after my release from Holloway Gaol in 1884 and continued until the paper passed into the hands of the Freethought Publishing Company in 1899. Its object was to expose no one but myself to attack in case of another "blasphemy" prosecution. I gave up my old Clerkenwell-green printing office and handed over the printing of the *Freethinker* and all my books and pamphlets to Mr. Charles Watts. Nominally he was my printer, but everything was transacted through his son, who was always on the spot attending to the business—and, as far as I was concerned, most satisfactorily. I also rented an editorial office on the premises, and the basement for housing my stock of publications. Of course this is rather ancient history, and I mention it simply in order to explain what follows.

The scheme of the Secular Society, Limited, was in print some twelve months before the date of registration (September, 1898). The proof was in the hands of the printer all that time. It was not

surprising, therefore, that the printer (I mean the actual printer) had a similar scheme in readiness for launching soon after mine was afloat. I am not saying that there was any harm in this. I am not casting any reflections. I am just stating facts—and drawing attention to chronology.

Had it not been for the Secular Society, Limited, there never would have been any Rationalist Press Association, Limited. It was I who produced the seed; it was easy for others to grow the flower.

Anyone with an eye for such things, who can look through the verbiage of Articles of Association, will see that the main features of my scheme are reproduced in the other scheme. They *must* be reproduced in *any* scheme—for the project was thought out once for all. An actual Trust is constituted without being called a Trust; and, I venture to say, without the disadvantages of a nominal Trust. That is the very essence of my scheme, and the special Articles which secure it are reproduced in the imitation. The differences are in minor matters that *can* be changed; the agreements are in primary matters that *cannot* be changed.

I take Mr. Holyoake's word for it that these facts were unknown to him. They were not unknown, however, to his active associates. And when they induced him to put his name to their appeal for £1,000, representing that their Association was the first thing of the kind in the history of Freethought, they were taking advantage of his innocence. It is pleasant to learn that Mr. Holyoake had no conscious share in that misrepresentation. I know there is a maxim that all things are fair in love and war—and some carry it still farther, but I was never able to subscribe to it. There are some things that only the base can do even to their enemies.

With regard to the "chance" of the Secular Society, Limited, which Mr. Holyoake hopes "may be as good" as the Association's he is chairman of, I desire to say that it has enjoyed something more substantial than good wishes. It has received several legacies—without the slightest friction. And I venture to prophesy that there never will be any.

Of course it is Mr. Holyoake's ignorance of the Secular Society, Limited, which leads him to ask whether its objects are expressed in the same terms as those of an Association that came into existence subsequently. In neither case can I see that the terms owe anything to his Liberty of Bequest Bill. Here is the vital clause in his Association's Memorandum:—

"Rationalism may be defined as the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics verifiable by experience and independent of all arbitrary assumptions or authority."

Is this anything more than a verbose and pompous, yet timid, way of expressing the main substance of what was set forth in the Memorandum of the Secular Society, Limited? The correspondingly vital clause in that document runs thus:—

"To promote, in such ways as may from time to time be determined, the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action."

This is good English. It is also good Secularism. It is clear and honest. It goes to the very point of absolute difference between Secularism and Christianity. It sweeps supernaturalism right out of the field; it denies the thought of another life any sovereignty over the present life. It excludes every form of religion, as the word is usually understood. In essence it is Agnostic, Atheistic—or whatever else you like to call the rejection of the supernatural.

Mr. Holyoake knows now that I have registered a Society "with a distinct avowal of its anti-Christian objects"—distinct, that is, to everyone who has the sense to understand its clear and candid language. But I have not "repealed all the prohibitory acts" nor have I "silenced the common law." Such expressions show that Mr. Holyoake has overlooked the

whole gist of my argument in the article to which he replies.

What are the prohibitory acts? I only know of one act—the Act of William III., which was afterwards amended in favor of Unitarians. That Act defeated itself. It was so tightly drawn as to be incapable of application. No proceedings were ever taken under it. It was a dead letter from the beginning. The old Common Law was not "silenced" by my Incorporated Society. It was silenced by my prosecution for "blasphemy." I argued in my defence that it was absurd to declare that Christianity was part and parcel of the law of England after Jews had been admitted to parliament. Lord Chief Justice Coleridge supported this argument in his summing up. He laid it down that the very fundamentals of Christianity may now be assailed, provided that the attack be carried on in a proper spirit. Of course the latter clause is only a theoretical sop to orthodoxy. The former clause is a substantial concession to Freethought.

Common Law is judge-made law. Previous judges made the old Common Law of Blasphemy by their decisions. Lord Coleridge made the new Common Law of Blasphemy by his decision. What else did Mr. Holyoake himself mean by the declaration in the *Daily Chronicle* that Lord Coleridge's judgment in my case "amounted to a new charter of the public right of conscientious discussion"? If the Common Law of Blasphemy is just what it used to be, where does the "new charter" come in?

My point is that Lord Coleridge's judgment started a new epoch. It is no longer a crime at Common Law to oppose Christianity. That was why the Secular Society could be incorporated. And that is why any other Society, having the same object, can be incorporated after it.

When I say "the same object" I speak advisedly. In spite of all its high-flown utterances about "philosophy," and haughty sneers at popular Freethought, it is as plain as possible that opposition to Christianity is the only point of agreement amongst the members and writers and speakers of the Rationalist Press Association. Let them try to formulate a more positive agreement, and see how quickly they would fly asunder.

Mr. Holyoake admits that his Association has stated that "money might be safely left for Rationalist purposes," but it was done without his consent. How was I to know that? I saw his name as chairman at the end of a Report which stated that "money may be not only subscribed, but bequeathed to it, with every confidence." Even in the current Prospectus, under the heading of "Bequests," I notice the assurance that "there would be the fullest guarantee" for the "carrying out of the testator's intentions." If this is not the case, it should be stated in the Prospectus, and not in the *Freethinker*.

Mr. Holyoake says that the "only security" for money left to promote Freethought is bequeathing it "absolutely to some person who would be likely to use it as a testator himself would." With all proper respect to Mr. Holyoake, I beg Secularists to believe nothing of the kind. One of my objects in devising the Secular Society, Limited, was to do away with all that. It is far from desirable to prevent Freethinkers from making a bequest to any Freethought advocate who may have given his life, and all that this involves, to the service of the cause. But whatever is intended for the movement itself should be bequeathed to the Incorporation, either for its general objects, or for some special object that may be desired; since the Incorporation can act as trustee for any purpose whatever.

I have gone thoroughly into the matter, and assure Freethinkers who have anything to leave the movement, that a bequest to (say) the Secular Society, Limited, cannot be contested in the way Mr. Holyoake suggests. While the Incorporation stands—and it cannot be upset in connection with a will, as Mr. Holyoake will find if he takes competent opinion—

executors have no alternative but to pay legacies over as directed by the testators.

Personally I do not see that Mr. Holyoake's old Liberty of Bequest Bill is now of the slightest importance. Fourteen or fifteen years ago it might have been—at least as far it made the law as laid down by Lord Coleridge clearer. But the Secular Society, Limited, has solved the financial problem. All that now remains to be done is to pass a Bill repealing the Blasphemy Laws altogether. This would sweep the board of the last crumbs of legal bigotry. In the meanwhile, however, I say—with the best of legal opinion behind me—that Freethinkers (even Atheists) are perfectly free to bequeath money to promote their principles. They cannot safely do so if they leave it to a fluid Society which is not registered and therefore has no legal existence; but they can do so with absolute safety if they leave it to an Incorporated Society, which has all the rights of an individual citizen.

Finally, I wish to say that Mr. Holyoake's opposition to this view of mine is obviously based upon his non-recognition of the real character of Lord Coleridge's judgment at my trial. Perhaps it is natural that he fails to recognise it. So many wise heads failed to recognise it, until I was fortunate enough to see it plainly and act upon it decisively. Mr. Holyoake's imprisonment for "blasphemy" happened sixty-three years ago. A lot of water has run under London Bridge since then. What the veteran Secularist seems to forget is the course of time and the progress of events. He does not quite forget it, for he saw the importance of Lord Coleridge's judgment when he wrote to the *Daily Chronicle*. He forgets it in this argument concerning Bequests. I do not forget it. And this explains the difference between us.

G. W. FOOTE.

Acid Drops.

Another Torrey lie nailed down in its coffin! We referred last week to a circumstantial story in the *London Daily Express*, to the effect that a canvass was made at the well-known establishment of Messrs. Sutton, at Reading, and that 600 professed infidels were found amongst the employees; that these were all brought up by special train to London and taken to the Albert Hall, where many of them accepted Christianity on the spot. A friend of ours in the West of England wrote to Messrs. Sutton asking what truth there was in this story. He received the following reply:—

The Royal Seed Establishment, Reading.
March 7, 1905.

DEAR SIR,—

In reply to your letter of yesterday's date, the paragraph you refer to had no foundation. No such visit was ever made or even thought of.

We are, dear Sir,
Yours faithfully,

SUTTON & SONS.

We keep this letter by us for inspection if necessary.

Dr. Torrey has not yet obliged the world with the name of that lady Freethought lecturer in Hyde Park whom he claimed to have converted at the Albert Hall. There is no Hyde Park lady lecturer known to the Freethought party in London. Dr. Torrey has therefore been deceived by some cranky female or he invented this lie out of his own head. Even if he was deceived he is a liar now, for he has been told of the mistake and advised to make inquiries, but he does nothing of the kind. He prefers to let the lie stand.

This Yankee revivalist has not the decency to justify or withdraw his accusations against Thomas Paine and Ingersoll. We tell him plainly to his face that he is the worst liar in London. What a joke is this man's coming to save us! Many better men than himself are "doing time."

They are "washing St. Paul's Cathedral" by an American process. Couldn't they go up to the Albert Hall and wash Torrey?

It was the *Daily Chronicle* that published Dr. Torrey's insolence about "infidelity and immorality" being "twins." The same journal publishes his statement that "the professed Atheists are mentally and numerically small." Well,

there are many of them who could easily give Dr. Torrey a licking in an intellectual encounter. He knows better than to meet one of them. A more bombastic coward never strutted on a Christian platform. He flings filth at Freethinkers' houses and runs away every time they look at him. There have been blackguards in his line of business before, but we never knew of any such blackguard who was so much a craven. When he declares that he is "saved" anyhow, we can only say, with Byron, "It is a large economy in God to save the like."

The *Chronicle* said (probably with an eye to its advertisement columns) that Dr. Torrey was making a great impression on the West End. The *Christian World*, on the other hand, declared that "the West End element was almost entirely lacking" at his meetings. It frankly admitted that the audience consisted mostly of "church-going people." The *Christian World* also admitted that Dr. Torrey converted the converted, his "appeals often drawing reponses from people already in fellowship with churches." "From the Albert Hall inquiry room officials," it says, "the minister of a well-known central church recently received the names of seven 'converts' resident in the neighborhood of his church. Of these four were found to be young people already actively engaged in religious work and in full church membership, while another of the seven could not be traced at all because the address given was absolutely non-existent." Facts like this make big holes in the Torrey balloon.

Dr. Torrey claims to have converted four Church clergymen at the Albert Hall. It sounds awfully odd, doesn't it? Anyhow, we hope it will keep them out of gaol.

Rev. Eustace Jervis, chaplain at Lewes Prison, preaching at St. Katherine's Church, said that "All sorts and conditions of men passed through his hands in prison every year. They included clergymen (laughter), churchwardens—several churchwardens, in fact, lately (laughter)—a whole landing full of family solicitors, and hosts of people who called themselves most respectable." The reverend gentleman did not make any speciality of Atheists. He seemed too busy with churchwardens and clergymen.

Sir Charles Warren—the hero of Trafalgar Square and Spion Kop—has found his true vocation at last. On Wednesday, March 8, he addressed a large congregation at St. Edmund's Church, Lombard-street, E.C., under the auspices of the Church of England Men's Society. Women, therefore, as we are glad to see, had nothing to do with the affair. The great hero wore a surplice and a cassock. What a pity he did not begin, instead of ending, his career in this fashion.

Another layman filled a pulpit on the same day. Mr. C. F. G. Masterman, one of the *Daily News* saints, who is also a politician and aspires to a seat in parliament, preached from the pulpit of St. Paul's, Covent Garden. His sermon seems to have been of the sentimental Christian Socialist variety. Has Mr. Masterman found his true vocation, too?

General Booth has gone to Jerusalem. Why did he not extend his trip to Jericho?

"Severe rebuke to Agnostics" is the heading of a report in the *Hull Daily Mail* of a sermon by the Rev. R. O. Johns in St. George's Hall. The reverend gentleman appears to have been preaching a sort of charity sermon; not human charity, but Christian charity—for he hurled his professional scorn at "the blatant infidel," though it would be very difficult to find any "infidel" quite as blatant as this preacher of the gospel of love. Mr. Johns was great on orphanages and the feeding of poor children. He referred to a local institution, and remarked that "if you look down the subscription lists you will find the subscribers whose money helps to feed the children are men and women who praise God." And this man thinks himself a Christian! Well, he may be so, but he is not a follower of Christ. Jesus said that in giving you were not to let one hand know what the other did; so far from making a boast of it, you were to keep it dark. Mr. Johns puts charity on a basis of competition. "Here is our subscription list," he says, "where's yours?"

Mr. Johns wanted to know where he could find an Agnostic hospital or an Agnostic orphanage. This question shows a complete misunderstanding on his part. Freethinkers do not want any more sectarian charity. Christians do quite enough in that direction. By sheer force of numbers they have nobbled every hospital in England. Money is accepted from all citizens in support of these institutions, but the Christians monopolise the management and use them in

furtherance of their own faith. They appoint chaplains and let them go about from bed to bed proselytising. They take care that the matrons and nurses are all Christians. If one of these shows Freethought proclivities she is soon given to understand that her room is preferable to her company. Cases of this kind have come under our personal observation.

Freethinkers are not going to set up Agnostic hospitals or Agnostic orphanages. They are working to make the hospitals public institutions—and *secular* institutions, as all public institutions should be. Religion should not be excluded; patients who want it should have it; but it should have no kind of privilege. And when this state of things is brought about, as it is sure to be in time, we shall see how much the Christian support of such institutions has been an expenditure on Christian propaganda.

Mr. Johns and all his kind should try to understand that Freethinkers are intolerably sick of orthodox cant about "charity." What is wanted is justice. The idea of leaving unfortunate children to the "charity" of religious propagandists is disgusting. Society at large owes them a duty. And when society recognises this fact, as it is beginning to, it will be all over with the pious trading on juvenile destitution.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is casting an envious eye on Wales. Why should the revival be confined to the Principality? Let us have some of it in England. To that end the Archbishop is considering the advisability of appointing a day to be observed throughout the Church of England for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It will be amusing to see the parsons, who are already full of the Holy Ghost, by virtue of their ordination, waiting *en masse* for a further charge of the same force. How they they will get it in passes our comprehension. Perhaps they are empty now. On second thoughts, we fancy this is very likely.

The National Free Church Council discussed a number of entertaining questions at Manchester. One of them was barmaids. Perhaps it would be still more entertaining if the barmaids discussed the National Free Church Council.

A barmaid's position is not an ideal one. It is often loathsome. But she might be in a worse position still in the present state of society. She might be on the streets, for instance; and that is where the Free Church Council might drive her if they succeed in throwing her out of her present labor market—as they are trying to do by legislative enactment. There are a vast number of barmaids in this country, and every man of sense knows what would happen in many cases if they were all turned out of their situations.

While the Free Church Council was on the liquor question it resolved that all public-houses should be closed not later than eleven on week days and all day on Sundays. As far as we are personally concerned this matter is of no interest, but from the point of view of the general public we are simply amazed at the insolence of these Nonconformist Puritans. The Sunday closing of public-houses is a proposal of religious fanaticism. It means that the men of God want to abolish all competition against themselves on the day of leisure. They fancy that if there were no other attractions on Sunday their churches and chapels would be better attended, if only out of sheer desperation. As for early closing on week days, we presume that "eleven o'clock at the latest" might mean ten, or nine, or eight, where the Nonconformist Puritan ruled the roost. What a pretty piece of tyranny this would be in a city like London! No doubt we shall soon find the Free Church Council resolving that no person should be allowed out of doors after dark without a special permit from a magistrate, endorsed by a minister of religion.

Gipsy Smith was one of the Free Church Council's public attractions. He performed at a midnight revival meeting in the Free Trade Hall—which never saw anything so "free" before. Hundreds of "mill hands," who ought to have been in their beds, were present. There were seven processions with bands and torches through the streets. To use an Americanism, it was quite an elegant entertainment. Dr. Clifford took his part in it with characteristic grace. But the principal attraction seems to have been Gipsy Smith's sister. The revival business is so flourishing that all the family are crowding into it. We saw Gipsy Smith's father billed the other day. No doubt we shall hear of his grandfather and his mother-in-law presently.

The "special correspondent" of the *Daily News* waxed quite hysterical over the hysterical scenes at that Free

Trade Hall midnight meeting. When the excitement had been worked up by all the pathological devices known to revivalism, the front rows of seats were cleared for the most susceptible victims, and "these were filled by praying and sobbing men and women." "How this effect was produced," he says, "cannot precisely be told. It was of the Spirit." What "spirit" does he mean? At that time of night it may have been a mixture.

"The Church of Christ in China" was discussed by the Free Church Council. Dr. Horton propounded his dream of uniting all the missionary societies in the Celestial Land, which is a thing he will never live to see accomplished. He believed that if all the Christian sects combined in a sort of happy-family attack on the Heathen Chinese, he would soon surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. What he would gain by the surrender is not quite clear. The missionary pictures of Chinese wickedness are got up for Exeter Hall—and subscriptions. There is at least as much sound morality in Heathen China as in Christian England. Manchuria is supposed to be the darkest part of China, yet Mr. David Fraser, the *Times* war correspondent, says that the inhabitants "build their streets with American regularity, keep them infinitely cleaner than those of London were kept a century ago, and conduct themselves with a decency and decorum that might be imitated to advantage in many places for which the last degree of civilisation is claimed." What good can Christian missionaries do there? Let them tackle the slum population of their own cities.

Here is another extract from Mr. Fraser's new book, *A Modern Campaign in the Far East*:—

"The people are temperate in their habits, decent in their public behavior, honest in their transactions, industrious to an astonishing degree, polite in a dignified and unobsequious manner, all of which disconcerts those entering China for the first time, burdened with preconceived notions of Chinese characteristics and the underlying belief that the inhabitant of Manchuria is a bandit. An intelligent and industrious man here, as in other parts of the world, may acquire wealth and position; by good deeds and upright living may earn the regard and honor of his fellow-men."

Again we ask, what do these people want with Christian missionaries?

In the discussion on the Bible the Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan told the Free Church Council that "The Churches as a whole did not know the Bible. The great majority of Christian men and women were woefully ignorant of its contents." We have often said the same thing. It is the Freethinkers who know the Bible. That is why they are Freethinkers.

By way of giving the Bible a lift a converted infidel was trotted out.

"Mr. E. P. Luke, who was introduced as a Secularist converted by the Bible, said he had been a victim of the caricatures of the Bible, such as were still presented to-day. He had mocked at the Bible, but now he could say with pride that he had the honor of having been imprisoned because he refused to permit the parsons to steal the Book from little children."

Mr. Luke, whoever he is—we have not the honor of his acquaintance—retired amidst applause. But those who applauded his last statement must be far gone in sectarian fanaticism. It is absurd to say that the parsons want to steal the Bible from little children. They simply want them to read it the right way. This is precisely what the Dissenting ministers want. The whole quarrel is over "the right way."

Years ago Mr. W. T. Stead surprised some of his pious friends (but he never surprises us) by talking about "tips from heaven." He has now got hold of another expression that will make some Christians squirm. It is "junior partners of God Almighty." Mr. Stead is one of them. He said so at the Free Church Congress in Manchester—if we may believe the local *Evening Chronicle*. We should like to know the senior partner's opinion on this subject.

Mr. Stead told the Free Churchmen that he "had been a bad lot." We should be sorry to contradict him. But why should he expose his unhappy past in this way?

We have to correct Christian mistakes in all sorts of directions. Here is a literary one. Dr. Horton, presiding at the recent Free Church Congress, proposed that a telegram of brotherly love should be sent to the Rev. R. J. Campbell, whose doctor would not allow him to take part in the proceedings. It is not very long since Dr. Horton claimed that God directly inspired him to write a certain book of devotion. But the same inspiration does not appear to guide him in other matters. After describing Mr. Camp-

bell as "one of the most sensitive human beings that God ever made"—as though there were human beings that someone else had made!—Dr. Horton proceeded as follows:—"It was said once by a great poet, of Shelley, that he was a reed through which every wind turned into music, and you may say of Mr. Campbell that he is also a reed through which every wind turns to eloquence." Now it is sufficiently ridiculous to suggest any comparison between Mr. Campbell and Shelley, but that is not our point. Dr. Horton is wrong altogether. No doubt he recollected in a muddled way what a great dead poet said of a great poet still living. Tennyson said of Swinburne: "He is a reed through which all things blow into music." The passage occurs on p. 657 of the *Life of Tennyson* by his son.

The Kaiser has stirred up bitter feeling amongst his Catholic subjects. Speaking after the consecration of the new cathedral at Berlin, and as a Protestant, he said that "By its fruits the Protestant Church would enable us to judge whether it would be victorious, and whether God was with it or with Rome." "If God is with us," he added, "we shall prevail, if not in twenty or 200 years, perhaps in 500." It is difficult to see any atrocious wickedness in this utterance. But the Catholics are never satisfied. They want their own way in everything. And one of their ways is to shut the mouth of every non-Catholic.

George Smith, aged twenty-five, is safe under lock and key for fifteen months. During that period his fellow citizens will be free from his piety and his predatoriness. After being sentenced in five different towns he took to swindling advertisers in the *Exchange and Mart*. He went to church in North-West London three times on Sunday, sang in the choir, and conducted a Bible class. So the *Daily Chronicle* says, from the evidence given in court. This is another case for Dr. Torrey when he has any time left after slaying the "infidels."

Another "infidel" suicide—which Dr. Torrey will please note. The Rev. A. C. Rogers, a curate of St. Peter's, Eaton-square, was depressed because an oculist had told him that he would have to undergo an operation for cataract, and depression led to one of its common results.

The *Sunday School Chronicle* defends beating children. Witness the following:—

"The reaction against the rod has been carried to absurd lengths. Children rarely feel the 'shame' of corporal punishment. Often they realise the justice of a caning, and prefer its short painfulness to the slow agony of other penalties."

Good old "penalties!" And good old cane! How hard it is to teach Christians philosophy and humanity.

Mr. Justice Darling, in ordering a criminal to be flogged, though it necessary to argue the point. He said that flogging had been called degrading, but he asked how it was possible to degrade such a man any further. We thought his lordship had more sense. There is no man on earth who is quite as bad as he might be. Cruelty degrades the degraded. It appeals, not to the best in them, but to the worst. And that is its condemnation.

Reuter's agency at St. Petersburg telegraphed to London on March 10 at 5 p.m.:—

"In a private telegram received from General Kuropatkin the request is expressed that the inhabitants of Russia's oldest city may offer up prayers for a Russian victory at Mukden."

Fancy a general at the present day sending such a telegram in the midst of a fierce engagement! No wonder these praying soldiers lose. It would take a terrible lot of prayer to stop the Japanese—who rely upon their own brains and courage.

Kuropatkin went out to Manchuria loaded with ikons and other superstitious rubbish. When he got there, and took command, he talked in the most insolent way of what he was going to do to the Japanese. He was going to sweep them into the sea and dictate terms of peace at Tokio. All he has been able to dictate yet is a series of retreating telegrams to the Czar. The wooden images of saints have probably helped the Japanese to keep warm.

Rev. Francis Standfast, preaching at the Sturminster Newton Wesleyan Chapel, Dorsetshire, fell from the pulpit to the floor in an epileptic fit, and expired soon afterwards. Of course the tale has no moral. It would have had one, however, if it involved a Secular lecturer. In that case it would have been a "judgment."

Religion has lost £100,000. Sad! but true. It appears that the late Mr. Alex. Dick Grimond, a Dundee manufac-

turer, directed that one-third of his property, which amounted to nearly £300,000, should be put to such "charitable or other religious institutions and societies" as his trustees might select. Two nieces of the testator contested the will, and lost in the Scottish courts. They appealed to the House of Lords, and got a decision in their favour. Mr. Grimond, it was held, had really left his executors to make a will for him after his death, and this the law does not allow. The religious bodies who were looking for a slice of that £100,000 have our sympathy.

Rev. W. B. Jones, of Penycæ, near Ruabon, despises sprinkling baptism. He takes Welsh revival converts into the Dee and puts them under water. After sousing all his candidates the other day he waded into the river until the water was up to his shoulders; then he lifted up his arms, and cried out to anyone in the crowd who felt stirred by the Spirit to come forward and have a ducking. But there was no response. The spectators did not find the religion of getting wet through attractive.

The Welsh revival did not prevent a sad pit accident by which many lives were lost. Nature goes on her inexorable way, quite regardless of hymns and prayers. As for the God who is supposed to be behind Nature, he seems no less blind and deaf. An ounce of precaution is worth a ton of supplication.

The Free Church Council could not separate without a Passive Resistance demonstration. There was a grand parade of "martyrs," some of whom had been immured in English dungeons for several days; and of course there was the usual perfervid speech from the "prospective martyr," the Rev. Dr. Clifford. He had worked himself up into the belief that he was fighting "for the soul of the nation"—whereas he was only fighting a trade battle "with" the Anglican Church. The Rev. F. B. Meyer, another "prospective martyr," said that "the Anglicans seemed to think that God Almighty had given them a prerogative for the education of the children, a prerogative to which they could not for one moment assent." Quite so. Neither can the non-Christians of England assent to the prerogative of the Nonconformists. We have said before, and we repeat, that Dr. Clifford flourishing the Bible in the nation's schools is as odious a figure as the Bishop of London flourishing the Church Catechism. Rather more so, indeed; for the Church Catechism is at least clean.

The case of Mr. Edwyn Holt, of Athol Dene, Hale, the prospective Liberal candidate for the Wirral Division, may be described as "Martyrdom made Easy." This gentleman joined the ranks of the Passive Resisters, and declined to pay the Education rate. He was brought before the "beak" and told by the magistrates that they had to perform their "painful duty" and commit him to prison. This they did with heavy hearts. They sentenced him to one day's incarceration. He had to go to the gaol at Knutsford, put his head inside, and come away again. That was all. We shall soon find Cook's Agency running trips of this kind.

The Christians do love each other at Liverpool. It takes the police all their time to keep them from turning each other into something like sausage meat. One of them, who was arrested in a recent holy row, had a loaded sling in his possession. He also had a Bible, which he called "another weapon." We have seen copies of Holy Writ that would easily crack a nigger's skull. No doubt it is a handy book in a free fight.

The infamous working of the Comstock Law against "obscenity" going through the American mails has once more been exemplified. Mr. Moses Harman, the editor of *Lucifer*, Chicago, has been arrested again in spite of his eighty years, under this hypocritical device for making war upon unpopular opinions. We differ very greatly from Mr. Harman, but he has the same right to his opinions that we have to ours, and if he lived in England we would defend it. We are perfectly certain that he is honest and sincere, however he may be mistaken—which, of course, is a matter for discussion. To call his paper "obscene" is a shocking abuse of language. This is to bring all debate on the institution of marriage under the head of "obscenity." And if America puts up with a law like this, so administered, she may as well give up the idea that she is a free country, and confess that Republics may be even more tyrannical than Monarchies.

Away with your broad and flat churches, and your narrow and tall churches! Take a step forward, and invent a new style of outhouses. Invent a salt that will save you, and defend our nostrils.—*Thorcau*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

March 26, Coventry. April 2, South Shields; 16, Manchester; 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; 26, Manchester; April 2 (afternoon), Victoria Park; 9, Glasgow; 16, Liverpool; 23, Town Hall, Stratford; 29, Hetton Moor; 30, South Shields; May 1, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 7, Victoria Park.

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

CELSUS.—Correspondence returned as requested. We read it with many smiles. You were too much in earnest for that elusive controversialist. With regard to your two questions; first, we do not know of any Secularist friend of the "Passive Resistance" movement except Mr. G. J. Holyoake; second, it is not true that we ever refused to insert a letter from Mr. Holyoake on the subject. We repeatedly invited him to explain to the Secular party why he had allied himself to the Nonconformists. He never took the slightest notice of our invitation. But at last he sent us a copy of a letter of his which had appeared in a religious newspaper, the *Daily News*, with some sentences that the friendly editor had omitted. To call this a letter to the *Freethinker* is an abuse of language. Had the writer been any other person than Mr. Holyoake, we should have regarded it as a calculated joke.

T. THELWALL.—Thanks; see "Acid Drops."

R. J. HOWELLS.—Pleased to hear that "after much trouble and coaxing" you have succeeded in getting the *Freethinker* and are "delighted with it." Thanks for cutting. See paragraph.

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

S. ALDWICKLE.—You will find that we have referred to your correspondence with Dr. Torrey in the *Clarion*, together with some other correspondence that Mr. Blatchford asked us to deal with. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation. Glad you think that "all lovers of truth must be indebted to us" for our "masterly defence of Ingersoll and Paine"—as you are good enough to call it.

FLORENCE ROBERTSON AND FREDERICK WROE.—In our next.

F. GOODWIN.—We quite agree with you that Mr. Snell does real good by his illustrated lecture on Charles Bradlaugh.

G. WEIR.—Thanks. We keep your letter by us. It may be more useful a little later.

W. BINDON.—We don't see what we can say about the episcopal postcard. If Bishop Kennion dresses like a guy he acts like other bishops and plays a very old game. With regard to your previous note, which we would rather answer publicly, we have to say that we should be quite ready to discuss with Dr. Torrey the truth of his charges against Paine and Ingersoll. That should take precedence of any other subject. But if he has reasons, as we can well believe, for avoiding that topic, we should be quite ready to debate with him either the truth of Christianity or the inspiration of the Bible. But we fear you are only wasting your time in trying to bring about such a discussion.

S. FELLOWS.—The words you quote as attributed to Tiberius are apocryphal.

W. H. POWELL.—We prefer to keep our Freethought propaganda separate from vexed political and social questions. We do so without the slightest desire to dictate to others. By the way, you will see that some of your points are dealt with in Mr. Cohen's article. Glad to hear that Freethinkers are multiplying in Wales.

OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £93 7s. 11d. Received this week: John Helm 4s., G. Parsons 3s., P. 6d., W. Stewart 1s., H. Farmer 6d., E. G. B. 1s., J. Hyde Bain 2s. 6d., W. C. Webber 2s., A. Kenvyn 5s.

H. PARIS BROOKES.—We appreciate your courtesy, but the letter is not quite in our line.

F. S.—Thanks for cuttings.

M. J. B. (Glasgow).—Next week.

J. HYLE BAIN writes: "Your vindication of Paine and Ingersoll is immense—is a masterpiece."

ALLAN COLLINS.—Glad to have your letter. Peg away.

M. CORBETT.—Shall be sent. We note your agreement with our "Underground Movement" article.

J. BARAULT.—Will deal with it next week.

SOUTH SIDE, who has for many years placed copies of the *Freethinker* in railway carriages, etc., suggests that those who can only afford one copy might tear it into separate leaves.

W. P. PEARSON.—Accept our best thanks. See paragraph. Pleased to hear the supply of Torrey pamphlets have all been distributed at Liverpool, and are thought "from a propagandist point of view to be excellent." A further supply is being forwarded. Glad to learn that Mr. Ward is in good form at present. May he continue so. When we look back over our own stormy past we feel a tenderness for the younger soldiers of Freethought who have entered the field.

W. J. McMURRAY.—Your order is handed over to the business manager, with remittance. Your letter is an admirable com-

mentary on the text of our last week's article on "The Underground Movement." If all Freethinkers exerted themselves as you have done the cause would progress far more rapidly. What you tell us is an honor to yourself; to us, also, it is cheering and encouraging.

T. DOBSON.—Thanks; see paragraph.

N. D.—Sorry we were more than full up with matter before the papers you kindly sent reached us. We appreciate your efforts in the "Underground Movement" direction.

J. TOOPE.—We have no interest in the matter now. The reverend gentleman's denials are too late.

M. E. PEGG.—Date booked. In reply to your kind inquiry, Mr. Foote is "keeping pretty well in this trying weather."

H. ALLEN.—Order executed. Pleased to hear you have just read *Bible Romances* through and "find it delightful." Also that you are getting others to read it.

G. A. ALDRED.—Perhaps you will let us know the result. Meanwhile, thanks. We suppose the *Freethinker* will be hated by orthodoxy for a long while yet, and used despitely, because it was the "pioneer" journal, as you well call it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

Owing to the rapid run on the second lot of Torrey pamphlets we had printed, the distribution of copies at the Albert Hall meetings had to be suspended for some nights, in order not to disappoint applicants from various parts of the country. We have put a third supply in hand, and there seems every likelihood of several more supplies being required during the next two or three months. It is also our desire to print a smaller pamphlet, of pocket size, dealing with Dr. Torrey's fables of "infidels" he has converted, including the imaginary female Freethought lecturer in Hyde Park. We appeal to the "saints" to send us the requisite sinews of war for this campaign. We hear from all sides that the pamphlets are first-rate for propagandist purposes, and that they are stirring up interest in Freethought wherever they are distributed. Many who could subscribe towards this effort have not done so. Why? We hope they are not too lazy or too indifferent. We are waiting to hear from them.

Mr. Foote had a capital meeting at Stanley Hall on Sunday evening. There was a marked improvement on the first night's attendance, and the audience was very sympathetic and appreciative. A pleasant feature was the presence of a good sprinkling of ladies. Evidently, too, there were a number of strangers in the meeting, and they all seemed thoroughly interested in the lecture. Several questions were asked and suitably answered, but again there was no formal opposition; the truth being that serious discussion is more and more avoided by the representatives of orthodoxy, who are doubtless well aware of its dangers.

The Stanley Hall course of lectures includes two by Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd, and we hope to hear that the attendance has been maintained and even improved. Mr. Cohen lectures this evening (March 19) on the burning Revival question. The district "saints" should do their utmost to let other people know that such lectures can be heard without "gate money."

Mr. John Lloyd, who was at Glasgow last Sunday, visits Liverpool to-day (March 19) and delivers two lectures for the local N. S. S. Branch. He will be sure of a hearty welcome, and will doubtless have good meetings.

The Liverpool Branch holds a Social and Dance on April 4, and a big gathering is expected. Tickets are 1s. each, or 1s. 6d. for lady and gentleman. Those who wish to participate should apply for tickets early, as there is

much demand for them already, and laggards may find themselves out in the cold.

Another Liverpool event is the public debate at the Alexandra Hall on March 28 and 29 between Mr. H. Percy Ward and the Rev. W. Reginald Horner, of Bedford-street New Church. The subject of debate is the question, "Is there a Future Life?" and there will be a charge of sixpence and a shilling for seats.

Mr. W. P. Pearson, the Liverpool Branch secretary, acting in concert with a friend, offered to supply the Wallasey Public Libraries Committee with a weekly copy of the *Freethinker*, with a view to its being placed upon the table at the Earliston Reading Room. Mr. Ernest A. Baker, Librarian, replied on March 9 as follows:—"Dear Sir,—Your letter of 23rd ult. was placed before the Book Sub-Committee last night. The committee thank you for your kind offer to present a copy of the *Freethinker*, but regret that they cannot sanction the placing of the same on the Reading Room tables." As the committee includes several Churchmen, with a Congregational minister as chairman, this is hardly surprising. We shall civilise these people in the course of time. They will then know that Public Libraries are for all citizens, and not for certain sects.

South Shields and Tyneside Freethinkers are making a strong effort to turn the "revival" movement to advantage. Assisted by the Secular Society, Limited, the South Shields Branch has already organised successful courses of lectures by Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd. Mr. Foote is paying a visit there on the first Sunday in April, and the large and handsome Assembly Hall has been engaged for his lectures. Mr. Cohen is going down again later on, and will spend a little time in the district, lecturing at Newcastle, Hetton, and perhaps other places, as well as Shields. The stirring up of fresh interest in religion has given Freethought another opportunity

We have pleasure in noting some excellent Freethought letters in the *Conssett Chronicle*. One is by Dr. J. G. Stuart, another by "Veritas," and a third by "John White, Atheist." We wish Freethinkers would do more in this line of local propaganda.

"Hathart," in the *Darwen Gazette*, makes mincemeat of the "men in black" who have joined in protesting against Sunday Concerts. We hope these members of the Black Army will be taught a much-needed lesson—namely, to mind their own business and leave other people to mind theirs.

The *Journal de Charleroi* frequently quotes from our columns under the heading of "La Libre-Pensée Internationale." The latest number to hand contains a long extract, nicely translated into French, from Mr. W. Mann's last *Freethinker* article.

The *Bury Times* reproduced our large "Acid Drop" in reply to Colonel Mellor's nonsense about godless education in France. We beg to acknowledge our contemporary's courtesies.

Revivalism is not having all its own way in Wales. One paper, at any rate, is printing a little common sense. The *South Wales Echo* devotes a couple of leaderettes to the prophetic lunacy following in the wake of the Welsh revival. This passage will interest our readers:—

"Weak minds are easily filled with wonders and horrors, and I would save them a single spasm of fear and rescue them from being deluded by that prophecy which as a gratuitous form of error has been proved by time. Mr. Baxter told of storms of hail, blood and fire, earthquakes, universal sanguinary warfare, destruction of ships and the flight of saints, and many other things terrible and alarming, all of which were to happen before 1901—and of course they did not. The absurdity of the whole prophetic nonsense is proved by the alarming pamphlets published in 1886; and yet to-day in Wales the same prophecies are preached, only the dates for the happening of these terrible events have been put on till 1929! The prophetic business is a monument of amazing human folly from which Wales should be saved."

It would be a good thing if the Welsh papers would all speak in the same strain.

According to the latest Registrar-General's return, out of every 1,000 marriages, 651 take place in Established churches, 180 in Nonconformist chapels, 41 in Roman Catholic chapels, 4 in Quakers' meeting-houses, and 170 at registrars' offices. The last—purely civil marriages—are increasing every year, and the number of marriages in churches is decreasing.

The Book of Daniel.—IV.

(Continued from p. 166.)

HAVING briefly examined the fictitious "history" of the first six chapters of Daniel, I now turn to the facts of real history which are more or less plainly referred to in the second portion of the book. These have to do chiefly with the position of the small Jewish kingdom among more powerful nations from the time Daniel is represented as living in Babylon down to the days of the author of the romance. It will, no doubt, be remembered that during this long period the Jews were subject, first to the rulers of Persia, next to the sovereigns of Egypt, and lastly to the kings of Syria—the suzerainty of the last-named monarchs dating from B.C. 203. It was during the latter period that the author of the book of Daniel lived. This ancient fiction-writer represented his hero, Daniel, as seeing visions which foreshadowed the future history of the chosen people to the end of time. As a matter of fact, these predictions, though they commenced with the age in which Daniel had been placed, all end with a veiled reference to a calamitous event which happened in the reign in which the author lived—that of Antiochus Epiphanes (B.C. 175-163). The writer had no knowledge of the Jews becoming subject to the Romans at a later day nor of their subsequent dispersion among the nations. His ignorance in the latter cases is excusable, for they occurred long after his time.

The great event which gave rise to the book of Daniel was the attempt made by Antiochus Epiphanes to compel the Jews to change their religion (B.C. 168). Two years before this date Antiochus came to Jerusalem, plundered the city, and slaughtered many thousands of its inhabitants. But in the year named the king sent an army under Apollonius with orders to forcibly suppress the worship of Yahveh and set up in its place that of Jupiter Olympius and other gods of Syria. The account of this coercive measure is thus recorded by Josephus (*Antiq. xii. v. 4*):

"Pretending peace, he got possession of the city by treachery.....he left the temple bare.....He also emptied it of its secret treasures, and left nothing remaining; and by this means cast the Jews into great lamentation, for he forbade them to offer those daily sacrifices which they used to offer to God, according to the law. And when he had pillaged the whole city, some of the inhabitants he slew, and some he carried away captive..... And when he had built an idol altar upon God's altar, *he slew swine upon it*, and so offered sacrifice neither according to the law, nor the Jewish religious worship in that country. He also compelled them to forsake the worship which they had paid their own God, and to adore those whom he took to be gods; and made them build temples, and raise idol altars, in every city and village, and offer swine upon them every day..... He also appointed overseers, who should compel them to do what he commanded. And, indeed, many Jews there were who complied with the king's commands, either voluntarily, or out of fear of the penalty that was denounced. But the best men, and those of the noblest souls, did not regard him, but paid a greater respect to the customs of their country than concern as to the punishment which he threatened to the disobedient; on which account they every day underwent great miseries and bitter torments; for they were whipped, with rods, and their bodies were torn to pieces, and were crucified while they were still alive.....And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed; and those with whom they were found were miserably punished also."

Never before, in the whole history of the Jews, had such a terrible calamity come upon that nation. Never before had a religion been imposed upon the Jewish people by any monarch to whom that people had become subject. Hitherto, the regular payment of the prescribed annual tribute had secured perfect freedom in religious observances. Apart from the crimes sometimes committed in connection with the office of high priest—which among the Jews was esteemed the highest dignity in the land—the great body of the people, at the time of this persecution, was never so strict in the performance of religious duties, or so free from idolatry. Prior to the exile

in Babylon the whole nation, with a few individual exceptions, participated without scruple in any kind of idolatrous worship it had pleased the king to introduce. But things were now changed; every form of idolatry had long been banished from the land, and Yahveh alone was worshipped. During the three years of this reign of terror pious Jews asked each other why "the Lord" permitted a wicked heathen king thus to afflict his chosen people, who alone among all the nations served and obeyed him. They looked back on their past history, as recorded in their sacred books, and could readily assign a reason for the calamities which had formerly befallen the nation. The people had served Baal, had built high places for strange gods, and had in various ways "done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord," and, as a consequence, had been delivered into the hands of their enemies. But such was not now the case. Why, then, had such a dreadful scourge been allowed to assail them? Why were only those who apostatised permitted to live in peace and safety? And why were the faithful who remained firm in their allegiance to Yahveh and the Mosaic law condemned to suffer cruel torments and agonising deaths? Would it not be better to renounce the worship of a god who was powerless to protect his people? These were the questions (as may be read between the lines of the accounts in 2 Maccabees) which agitated the minds of the faithful during this period of tribulation. Pious minds were exercised in finding an adequate cause for the persecution which did not militate against the justice and mercy attributed to "the Lord." One was soon discovered. The calamity was sent as a punishment for the murder of the righteous priest Onias and for the wickedness committed by the rival high priests, Jason and Menelaus, who had caused much bloodshed in Jerusalem. The Lord was now afflicting the whole nation for the sins of these two men.

Amongst the pious Jews who dwelt in Palestine in the days of the tyrant Antiochus, and who heard, day by day, of the shameful outrages perpetrated upon the most faithful and religious of their countrymen, was the individual from whose pen emanated the romance entitled "The Book of Daniel." The object the writer mainly had in view in this work of fiction was to keep his countrymen steadfast in their fealty to their tribal deity. This he endeavored to effect by the fictitious narratives contained in that book, from the perusal of which the reader would naturally deduce various pleas for the goodness and justice of the Almighty. The Lord, it would be seen, was both able and willing to protect his chosen people, and always did so when they were innocent of all transgression, as in the case of Daniel in the den of lions and in that of the three men in the furnace. Moreover, the afflictions the people suffered were to be regarded as a chastening of the Lord for sins recently committed, and when these transgressions had been sufficiently atoned for, the persecutions would cease. The writer further wished it to be believed that this time of tribulation had been revealed, four hundred years before, to a prophet named Daniel, to whom it had also been revealed that the Jewish nation would be victorious over all its enemies, and would, after regaining its independence, become the greatest nation upon earth.

The following passages amongst many others in the writer's fabulous history would have a special interest for pious Jews during this period of religious persecution:—

Dan. i. 8: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat."

Dan. iii. 17, 18: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Dan. iii. 28: "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him.....and have yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God."

Dan. vi. 16: "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee."

Dan. vi. 23: "And no manner of hurt was found upon him because he had trusted in his God."

As already stated, the terrible calamity which had overwhelmed the Hebrew nation figures more or less clearly at the end of each "vision." It is also more directly referred to in a prayer which has been put in the mouth of the mythical Daniel as offered in "the first year" of the reign of the imaginary king "Darius the son of Ahasuerus" (ix. 1). This prayer could have been composed only by one who had witnessed the horrors perpetrated by Antiochus Epiphanes. The reader can satisfy himself upon this point from the following extracts:—

"O Lord, the great and dreadful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have dealt perversely, and have done wickedly.....O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day, to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.....Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even turning aside, that they should not obey thy voice: therefore hath the curse been poured out upon us.....And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done us hath been done upon Jerusalem.....Therefore hath the Lord watched over the evil, and brought it upon us.....O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, let thine anger and thy fury, I pray thee, be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are round about us.....Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, that is desolate for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations and the city which is called by thy name.....O Lord, hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (Dan. ix. 4-19).

At the time when this supplication is represented as offered Daniel was living, according to the story, in perfect security in Babylon, and all the chief inhabitants of Jerusalem were exiles scattered throughout the Babylonian empire. The holy city at this time was uninhabited and in ruins, and had been so for nearly half a century. After the lapse of such a long period Daniel could scarcely have remembered that such a place existed. Nothing new had since occurred in connection with that city. The Jewish exiles in Babylonia, at that time, were well treated, and occupied a position somewhat resembling colonists, their condition being one of comparative comfort; while some of them even owned houses and land. Only a small number of these exiles took advantage of the permission to return to Judæa, the majority having no desire to do so. Yet in this passage Daniel is represented as pleading on behalf of Jerusalem and its inhabitants who are said to be suffering from some dire calamity. The Lord is entreated to stay his hand, to have mercy on his people, to withdraw the terrible punishments that were then afflicting the whole nation—not in Babylon, but in Judæa and Jerusalem, whose inhabitants were subjected to such inhuman treatment "as hath not been done" in any other country "under the whole heaven." Moreover, it is plainly evident from various expressions in the prayer that its composer, at the time of writing it, was living in Judæa, where also lived the great bulk of the Jewish people. Furthermore, when we take into account the fact that all the "visions" carry the events of history therein referred to down to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, and no farther, there can be little doubt that the prayer placed in the mouth of the mythical prophet Daniel, and in the reign of an imaginary king of Babylon, is simply an agonising cry of despair called forth by the afflictions borne by the faithful during the long and infamous persecution by the tyrant Antiochus.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT FRIENDSHIPS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have been an intermittent reader of your journal from the first number, and, as I feel a strong desire to say a few brief words on the matter of friendship amongst Freethinkers, I urge this as an inducement to you to read what follows. You will excuse my frankness in saying I have been an intermittent and not a regular reader, but I want to be exact, and can assure you that when I have not seen your excellent paper the omission has been due, not to a lack of desire on my part, but to the fact that I have not been sufficiently energetic to surmount the considerable difficulties which have operated as a barrier between myself and the *Freethinker*. With this apology I beg leave to resume.

Many of your correspondents have instanced the friendly intercourse established amongst members of a church or chapel, and have expressed wonder why the same does not obtain amongst Freethinkers. There is a wide difference between the two parties. The congregation of a church or chapel are, generally speaking, neighbors, move in the same social sphere, and have many things in common; and even when this does not prevail an ordinary congregation is large enough to break itself up into congenial coteries. On the other hand, Freethinkers are a scattered lot, and in any given district it will be found that their social positions and pursuits are as various as may possibly be. Practically there is no bond between them save that of intellectual sympathy; and I am very much afraid mere intellectual agreement is a very poor basis for friendship. Friendship, to be in any way enduring, must have in it a good deal of the feeling so forcibly but inelegantly expressed in the couplet—

To her faults a little blind,
To her virtues very kind.

This state of mind is not to be secured by any reasoning power, or by standing upon a common platform. Reason, at the best, can counsel no more in men and women associated in a common cause than party loyalty. The touch of nature which makes enduring friendship is of something else, and spasmodic friendliness is harmful rather than a thing to be desired. I regard all Freethinkers as my friends, and if any tell me they do not reciprocate the feeling, I simply don't believe them; nevertheless, I am confident I should bore a good many of them to the extreme limits of ennui, and I am equally certain that I, in my turn, would be wearied by many excellent Freethinkers if ordinary social intercourse was enforced upon us, merely from the meagreness of the topics in which we took a common interest.

I am honored by the friendship of a good many Freethinkers; but when I try to ascertain what attracts me I am irresistibly driven to the conclusion that it is in the man or woman, and not in the speculative opinions that the charm lays. I hope I am not ambiguous, and make it plain that real friendship is only possible where the human temperaments and idiosyncracies are mutually attractive and sympathetic.

The suggestion anent a Freethought Club is valuable. If a club, run in the manner of a good-class political or social one, could be started and maintained it would solve the question. A natural selection would go on. Members would be attracted by their affinity to each other and none would be bored, or bore others, by a mere desire to be polite and entertaining when associated haphazard together, and having in common merely a hatred to, or a disbelief in, the current religious thought.

AN APPRECIATIVE READER.

"FRIENDSHIP AND FREETHINKERS."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As "Juverna" has had the last word, I trust that I may be accorded a similar privilege. I regret that my personality has obscured my purpose, and has led "Juverna" to attempt to delineate me psychologically rather than to controvert my opinion. What I am matters nothing: what I think is the only subject of discussion. I think that the Freethought cause is best propagated, at present, by the "underground" method, slightly varied. I think that Freethinkers should be scouts, not sentries. I have a rooted objection to being herded in and railed off from my fellows, be they Christians or anything else. I believe that more good is done by the influence of one Freethinker in a circle of Christians than could be achieved if we all banded together presenting a phalanx front to the Christian host. As I said in my first letter, "Permeation is as effective as percussio." Organisation of the compact type desired by

so many of your correspondents may be necessary for political purposes; but our cause is not, at present, practical politics. Until we enter the political field as citizens with certain demands (say the abolition of State support of religion, the provision of purely secular education, etc.), our business is to make converts. The gathering of the clan for political purposes will be an easy matter; meanwhile, let us plough each his own furrow. "Juverna" wonders that I should have replied to her, and ignored the Matrimonialists and the males. The Matrimonial Bureau was smothered, notably by Mr. W. P. Ball. The discussion on Friendship I regarded as a sporadic outburst of sentiment, until I read the letter of "Juverna." Then I saw the danger of the outburst becoming epidemic, and therefore intervened.

But the letter of my plucky little supporter, "E. B.," makes me feel rather more lenient than I have felt previously. For the benefit of those Freethinkers who have never seen a Freethinker in the flesh, I should suggest a correspondence circle, but not on the *Clarion* principle. If Mr. Foote could publish the wants of those Freethinkers who desire companionship, with their names and addresses, it might be a boon. Only those people who have something to write about would reply, or would have their names inserted. Thus the lonely Freethinkers would have the pick of the clan for correspondents, and the expense attaching to the dances and socials as methods of exchanging opinions would be obviated. I suggest this as an improvement on the proposal of bringing Freethinkers together. "Juverna" and "E. B." have not the acquaintance of Freethinkers. Then I suggest, in the interest of romance (and here I am sure of "Juverna's" support, for she is incurably romantic), that they never meet a Freethinker: they would probably be disappointed. To take a concrete example. In the course of this correspondence I have been likened to Diogenes *de la tonneau*, a walking volcano, Hercules, a phoenix, St. Simon Stylites, and a leader of a forlorn hope. Yet if "Juverna" were to meet me she would be disappointed to find an uninteresting man of twenty-three, quite placid, friendly, but not even good-looking. So, if you wish to be interested in your correspondents, never meet them. It is probable that some marriages might arise from such correspondence, for humanity is strangely rash. But I am no supporter of marriage between Freethinkers. I am so enamored of proselytising that I think that a Freethinker's marriage ought to mean another convert to Freethought. So I advise Freethinkers of both sexes to marry Christians: it will be a judgment on the Christians, and should result in their conversion. I hope that "Juverna" now repents of her statement: "He will help no one: he does not believe in it." I differ from "Juverna" in wanting to help Christians to become Freethinkers, whilst she wants to help Freethinkers to remain so; an unnecessary provision in my opinion. "E. B." is a splendid example of my contention. Here is a young woman, not yet twenty-one, who, remote from personal influences, and only in touch with Freethought literature, not only becomes a Freethinker, but is enthusiastic at the prospect of the work she will doubtless do. She is, I take it, in the camp of the enemy; and I contend that she will best serve her cause by remaining there, rather than by swelling the ranks of the organised Freethinkers. If she cannot argue her friends into Freethought, she can remove the prevalent conception of a Freethinker as an imp of Satan by her mode of living; and this is no small achievement. Her letter has been a veritable pick-me-up, for it is always cheering to have one's own opinions supported, by fact as well as argument. Perhaps my views are not Utopian, after all.

And here I must leave the subject, for there is an end to all things, even to my replies to "Juverna." I regret that I should have misled "Juverna" to regard me as a pugilistic person; really, I am a most placable individual. But, as Bernard Shaw says, "Compassion is the fellow-feeling of the unsound," I felt obliged to oppose what seemed to me to be the unsound policy of sentimental methods in the propaganda of intellectual ideas. Freethought is not a matter of feeling or emotion; it is a reasoning process, and should not, I think, be stimulated other than by reasoning. I thank you, Sir, for your courtesy in publishing my letters; I am obliged to "Juverna" for taking up the cudgels in her own defence; and I wish "E. B." an increase of happiness in her self-reliance, the only valuable quality that most English people lack.

ALFRED E. RANDALL.

The one thing in the world of which a free man thinks the least is death, and his wisdom is not the meditation of death but of life.—*Spinoza*.

One should advise only about matters in which one is prepared to co-operate.—*Goethe*.

The Parson's Consolation.

It was the good ship *Jesus Christ*
That sailed, not walked, the ocean,
It seldom carried passengers,
They cause such a commotion.
But one fine day the captain took
A gig and went ashore:
And when he landed back at night
He cursed, and raved, and swore.
He'd received an order when on shore,
That gave him such a shock;
He had to take a *priest on board*,
Who had to leave his flock
On account of a disorder
(It did not state the kind),
But it made that captain tear his hair
And drink till he was blind.
"A Parson! O my God," he roared
"A blooming priest, oh lor.
As if we ain't enough ter do
'Sides listen to *his* jaw."
But strange to say when the good ship sailed
Mr. Parson kept his bunk,
He scarcely ate one single meal
And seemed in such a funk.
But when the Biscay Bay was reached
He grew so *sick*—of reaching,
That he sensibly got off his knees
And to heaven stopped beseeching.
Crawling to the bosun's side
(Altho' a perfect stranger)
He said, "Pray tell me, my good man,
If there is any danger?"
Amid the howling of the storm,
The bosun yelled, and said,
"Jest foller me ahint, my fren',
And mind yer bally 'ead."
Along the deck they slowly crawled
And stopped before the door
Of a room in which the captain
Sat and drank and cursed and swore.
Oh! Oh! the Parson blushed and raised
His fingers to his ears,
And yet, that sailor's "languidge"
Seemed to ease his dreadful fears.
He could not bring himself to think
A man could be so bad,
If there were any perils, and
It made him, oh, so glad.
Now, if a gale should chance to rise
On that tempestuous ocean,
That Parson takes advantage
Of the bosun's funny notion;
He'll slip up to the captain's door
And stand in all the wet,
Then with a thankful voice exclaim:
Thank God! He's swearing yet.

J. S. CLARKE.

From Washington to Cleveland and Roosevelt.

The immortal founders of our Republic were not "Christians," using the word in the sense in which Roosevelt and Cleveland use it. George Washington declared in unmistakable language that this country was not based upon the Christian religion. He said this in his official capacity, to the house of Congress, and as the President of the Nation; Washington was a Deist, and deism is a terrible heresy from a Christian point of view. Thomas Jefferson was even more pronounced in his antagonism to the sects and their creeds. He did not attend upon their services, and argued openly against their claims. They called him an infidel. President Adams was just as much a rationalist as was Jefferson or Washington; and Paine, who did every whit as much as any of the illustrious Americans we have mentioned for this country, was also a Deist and a non-Christian. Perhaps few names shine with a clearer lustre in our annals than that of Benjamin Franklin. But he was not a Christian; he had absolutely no sympathy with the Churches, and went to sleep in the pew whenever circumstances compelled his presence there. He said that lighthouses were more helpful than churches. It was in the brains of these really great men that the embryo of the American nation was nourished into form and individuality. These men are among the noblest examples this great nation can offer to the present

generation, and they were not Christians. When the Republic was in danger, another pagan, Abraham Lincoln, who never went to Church, when forty or fifty million people did, and who wrote a book against the Christian Scriptures, stepped forward and with the might and beauty of his unsectarian soul, saved the Union. Now the transition from these pagan founders and saviors of our republic to the sectarian presidents is not a flattering one. Can it be that we are retrograding when we think we are progressing? Are our public men as free to-day, in the expressions of their religious opinions as Cæsar was in Rome, or Pericles in Athens? Has Christianity made it safer for us not to play the sycophant or the hypocrite? Does our religion encourage men to be original? Do we not on the contrary throw all our influence on the side of the man who will conform? Conformity is orthodoxy with us. Originality is heresy. Orthodoxy means prosperity, fine churches, the support of courts and parliaments, the friendship of Kings, Czars, and Presidents, the praise of the Press, and the protection of the ramparts of prejudice and convention; while heresy means poverty, ostracism, persecution, isolation, bitter disappointments, and, what is worse and unkindly still, wilful misrepresentation. And all these we owe to the Christian Church. An oracle of Delphi had declared that the best religion is that of a man's own country. It was left for Christianity to brand all other religions as impostures.—*Liberal Review (Chicago)*.

THE FATE OF CHRISTIANITY.

The same means that have supported every other popular belief, have supported Christianity. War, imprisonment, murder, and falsehood; deeds of unexampled and incomparable atrocity have made it what it is. We derive from our ancestors a belief thus fostered and supported. We quarrel, persecute, and hate for its maintenance. Does not analogy favor the opinion that, as, like other systems, Christianity has arisen and augmented, so like them it will decay and perish; that, as violence, darkness, and deceit, not reasoning and persuasion, have procured its admission among mankind, so, when enthusiasm has subsided, and time, that infallible controvertor of false opinions, has involved its pretended evidences in the darkness of antiquity, it will become obsolete; that Milton's poem alone will give permanency to the remembrance of its absurdities; and that men will laugh as heartily at grace, faith, redemption, and original sin, as they would now do at the metamorphoses of Jupiter, the miracles of Romish saints, the efficacy of witchcraft, and the appearance of departed spirits.—*Shelley*.

THE MODERN CHRISTIAN.

The modern Christian is a man who has consented to say all the prayers in the liturgy, provided you will let him go straight to bed and sleep quietly afterward. All his prayers begin with "Now I lay me down to sleep," and he is for ever looking forward to the time when he shall go to his "long rest." He has consented to perform certain old-established charities, too, after a fashion, but he does not wish to hear of any new-fangled ones; he doesn't wish to have any supplementary articles added to the contract, to fit it to the present time. He shows the whites of his eyes on the Sabbath, and the blacks all the rest of the week. The evil is not merely a stagnation of blood, but a stagnation of spirit. Many, no doubt, are well-disposed, but sluggish by constitution and by habit, and they cannot conceive of a man who is actuated by higher motives than they are. Accordingly they pronounce this man insane, for they know that *they* could never act as he does as long as they are themselves.—*Thoreau*.

The advocate of what is false has every reason to make his advances stealthily and to curry favor with the world. The man who feels that he has truth on his side must step firmly. Truth is not to be dallied with.—*Goethe*.

Obituary.

We have to record the death of James Marsh, of 5 Market-street, West Houghton, Lancashire, on February 18. In his earlier days he attended a Congregationalist church, where he was much beloved by the children. Later in life his views changed and he became an Agnostic. The funeral took place at the local Cemetery on the Wednesday following his decease. There was a considerable number of spectators who wanted to see what it was like to be buried as a Secularist. Mr. Hampson, of Bolton, was to have read the Secular Burial Service at the grave; but he could not attend, and Mr. J. Shufflebotham, of the late Bolton School Board, officiated in his stead. The mourners included representatives of the Co-operative Society, the Board of Guardians, the Town Council, the Reform Club, and other public bodies.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

STANLEY HALL (Junction-road, Upper Holloway): 7, C. Cohen, "The Truth About Christian Revivals."

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, J. M. Robertson, "The Gospel Myths."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 3, H. Lennard, "Shakespeare: the Poet of Humanity"; 7, "Robert G. Ingersoll: the Man and His Work." Thursday, March 23, at 8, Bull Ring Coffee House, a Paper by one of the members.

FAIRFORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Henry Harrison, "Solving the Problem of the Unemployed."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, H. Snell, "Science and Common Sense"; 6.30, "The New Freethought."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): 6.30, A. Duke, "The Evolution of Man as Taught by the Suret Doctrine." Monday, March 20, at 8, J. P. Gilmour, "Science and Supernaturalism."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, J. H. Levy, "Religious Persecution."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, John T. Lloyd, "Ourselves and Our Relations"; 7, "The Right Way to Heaven." Monday at 8, Rationalist Debating Society: W. J. Sloane, "What is Theosophy?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, R. C. Phillips, "Back to the Land."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, George Berrisford, "Is Morality a Necessity of Christianity?"

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

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