

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*Modern Protestantism sees, in the cross, not a furca to which it is to be nailed; but a raft on which it, and all its valuable properties, are to be floated into Paradise.*  
—RUSKIN.

## Dr. Torrey's Converts.

WHEN the great Artemus Ward was asked what were his principles, he said he had none, he was in the show business. Dr. Torrey might say the same if he told the truth.

Whether this gentleman tells the truth or lies, is a matter of very little importance, as far as he himself is concerned. What he says derives all its importance from the fact that he is put forward as a Christian representative. Hundreds of Christian ministers are behind his Albert Hall mission, and £17,000 has been raised to pay its expenses. It is announced that 223 Christian ministers of all denominations are organising the South London mission which is to begin in April. These are facts that should not be forgotten.

Revivalism, at the best, is atavistic. It is a return to primitive religion. It is an effort to plunge the people's minds in a hot bath of emotion. The first condition is a big crowd. The bigger the crowd the less reason there is in it and the more feeling. The next condition is music. Not the higher music, which appeals to complex and subtle emotions, but the simpler music, of limited power and range, which depends for most of its effect upon the excitement and the volume of sound that are only possible in a vast assembly. The third condition is supplied by professional revivalists, who have learnt how to play upon the primary religious instincts of the multitude. They appeal to what is called "the sense of sin," to supernatural hopes and fears, to the morbidity, the weakness, and the cowardice of their congregations. The result is that a certain number of hearers become hypnotised, and are drawn to the penitent forms and inquiry rooms. And these are advertised as the revivalists' captures for Christ.

Where you find atavism of one kind you are pretty sure to find atavism of another kind. This is why all revivalists are liars. Veracity is by no means one of the primitive virtues; it is the virtue of a high civilisation. It implies both intellect and character. To expect it among religionists is to expect the impossible. Very little stress is laid upon veracity in the Bible. It was not thought to be worth a mention in the Sermon on the Mount. Christianity was built upon its negation. Any fable, any falsehood, was considered to be legitimate if it served the purpose of "edification." This can be illustrated to any extent from the history of the Christian Church and the history of Christian documents.

Dr. Torrey's capacity as a liar should not be surprising. It is perfectly natural to his profession. When the late Rev. Hugh Price Hughes started as a revivalist, when he threw himself into the West London Mission, he launched that old "Atheist Shoemaker" lie, which I hunted down and exposed in every important particular. Dr. Torrey goes to work on a bigger scale. He is therefore a bigger liar. As long as the missions and the cash hold out

he will lie up to the full requirements of the situation.

In the Introduction to his *Talks to Men* he makes the following statement:—

"Many agnostics, sceptics, Unitarians, and destructive critics have testified publicly to having been led by these lectures to give up their former erroneous positions."

This is not only a lie, but a brazen lie. If agnostics and sceptics had testified *publicly* to their conversion by Dr. Torrey, the fact would be publicly known without his information. His recognition of the necessity for such a statement is a proof of its falsehood.

Dr. Torrey has been invited to give the name of one—only one—of these converted agnostics and sceptics, and he has always declined the invitation.

During the first week of his Albert Hall mission Dr. Torrey claimed to have converted a woman, who was an Atheist, and a lecturer in Hyde Park. He will never give her name and address. Why? Because there is no such person. Atheist lecturers are few; Atheist women lecturers are fewer. They are all known. You may make shoes in private, but you cannot lecture in private—especially in Hyde Park. The female "infidel" lecturer of Dr. Torrey's story had no existence. She is an absolute invention. And he knows it.

It was shown in last week's *Freethinker* that the story of the 600 "infidel" employees of Messrs. Sutton, at Reading, who were brought up by special train to London, and taken to the Albert Hall, and numerous converted there, is another absolute invention. We have Messrs. Sutton's word for it. And that ends this circumstantial lie.

Feeling that the challenge for particulars is growing hot, Dr. Torrey has foolishly broken silence, and indiscreetly dropped the names of Reade and Pitman. He does not say, he only suggests—the cunning old dog!—that these persons are his own converts. I will deal with both.

Mr. Henry Musgrave Reade was trotted out as a "convert" by Dr. Torrey at St. James's Hall, Manchester, at the end of 1903. Mr. Reade lent himself to an imposture by standing up when Dr. Torrey called upon him to do so at one of the meetings. His silence and the revivalist's language led people to suppose that the "convert" they saw had been captured at St. James's Hall. But what are the facts? Mr. Reade was connected, in a humble way, with the Freethought party in Manchester in the early eighties. He did not stay in it long. He said himself, in a pamphlet he wrote, that for twenty years he varied his ideals as the "humor took" him. "Now it was Postivism," he said, "then Egoism, Anarchism, Spiritualism, and Socialism." In the year 1900 he was in America, where he underwent another change. This time he went back to the faith of his childhood. Some magnificent scenery struck him all of a heap; he felt that he was "in the presence of God," and he "capitulated without a struggle." This is what Mr. Reade wrote in the pamphlet referred to. He also sent me a letter on the subject, which I printed in the *Freethinker* of January 3, 1904. Dr. Torrey himself, in a letter to Mr. John A. McCrorie, of Glasgow, dated from Greenock, December 15, 1903, said: "Mr. Reade was not converted during my meetings but before I

went." He got pretty near the truth for once. Such things will happen occasionally, if only by accident. At any rate, there is the word of both the revivalist and the "convert" that the latter became a Christian years before they ever met. Dr. Torrey has, therefore, no personal right whatever to use the name of Mr. Henry Musgrave Reade.

Now let us take the case of Robert Pitman. I hear that Dr. Torrey is talking very glibly about this "convert." Some two years ago, although I was not aware of the fact, this remarkable "convert" was paraded in a Christian paper. Mr. H. J. Hewett, of 48 Florence-road, New Cross, London, S.E., sends me the following, which he says is copied from the *Baptist* of March 9, 1903; it purports to be a letter written by the Rev. Hugh C. Boulton, of Bristol, to Dr. Torrey:—

"One of your bitterest antagonists here has been brought to Christ. Perhaps you may remember the Freethought opposition at your Colston Hall mid-day meetings. One man in particular was continually interrupting the course of your remarks. His name was Robert Pitman. He went to a mission at Bedminster to report for the *Freethinker* and the *Clarion*. During the meeting the Holy Spirit kept asking him a direct question. 'What if after all you are wrong?' The voice thus persistently made itself heard. 'What if after all you are wrong?' He was shaking from head to foot, and forgetting the presence of the large audience around him, he sat down and proceeded to weigh up the pros and cons of the question. He came to the conclusion that Christ could do more for him than infidelity had done, and that reasonably if he were honest he ought to respect the claims of Christ. One fact, however, staggered him—the Resurrection. He could not believe it possible, arguing from its human improbability. He had not time there and then to sift the evidences. He decided, therefore, to accept the fact on trust and leave the analysis of the evidences until afterwards. He thereupon stood up in the face of the gathering and proclaimed his acceptance of Christ. He has since been the means of the conversion of many infidels here. He immediately wrote to Foote and Blatchford apprising them of his conversion, but has received no reply."

The letter concludes:—

"He bitterly regrets his antagonism. He gave away with his own hand 20,000 infidel tracts at the doors of the Colston Hall during the mission. I have tried to console him with the suggestion that perhaps very few took the trouble to read them, but he is doing his best to undo his past work, and to consecrate all his talents to the Savior.....I have written this at his request. He would like, he says, to shake you by the hand and tell you of all this."

There are three statements in this letter which are utterly false. I will take them seriatim.

The first false statement is that Robert Pitman went to Bedminster to report for the *Freethinker*. This cannot possibly be true. The *Freethinker* has never had any reporters. I do not even remember that I ever heard of Robert Pitman until now. I certainly should not have forgotten him in so short a time if he had been of any prominence in the Freethought movement.

The second false statement is that Robert Pitman delivered 20,000 "infidel" tracts at Dr. Torrey's meetings in Bristol. This is a large number. Who supplied them? They did not come from the *Freethinker* office, and I am not aware of any other place where "infidel" tracts are obtainable. I am also positive that I should have heard from some friend at Bristol if Robert Pitman had been distributing tracts in the way related.

The third false statement is that Robert Pitman wrote to me about his conversion and received no reply. I never heard of his conversion. I do not believe I ever heard of him. I dare say Mr. Blatchford knows as much about him as I do; but the editor of the *Clarion* can speak for himself.

The statement that Robert Pitman, within a brief space after his conversion, was "the means of the conversion of many infidels" at Bristol, is perfectly ridiculous. I should have heard of those "many" conversions. Bristol Freethinkers, at least, would have heard of them. But I did not, and they did not.

Who is this Robert Pitman? Is there such a person at all? Can he be produced? Can he give the name of any Bristol "infidel" to whom he was known as an "infidel"? Will he say who supplied him with those Freethought tracts? Will he give the titles of those tracts, or any of them? Will he name one of the "many infidels" he was the means of converting?

These are fair questions, and if Dr. Torrey is too busy (as usual) to deal with them the matter should have the attention of the Rev. Hugh C. Boulton. I never heard of this gentleman before, either. Perhaps some of my Bristol readers will make inquiries and let me know the result.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Giving Up the Ghost.

THE last of the Ingersoll lectures on Immortality has just been issued by Messrs. Constable at the extravagant price of half-a-crown. I call it extravagant because, from the point of view of mere matter, the whole might have gone comfortably within the covers of a sixpenny pamphlet. If the trustees have anything to do with the conditions of publication, it is obviously not their intention to cater for the average person. Perhaps it is thought that if the nascent doubts of some of the better class can be allayed, their influence will count for something with the rest of the people.

The Ingersoll Lectureship, it may be remarked, was founded by an American gentleman to secure the delivery of an annual lecture on the Immortality of Man. As has happened in other instances, the terms of the bequest was liberal, but its execution has hitherto been confined within sharply marked limits. While it is not confined to clergymen, such laymen as are invited to lecture are of a safe kind—that is, they all believe in immortality. So that the lectureship, instead of being one that encourages inquiry as to the truth of a belief, is really one that offers a substantial fee to certain gentlemen to say all they can in its favor. No unbeliever has been invited to deliver a lecture, and one may safely say no such person will ever receive an invitation. To put the matter quite plainly, the lectureship is simply an instrument for the manufacture of evidence in favor of religion.

Dr. Osler is a medical man—a profession that has never been notorious for its fervent piety; and his address, in spite of its concluding weak profession of faith, will certainly not do much to prejudice religious people in his favor. One of his colleagues, says Dr. Osler, on learning that he was to deliver the lecture, asked, "What do you know about immortality?" And Dr. Osler's reply, without putting it into words, was, "Nothing at all." He does not even adduce a single argument in its favor. On the contrary, he indicates objections to many of the popular excuses for believing in a future life. His lecture is, in fact, a simple statement of the relations of this belief to modern conditions; and these conditions, on the lecturer's showing, give it no encouragement whatever.

Dr. Osler's diagnosis divides the people into three classes. Those who believe, but who are uninfluenced by their belief; those who treat the belief in immortality as one of "the many inventions" man has sought out for himself; and those, a number "small and select," who treat it as purely a matter of faith. In this classification Dr. Osler would have been helped had he distinguished between the belief in a future life and in immortality; the desire for a future life and its acceptance as a fact. So far as the last point is concerned there is nothing to show that primitive mankind desired a future life, only that it was accepted as other conditions were accepted. The supposed fact of a continued existence beyond the grave was accepted as the result of that primitive mode of thinking which led to the peopling of nature with "spirits" of various kinds, and to the endowing of even inanimate objects with "souls." The

"desire" for a future life, such as one finds in the morbid cravings of comparatively late religious people, would seem to be the logical result of people threatened with the destruction of a belief that had been unhesitatingly accepted for many generations. Similarly with the belief in immortality. This too is a late philosophical conception grafted upon the primitive belief in a continued existence, just as the belief in God as Creator is a late conception grafted upon the earlier conception of the Gods as mere natural forces. It would take too long now to elaborate these points, but they ought never to be lost sight of in a consideration of this belief.

"Practical indifference," says Dr. Osler, "is the modern attitude of mind," and he is content to state the fact without discussing its significance. Yet the significance of such a fact is far-reaching indeed. For here is one of the earliest and widest of religious beliefs—a belief that is universally accepted by primitive peoples, one that is emphasised by all religions, and one that armies of priests have always been striving to keep in a state of vigor, and yet modern people are indifferent to it in a growing degree.

Surely in such a case one is warranted in concluding that the whole pressure of life and fact is against either the veracity or utility of the belief in a future life. Either that or the philosophy of modern science is meaningless. A belief that corresponded to a real "craving" or to some natural fact, simply could not be given up by an increasing number of people, and only held with indifference by the remainder.

Consider for a moment the amount of humbug preached and written concerning man's craving for a future life. If one went by religious journals or sermons, it would seem that this topic was the all-engrossing one. As a matter of fact, it is treated with complete indifference by the majority of people. The man who is continually harping upon such a subject is voted a bore by all classes. We do not conduct our lives with a view to immortality, nor is it well that we should. Even the press, ready as it is to sell itself to the prejudice of the moment, seldom touches the question. And those who do believe and those who do not believe behave in much the same manner in the face of death; or if there is any difference, it is that the unbeliever shows less fear of death than the believer. Nor is there any truth in the statement so often made that in the face of death man, when too late, thinks seriously of this question. Dr. Osler, speaking from a wide experience, says:—

"As a rule, man dies as he has lived, uninfluenced practically by the thought of a future life.....In our modern life the educated man dies usually as did Mr. Denner in Margaret Deland's story—wondering but uncertain, generally unconscious and unconcerned. I have careful records of about five hundred death-beds, studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. The latter alone concerns us here. Ninety suffered bodily pain or distress of one kind or another, eleven showed mental apprehension, two positive terror, one expressed spiritual exaltation, one bitter remorse. The great majority gave no signs one way or the other; like their birth, their death was a forgetting. The Preacher was right; in this matter man hath no pre-eminence over the beast, as the one dieth so dieth the other."

The experience of everyone will chime with that of Dr. Osler; and it gives one some conception of the chronic lying of the pulpit to remember for how long and how steadily death-bed scenes have figured in religious addresses.

Those who regard the belief in immortality as without any foundation in fact, Dr. Osler rightly says, base their position on the teachings of modern science. And science, he affirms, has nothing to offer in its support. "Modern psychological science dispenses altogether with the soul.....The association of life in all its phases with organisation, the association of a gradation of intelligence with increasing complexity of organisation, the failure of the development of intelligence with an arrest in cerebral growth in the child, the slow decay of mind

with changes in the brain, the absolute dependence of the higher mental attributes upon definite structures, these facts give pause to the scientific student when he tries to think of intelligence apart from organisation." And this is only one of the ways in which modern thought has affected and undermined the belief in a future life.

As science and fact give no support to the belief in immortality, what, then, remains? Well, Dr. Osler answers quite plainly, Faith. "On the question of immortality," he says, "the only enduring enlightenment is through faith. 'Only believe' and 'He that believeth'—these are the commandments with comfort; not 'Only think' and 'He that reasoneth,' for these are the commandments of science." And this is in substance, as I have said at the head of this article, Giving Up the Ghost. In plain English we are told: Don't think about the question of immortality; don't reason about it. There are no facts; there is no evidence. Cultivate faith, and that will pull you through. Doubtless; only by the same method one could believe in anything. "Have faith" has been the cry of every impostor and every quack that the world has ever seen and ever will see. On the same plan Dr. Osler might become a Theosophist or a follower of Joseph Smith. He really throws away his own principle of guidance when he discriminates between the baseless beliefs of Christianity and those of other religions.

Dr. Osler concludes his lecture with a sentence the vicious nature of which is only thinly disguised by the use of a great name or two. His own confession of faith, he says, is contained in the opinion of Cicero—he would rather be mistaken with Plato than be in the right with those who deny altogether the life after death. Well, perhaps it is a matter of temperament, but for my own part I would rather be in the right with a clodhopper than in the wrong with the greatest philosopher that ever lived. Error does not cease to be error because it is backed up by a great name; nor does truth become falsehood because it is professed by persons of lesser note. Moreover, one may be excused the belief that truth confers upon its possessors a greatness that falsehood can never bestow; and a teaching that ignores this, and seeks to obtain support by special appeals to prejudice or passion, stands condemned to all right thinking people by its very advocacy.

C. COHEN.

### "B.C.—A.D."

Is the present an improvement upon the past? Is man higher up in the scale to-day than he was three or four thousand years ago? The answer to such questions cannot be a simple Yes, or No. Professor Sayce and others argue that in Egypt and Babylon, two or three thousand years before Christ, civilisation had reached a marvellous state of perfection. Long before Abraham was born, those countries were "full of schools and libraries, of teachers and pupils, of poets and prose-writers, and of the literary works which they had composed." Has any intellectual culture ever surpassed that of ancient Greece? Does not Homer still occupy the chief place among poets? Have we had a deeper or subtler metaphysician than Aristotle or Plato? Do we know of a single modern artist who is entitled to take a higher rank than Phidias? If intellectually we are not much, if any, in advance of the ancients, how do we stand as regards morals? There are those who maintain that the world is ethically lower now than it ever was before. Among these are not a few Christians, whose contention is that the world is destined to sink lower and lower in the mire of iniquity until Christ comes a second time.

From the point of view of the scientist, a period of four or six thousand years is not worth considering. The evolutionist can only express himself in millions. Evolution is so slow a process that it often seems as if there were no process at all. The

difference between B.C. and A.D. is morally almost imperceptible. Pagan Rome was not nearly so black as Christian apologists paint it; nor is Christian Paris or Christian London by any means a model city. Has the reign of truth, honesty, righteousness, and love been inaugurated in Christendom? Is the stamp of brotherhood visible upon our social relationships and commercial dealings? It is easy to say that the world has been steadily improving ever since the advent of Christ; but if you look at the world, with both eyes wide open, can you conscientiously affirm that its ethical condition has improved, to any considerable extent, during the last two thousand years? Does the King ever invite the poor and needy to Buckingham Palace, and take as much delight in them as he does in Dukes and Duchesses, Earls and Countesses, and other titled personages? Being the Head of the Church he ought to treat all alike as brothers and sisters in the Lord. As a matter of fact, we are assured that, in this most Christian country under heaven, there are at present upwards of twelve millions of people on the verge of starvation.

The Rev. George Jackson, B.A., of the Edinburgh Wesleyan Mission, is of opinion that Jesus of Nazareth has revolutionised the world. Mr. Jackson is a successful rhetorician. He dogmatizes in the usual theological fashion. He begins his Manchester lecture, entitled, "B.C.—A.D., or the Difference Christ has Made," by asserting that the Christian conception of God as Father is original. The Fatherhood of God, according to him, is a purely Christian revelation. But this is surely a mistake. Although Jesus is reported to have always addressed God as Father, and to have taught his disciples to do the same, there is not a single new element in his doctrine of the Divine Being. His whole idea of God is to be found, very definitely and beautifully expressed, in the Old Testament. If Mr. Jackson would only read and ponder such passages as Exodus xxxiv., 6-8; Psalm ciii., 1-18; Isaiah lxiii., 7-9, as well as the passages in which the Old Testament formally calls Jehovah Father, he would see that there is absolutely no originality in Christ's teaching. Both the holiness, or righteousness, and the Fatherhood of God had been clearly taught long before Jesus came. In this respect, then, the difference which Christ has made is too slight to be appreciated.

Mr. Jackson asserts that Jesus has given the world a new doctrine of man. Here is a specimen of the lecturer's rhetoric:—

"When ye pray," said Christ, 'say Our Father.' In the very act of making my own claim I acknowledge that of others; God is their Father no less than He is mine; the lowest equally with the highest are of worth to him. The same great truth is involved in what we call the Incarnation. Since the Son of God became man, man himself is revealed to be akin to God. The Incarnation means, not only the coming down of God, but the lifting up of man. Man, not this man, or that man, but man everywhere, our common human nature, is stamped with a new worth, and clothed with a new dignity, because God has become man."

Does Mr. Jackson imagine that such dogmatism will ever convince honest sceptics? It is a pure waste of time and energy to repeat to them, without the slightest attempt at proof, the very things which they deny and reject. Such talk may comfort and confirm believers, but Infidels simply laugh at it. The question is, What new thing did Jesus *say* concerning man? The lecture under consideration does not tell us. I boldly deny that Jesus introduced any new doctrine of man.

Let us see what fruit this nameless new doctrine of man has borne. Mr. Jackson tells us that "in the city of Rome, during the first century of the Christian era, out of a population of 1,610,000, 900,000 were slaves." Well, what of it? Were all those slaves emancipated as soon as Rome became Christian? And were the emancipated slaves put on an equality with the rest of the population? Mr. Jackson knows well that Christianity did nothing towards liberating the slaves of Rome. Further-

more, he knows equally well that Jesus never uttered a single word against the degrading institution of slavery, and that he is reported to have made frequent use of bond-service and bond-servants as illustrations in his teaching without once expressing disapproval. The same thing is true of the Apostles. St. Paul employed the relation of slaves to their owners as a parallel to the relation of Christians to their Lord. It is true that he exhorted masters to be kind to their slaves; but Seneca did the same, and in much stronger language, while Philo of Alexandria condemned slavery as the worst of evils.

The Christian Church generally defended slavery as a divine institution. It is to the credit of some Christian Emperors that they made laws to protect the slaves: but several of their Pagan predecessors had done the same. The Church at one time practised manumission on a fairly large scale; but it is a historical truism that manumission had been a Pagan practice long before it was adopted by the Christians. From the time of Cicero onwards Rome's freedmen were always a great host. A well-behaved slave could usually win his freedom by five or six years' service. But it must be borne in mind that manumission as practised by Christian Rome was not so much a religious as an economic act, its main object being to increase the revenue of the State. A few slaves were made free, it is true; but slavery continued. The Bishops of the Church were themselves large and powerful feudal lords. Mr. Jackson cannot be ignorant of the fact that less than a hundred years ago Christian ministers were in the habit of justifying slavery in God's name. Even to-day there are thousands of Christians who thoroughly believe in it as the very best thing for inferior races.

It is undeniable that Christianity, as such, is not opposed to slavery. Mr. Jackson admits that there have been many contributing causes to the abolition of slavery; but it is impossible to see on what historical grounds he can assert that the "vital, determining fact, the fact behind all other facts" in it was the influence of Christianity. The assertion has not a grain of truth in it. The same statement holds good as applied to philanthropy, and to the service of man generally. Such institutions as hospitals are of purely human origin. Tennyson's nurse, who says:—

O how could I serve in the wards if the hope of the world were a lie?

How could I bear with the sights and loathsome smells of disease, But that He said, "Ye do it to Me, when ye do it to these?"

does not represent the highest type of womanhood. The true nurse is she who ministers to the sick and suffering, *not for God's sake, but for their own*. Sympathy is the true source of service, and sympathy is a fruit of humanity. It was quickened humanity that emancipated the slaves, and it is an awakened sense of humanity that leads to works of philanthropy. Mr. Jackson rhetorically exclaims, "Jesus Christ built Manchester Hospital. Where are the hospitals of his enemies?" But Mr. Jackson is misinformed. Jesus did *not* build Manchester Hospital. It was built by men and women who loved their fellow-beings and wished to help them in their need. Has Mr. Jackson never heard of Robert Owen's Garden City at New Lanark? The experiment was so satisfactory that crowds from all parts of Europe came to see it. Why was that Garden City doomed to failure? Because Christian prejudice could not tolerate it. Robert Owen was an Atheist, and both he and his good works had to be crushed, *for God's sake*. Charles Bradlaugh was a philanthropist of the noblest type, who did his utmost to help suffering people; but because his good works did not shine from the lamp-stand of religion, Christians shut their eyes and never saw them. Atheists cannot build hospitals because of the jealousy of Christians, who have never a good word to say of outsiders.

Being a scholar, Mr. Jackson cannot utterly ignore the ethical teaching of Pagans. He is bound to admit that the *Ethics* of Aristotle, the *Dialogues* of Plato, and the works of the Stoic philosophers and

the Neo-Platonists of the Roman Empire, must be assigned a very high rank; but, being a Christian minister, he is compelled to qualify his admission thus: "Nevertheless, the most casual comparison of ancient and modern ideals will reveal at once how great is the difference Christ has made." He ought to be fair even to his opponents. It is certainly not fair to compare ancient with modern ideals. If you compare contemporary Pagan and Christian ideals you will learn that morally there is very little to choose between them. Here is the opinion of a greater scholar than Mr. Jackson:—

"Seneca's moral principles are at some points much further developed than they can be said to be in either the Gospels or Epistles. In some respects he is concrete and practical where the Gospels are abstract, as when he condemns all war and urges habits of kindly fellowship between masters and slaves.....Such doctrines as those of reciprocity and the forgiveness of injuries were of course the common property of the moralists of all civilised countries before the Christian era—of the teachers of China and India as well as of Greece; and the duty of beneficence, which in a section of the gentilising third Gospel is made the whole question of moral and religious life, was indicated in almost exactly the same terms in the much more ancient sacred books of Egypt."—Robertson's *Short History of Christianity*, pp. 74, 75.

It would do Mr. Jackson good to read the works of such modern and competent scholars as Boissier, Schultze, Thamin, and Dill. They would soon cure him of his prejudices on the point in question.

Mr. Jackson closes his lecture with another important admission, and another pietistic *nevertheless*. The admission is that Christ has not made such a great difference after all. Quotations are given from Lecky and Buckle to show how astoundingly wicked the world has been under Christian rule. Lecky says that "few men, who are not either priests or monks, would not have preferred to live in the best days of the Athenian or of the Roman Republics, in the age of Augustus or in the age of the Antonines, rather than in any period that elapsed between the triumph of Christianity and the fourteenth century." Buckle says that "there have been whole generations in Scotland during which religion has meant the smiting of every glad and joyous thing as with a black frost." Then Mr. Jackson points to the Christian world of to-day and admits that it is a temptation to ask, "What difference is Christ making here?" "NEVERTHELESS," exclaims Mr. Jackson, "even in the darkest periods there has been a real religious life in the world." True. There has been too much religion in the world, and too little morality; too much piety and too little philanthropy. But Mr. Jackson does not give us a single fact in proof of his assertion. The facts are against him, and he flies for refuge to the word NEVERTHELESS. An eccentric Welsh preacher, having lost the thread of his discourse, shouted at the top of his voice, "Nevertheless! I thank God for this unspeakably glorious word in my text. Nevertheless! It is full of saving grace and covers a multitude of sins. Hallelujah!"

J. T. LLOYD.

#### THE TRUE ROMAN EMPIRE.

There never was, from the seventh century before Christ to the seventh after Christ, but *one* Roman Empire, which meant, the power over humanity of such men as Cincinnatus and Agricola; it expires as the race and temper of these expire; the nominal extent of it, or brilliancy at any moment, is no more than the reflection, farther or nearer upon the clouds, of the flames of an altar whose fuel was of noble souls. There is no true date for its division; there is none for its destruction. Whether Dacian Probus or Noric Odoacer be on the throne of it, the force of its living principle alone is to be watched—remaining, in arts, in laws, and in habits of thought, dominant still in Europe down to the twelfth century; in language and example, dominant over all educated men to this hour.—*Ruskin*.

Men will lie on their backs, talking about the fall of man, and never make an effort to get up.—*Thoreau*.

#### Special.

MR. W. BORRIE, a London reader, has taken the trouble to send me a copy of the *Erith Times* containing what he justly calls "a most disgraceful attack" on the N. S. S. and myself. Mr. Borrie says he knows "it is difficult to obtain legal redress for anything written or said of Freethinkers," but he hopes something can be done in this case, as the libel in question has been "passed round Woolwich Arsenal with great glee by Christian advocates."

The libel occurs in a letter ostensibly on "The Bible in the School" over the signature of S. E. Nutbourne. This person, I am told, has been at the same dirty business before. In a previous issue of the same paper he stated that "you can always purchase disgusting and indecent literature from Mr. Foote."

Here are some sentences from his letter in the *Erith Times* of March 10:—

"Let me again assert that the National Secular Society does publish indecent literature, and that Mr. Foote is an advocate of 'Free Love.' I am too old a hand to write what I cannot substantiate, nor do I stand alone in my statement. I have heard scholars publicly denounce Mr. Foote in St. James's Hall, and dare him to begin by turning his own children adrift."

Freethinkers who have known me for many years, and have read my writings and heard my lectures, are perfectly well aware that these statements are absolute falsehoods. The well-informed will not be deceived. But the object of such statements is, of course, to mislead the ignorant. Taking this fact into account, I wrote and posted the following letter on Monday afternoon, immediately after the libel came into my hands:—

#### A PLAIN CHALLENGE.

To the Editor of the "*Erith Times*."

SIR,—

My attention has been drawn to a letter by S. E. Nutbourne in your issue for March 10. This letter contains a gross attack upon myself. I am astonished at your allowing personal libels to appear in your paper under the pretence of "free discussion." Were I foolish enough to ask an English jury, consisting probably of Christians, with a Christian judge upon the bench, to do justice to a well-known Freethinker, I should place this matter in the hands of my solicitor. As it is, I desire you, if you have any sense of honor in your treatment of intellectual opponents, to call upon your correspondent to explain what "indecent literature" is published by the National Secular Society, what he means by the allusion to someone daring me to "turn my own children adrift," and when and where I have advocated "Free Love." The general blackguardism of S. E. Nutbourne's letter may be passed by in view of its specific statements. It is to these that I request you will invite him to address himself.

Yours, etc.,

G. W. FOOTE.

I do not know what will be the result of this letter. I confess I do not expect much satisfaction from the scoundrel who signs himself S. E. Nutbourne. But by addressing this letter to the editor of the *Erith Times*, and printing it in the *Freethinker*, I give my friends in that part of the world an opportunity of showing the local Christians that I have challenged the pious slanderer of the N. S. S. and myself, and am prepared to prove him a dirty liar if I have the opportunity.

Freethinkers may easily understand what sort of opposition they have to meet. The policy of slander, always chronic, is now acute. What is said about me personally, apart from the N. S. S., does not disturb my sleep or impair my digestion. But the honor of the dead is a thing about which I feel more profoundly. Now it happens that Dr. Torrey's libels on Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll are so *particular* that they can be refuted to a demonstration. That is the supreme value of my pamphlet on "Dr. Torrey and the Infidels." The facts are so overwhelmingly against the Yankee revivalist. We have him (as the saying is) on toast, and I beg Freethinkers to keep

him there—and keep him hot. They can do this by circulating my pamphlet, and providing me with the money to print as many copies as may be required. It will be remembered that the first 40,000 copies of the two pamphlets went off in less than a fortnight; a similar quantity went off in about the same space of time; I have just printed a third supply, and I dare say a fourth and fifth will be necessary. I should like to supplement the existing pamphlets with a small one exposing Dr. Torrey's lies about "infidels" since he started at the Albert Hall. This I desire to have ready for distribution when he opens the mission at Brixton. I am doing my part of this business as well as I can do it—and I want my fellow Freethinkers to do theirs.

My readers will be glad to see the press conspiracy of silence breaking down. The following appeared conspicuously in Monday's *Daily Mirror* :—

#### DR. TORREY CHALLENGED.

BRISTOL READER OF THE "DAILY MIRROR" OFFERS £50 FOR A CONVERSION.

Yesterday the *Daily Mirror* received the following letter from a correspondent who enclosed his real name and address, but not for publication :—

Bristol, March 18.

Recently I wrote to you suggesting that Dr. Torrey should meet Mr. G. W. Foote in public discussion. You kindly replied by letter, saying that you could not publish my proposal without knowing if Mr. Foote would be agreeable to such an encounter.

Since then I have written to Mr. Foote, and the following is what he says :—

"I 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 I can well believe, for avoiding that topic, I should be quite ready to debate with him either the truth of Christianity or the inspiration of the Bible."

I am therefore in a position to renew my offer, viz., that if Dr. Torrey, with his well-known ability for converting "infidels," will debate publicly with Mr. Foote, and if such debate leads to Mr. Foote's conversion, I shall have pleasure in placing £50 at Dr. Torrey's disposal for any charity he likes to mention.

BRISTOL READER.

The charges against Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll were, we believe, that they were men of doubtful moral character. Mr. Foote is apparently prepared to prove the contrary.

We shall await with interest Dr. Torrey's reply to this challenge. Even though he may not hope to convert Mr. Foote, he owes it to himself to justify what he said about Ingersoll and Paine.

I thank the *Daily Mirror* for that last sentence. It is good to hear somebody besides "infidels" saying that Dr. Torrey should attempt to substantiate his charges against two dead heroes, who cannot speak for themselves, but shall never lack a vindicator while I am able to wield pen or tongue. With regard to the suggested debate, I do not suppose it will ever come off, for I have a great belief in Dr. Torrey's personal discretion; but I am quite ready for my own share in this proposal, and I venture to hint that the Churches might all unite to make this a kind of test case with their Deity. A week's earnest supplication before the debate ought to settle me, if there is any truth in the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer. And if Dr. Torrey succeeded, with the Lord's help, in converting the Editor of the *Freethinker* and President of the National Secular Society, he would have converted *somebody* for once in his life.

G. W. FOOTE.

Some kinder casuists are pleased to say,

In nameless print—that I have no devotion;

But set those persons down with me to pray,

And you shall see who has the properest notion

Of getting into heaven the shortest way;

My altars are the mountains and the ocean,  
Earth, air, stars—all that springs from the great Whole,  
Who hath produc'd, and will receive the soul.

—Byron.

The aim of life is life itself.—Goethe.

## Acid Drops

Christian journals and Christian preachers resolutely decline to censure Dr. Torrey for telling lies about "infidels." Even the *Christian World* is as bad as all the rest. That journal printed a letter compaining of Dr. Torrey's libels on Unitarians. Our colleague, Mr. C. Cohen, sent a letter to the *Christian World* pointing out that Unitarians were not the only persons attacked. Mr. Cohen instanced Dr. Torrey's libels on Paine and Ingersoll, referred to the wide circulation of our pamphlet on that subject, and suggested that the better-class Christians ought to protest against his conduct. But in this respect there are no better-class Christians. The *Christian World* would not insert Mr. Cohen's letter. Very well, then. We quite understand the issue. Freethought must fight Christianity to the bitter end. It is to be a fight to a finish—a war of extermination. All the braver Freethinkers will recognise this, and act accordingly. "Christian" now as ever means "bigot," and "bigot" always means "persecutor"—the extent of the persecution being only a matter of opportunity.

Dr. Torrey claims to have converted four Church clergymen at the Albert Hall. He has now converted another Christian—Mr. Quentin Ashlyn, a concert singer. This gentleman, instead of taking his "turn" at St. George's Hall, London, stood up and said that he had been "converted to God at the Albert Hall mission," and that he could not spend his time in amusing people who were on the road to hell. Mr. Ashlyn is apparently starting as a missionary on his own account. We wonder if he will find it pay as well as ballad singing. Some find it pay a great deal better.

According to the story of his life in *M. A. P.* Mr. Charles M. Alexander—Dr. Torrey's christy-minstrel man—once wanted a suit of clothes very badly and prayed to the Lord for one, and it soon came along. "Thus," he says, "I learned a lesson I have never forgotten, that God answers prayer for temporal things as well as for things spiritual." Mr. Alexander tells this in a country where Peculiar People are sent to prison for believing—*really* believing—that God answers prayer for the recovery of the sick! Mr. T. P. O'Connor prints Mr. Alexander's nonsense for the sake of the halfpence. Long live our noble press!

The *Morning Leader*, with the *Star*, has done its share of puffing Dr. Torrey. Why did it denounce Old Dowie? Why did it turn the writer of "Sub Rosa" on the other day to ridicule Prophet Baxter? We believe the advertisement columns supply the explanation. Good old free press again!

We have repeatedly said that the ikons (images of saints) which Kuropatkin was loaded with, when he set out from Moscow to take command of the Russian armies in Manchuria, would probably serve to keep the Japanese soldiers warm in the cold weather. It appears that the whole lot were captured in Kuropatkin's last battle. Instead of burning them, however, it seems that the Japanese sent them on to Tokio, where they will probably be exhibited as Russian "gods."

Bishop Thornton, vicar of Blackburn, has been telling the Darwin Oddfellows how "dangerous" is the "tendency manifested in some quarters amongst professed friends of the people, who dissociated human brotherhood from the Christian faith." The reverend gentleman said that he was "profoundly convinced" that the brotherhood of man depended upon the fatherhood of God. This is all nonsense, but if it were true it would not help the Christian case. For the brotherhood of man was not discovered, and has not been promoted, by Christianity. There is nothing about it in the Gospels. St. Paul gets near to it, but in doing so he appeals to a Greek poet, who had said that men were all God's children. This very fact is enough to credit the brotherhood of man to Pagan teachers.

Father Gerard, who is evidently an excellent Jesuit, has been lecturing at Aberdeen on "Modern Freethought." A large part of his address, as reported in the *Free Press*, was an attack on the theory of the natural origin of life. When question-time came, he was asked: "How would your Church be affected if life could be evolved from dead matter?" His reply was that "his Church would not be affected in the least degree." Note the cunning of this attitude. The Freethinker is to be held up to reprobation and derision for believing that life originated on this planet in the ordinary course of nature; but if that belief were demonstrated to be true it would not matter a straw to the

opposite side. What does this mean? Does it not mean that the Church stakes nothing in the game, but plays "heads I win and tails you lose"? Such sophistry could only be played off on intellectual children.

Anybody can see what place Evan Roberts is graduating for. The following extract from a recent letter by the special correspondent of the *Daily News* is an intensely interesting document in human pathology:—

"Mr. Evan Roberts is still in Cardiganshire, and to-night strange scenes were witnessed at the revival services there. As one of the great Welsh hymns was being sung Mr. Evan Roberts suddenly stopped the singers and said: 'We are not all at peace with each other, and the meeting cannot be continued until that is settled.' He added that they were to make peace on their way home. He then took hold of the Bible and asked, 'What is this?' and the congregation answered, 'God's Word.' He subsequently said there was someone in the meeting who denied the Divinity of the Bible, and he asked him to stand up and confess.

"The enthusiasm of the meeting during the next five minutes is beyond description, the whole assembly praying that God would give strength to the person referred to. The evangelist commanded him three times to stand up, or he would have to name him. He added: 'It is not anyone who was present at the afternoon meeting.' No one stood up. 'Then,' said Evan Roberts, 'I will have to name him. God has revealed the name, and the age is twenty-three. Oh, Lord, forgive.' Five minutes later he smiled gleefully, because the man had changed his views.

"After warning some sceptics, Mr. Evan Roberts said a man was present who had committed sacrilege. A heart-rending scene ensued, the missionary saying: 'This man must make threefold retribution, and confess to his Church.' Members of the congregation were laboring under sheer terror, and the missionary challenged a doubter of God's hand in the revelation that if he was false God should remove him, but if the doubter was at fault he should suffer removal. The evangelist predicted terrible times, which, he said, they would understand a month hence."

The newspapers that have helped to turn this poor silly young man's head have a lot to answer for.

Ashton-on-Mersey District Council has been discussing the ticklish subject of kissing. Mr. Tonge asked the Medical Officer (Dr. C. J. Renshaw) whether kissing was dangerous, as there was a lot of it going on at week ends in the district. A lot went on among persons coming from places of worship. Half-a-dozen would meet together and each would kiss the other. He thought that a likely means of spreading disease. Dr. Renshaw replied that kissing was one of the worst things that could happen. A law should be passed against it. It was as bad as expectorating. Mr. Tonge repeated that it was very prevalent among persons coming from church. Mr. Kilvert asked whether it was because they came from places of worship. Mr. Sandbach thought it was in obedience to St. Paul's command: "Salute one another with a holy kiss." Mr. Tonge said it was a disgusting practice. He knew a Sunday-school teacher, a lady, who, he would guarantee, got fifty different kisses on a Sunday. The discussion then dropped. It was long enough, however, to throw light on the religious condition of Ashton-on-Mersey.

Ashton-under-Lyne has witnessed a two hours' wrangle over the religious question. When the Conservatives (the Church party) were in a majority on the Town Council they allowed Church of England and Nonconformist clergymen to attend the schools and give religious instruction to the scholars. When the Liberals (the Chapel party) came into power last November they put an end to this arrangement. The Church people protested, but the Chapel people declined to give way. Ultimately the County Council was asked to step in and decide the question. Sir Henry Hibbert presided at this "conciliation" meeting, but he could not induce the rival parties to come to a settlement, although he suggested various ways out of the difficulty. The Chapel people were willing to admit denominational teaching if given out of school hours. The Church people objected to this as a hardship on the children. What an argument it all is for Secular Education! Is it not disgusting to see these sects quarreling over the use of public property?

The Bishop of Manchester, preaching on behalf of the Church Missionary Society, said that the need for missionary effort in Japan was vast and might be expected to increase.

"With the freedom to set forth Christian truth there went also equal freedom to export the literature of Agnosticism. Vast quantities of agnostic and infidel reading were sent to Japan, and it was scarcely possible to conceive what effect they might have on the minds of this newly-awakened people."

We are pleased to witness the Bishop's alarm.

Y. Matsumoto writes to the *Manchester Guardian* correcting the local Bishop's idea that the Japanese are going

to be on the side of Christianity. He points out that the Japanese have a high moral code already, and says that people can judge for themselves as to "the value of their humanitarianism compared with the behavior of the so-called Russian Christians."

Sir Charles Warren's pulpit performance is being imitated by the jocular G. K. Chesterton, who preached recently at St. Paul's, Covent-garden. He assured his congregation that "Christianity was now triumphing." We dare say they wanted some assuring.

Rev. John Morris, rector of Llandidan, near Ruthin, Wales, has to pay £100 damages to Mr. W. C. Williams, schoolmaster, for libel. During the judge's summing up the man of God fainted. What a bold and noble character.

A Chatham young man named Lovell committed suicide by cutting his throat. At the coroner's inquest a letter was read which he had left for his parents. "God and myself," he said, "only know what I have suffered." "God," he added, "will pardon me." Is this another illustration of Dr. Torrey's theory, which he took over from Talmage, that suicide is the logical result of Atheism?

Sir Mortimer Durand, the British Ambassador at Washington, is reported as having told a Mothers' Meeting—we beg pardon, a Mothers' Congress—that he did not believe in the deterioration of the English race—in which we suppose he included Scotch, Irish, and Welsh—to say nothing of Mr. Hall Caine and the Manxmen. His reason for this opinion is rather singular. He did not believe that "the descendants of those who had done so much for the world would be allowed by God to degenerate into a race of weaklings." That should settle the question. But it doesn't. What God will allow simply means what will happen. This brings us no "forrader." What will happen? Ay, there's the rub. Other great civilisations have failed:—

'Tis said the lion and the lizard keep

The courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep.

Why should the laws of nature be upset for the English race? We are deteriorating now, and it will take something more than Sir Mortimer Durand's belief in God to stop the process.

Mr. Balfour, with his cheap "Philosophic Doubt," is no match for the expert Christian liars who run the Russian Empire. The Czar and his Old Gang, with the Holy Synod behind them, can easily trick a politician like our Premier. The comedy of the North Sea Commission is enough to make the "lost" laugh in the hottest rooms in Hades. England has got the money "compensation" which Russia offered at first, and all the rest is a bit of paper—called a Report. Arbitration is an excellent thing, in its way, and ever so much better than a bloody war; but it will never make liars and rogues honest.

The *Daily Chronicle* is running the *Daily News* very hard as a religious journal. On Wednesday, March 15, its leading articles were followed by General Booth's "Meditations at Jerusalem"—telegraphed from the Holy City (of course, at great expense) to the headquarters of the Salvation Army in London. We suppose the cost was charged to the advertising account of Booth's business.

The only important part of Booth's "Meditations"—and the importance of that is accidental—is the confession he makes of the practical failure of Christianity. It runs as follows:—

"But standing here to-day may I not make a special claim on behalf of the more helpless and hopeless section of the peoples? Could their condition be much more unlike that Kingdom which He came to establish, or more closely resemble what we know of the kingdom of Hell?"

"Look at the cruel, selfish, senseless, inhuman wars in which the poor are ever the main sufferers! Look at the starvation in which millions slowly pine, wasting and wailing, until delivered from their misery by the grave!"

"Look at the countless array of drunkards held by the chains of their demoralising appetites! Think of their desolate wives and children, their dreary homes, and of their march to death and Hell!"

"Look at the hideous slavery of impurity flaunting itself in the very centres of civilisation and Christianity, and at the debasing results that follow in its train!"

"Look at the melancholy criminals shut behind prison bars, for whose reformation for this world or the next so little intelligent effort is made! Look at the gay, frivolous crowds found everywhere, who, in the paltriest pursuits, waste the sacred opportunities given them to bless their fellows and prepare to meet their God."

Such is the state of things—even in Christian England, where some twenty millions a year are spent on religion—after nearly two thousand years of the faith that was to save

the world. Could there be a greater condemnation of Christianity? And what fools the people will be if they give this faith, which has wasted two millenniums, another millennium or two to see if it can do any better.

Naturally the Free Church Council could not meet at Manchester without attacking the largest Christian Church in the world—the Roman Catholic. Dr. Horton, the president, took a large part in these amenities. He was replied to in a sermon at the Jesuit Church by Father Brown, who observed that Dr. Horton's strong point was not veracity. For instance, he had declared that manuals of Catholic theology represented the priest as "making God" on the altar and "creating his Creator." Father Brown gives this the lie direct. He defies the Free Church leader to produce any passage justifying his statement. Every Catholic manual represents Transubstantiation as wrought by "the power of God" and not by the act or influence of the priest. No doubt this is so. Dr. Horton went too far. Perhaps it would be as well if he recollected the absurdities of his own faith. When a man has once swallowed the Trinity it seems odd that he should stickle at anything else.

Dr. Horton's brief reply to Father Brown takes no notice of the charge of unveracity. That charge, the *Daily News* says, he "can afford to ignore." Of course he can. There is nobody to make him do otherwise. Certainly he can "afford" it. His answer proves that he can. Instead of answering Father Brown, he asks him to repeat his words in the *Manchester Guardian*, as though their being reported there were not sufficient.

Father Brown promptly took up Dr. Horton's challenge, and asked him to name the Catholic manuals in which it is stated that the priest "makes God" and is the "creator of his Creator."

Mr. Perks, M.P., one of the Free Church Council orators, quoted from Gladstone's foolish pamphlet on the Vatican Decrees, which was so finely answered by Newman. Mr. Gladstone said, and Mr. Perks adopted it, that "No one can now become a convert of the Roman Catholic Church without renouncing his mental and moral freedom, and placing his civic loyalty and duty at the mercy of another." Father Brown answered Mr. Perks by pointing out that one of the first things Gladstone did when he came into power again was to appoint the Marquis of Ripon, a Roman Catholic, Governor-General of India.

What is the use of Free Churchmen talking in that style? If their argument is of any importance they should agitate for a Bill to disfranchise Roman Catholics. If they don't mean to do that they should hold their tongues about disloyalty. And as for "renouncing mental and moral freedom," surely a man does that when he joins *any* Church. Dr. Horton does not really use his reason any more than Father Brown. He only pretends to.

Dr. Moule, Bishop of Durham, does not believe in dancing as "an auxiliary in the work of the Church." "The associations of dancing," he says, "in our time and country, are so essentially other than religious (I am not saying irreligious, which is another thing) that, to my mind, there is a discord in the thought of aiding the Church by such a mode of social entertainment." Perhaps the worthy Bishop knows, but wishes to forget, that, as dancing was a religious exercise all over the world, so it was incorporated into the ritual of the early Christian Church. According to Scaliger, the bishops were called *Prævules* because they led the dance on feast days. Special provision was made for dancing in the choirs. Naturally the practice fell into disrepute with the Agape, or Love Feasts, where things appear to have gone on that will hardly bear telling. Nevertheless the practice lingered in the Church for many centuries. Even as late as 1813, at Seville, in Spain, twelve young men danced before the Sacrament on Holy Thursday. In more recent times it is well known how common dancing has been at revivals. Those who remember the early days of the Salvation Army will recollect how the Salvation lasses used to jig about and beat their tamborines. Amongst the Welsh followers of Whitefield were the Jumpers, whose speciality was dancing at religious meetings. This sect spread more or less in England, and Mr. George Meredith must have seen their antics before writing his "Jump to Glory Jane."

The Bishop of Durham, of course, may reply that religious dancing is a different thing from the terpsichorean art as practised by men and women for social pleasure. No doubt it is so. But it should be borne in mind that dancing, in its origin, was a religious exercise. That is why Arabs will look on with solemn faces at female dancing that to a European is simply lascivious. The social dance is a much later

thing. It is a survival of a practice which has lost its old significance. And it serves to illustrate the evolutionary truth that habits persist when the conditions in which they originated have ceased to exist. Dogs, for instance, scrape the ground with their hind feet on certain occasions and turn round and round before lying down, simply because their wild ancestors did so for a purpose of self-preservation ever so many thousands of years ago.

There is another aspect of this dancing question. Churches must be in a bad way in Puritan England when they patronise dancing as an aid to their support. Puritanism has always hated dancing, and everything else that brought the sexes together. Being morally unhealthy, it saw something wrong in the most innocent recreations, and especially when males and females looked at each other without a Bible or a man of God in between. No doubt the Puritans judged from themselves. They thought other people as inflammable as they were. They were hardly able to understand how a man could touch a woman's hand without panting for what was called "the last favor." Indeed, they seem to have been filled with the feelings expressed in Byron's poem "The Waltz"—significantly inscribed in the Introduction to "Horace Hornem."

Thus all and each, in movement swift or slow,  
The genial contact gently undergo;  
Till some might marvel, with the modest Turk,  
If "nothing follows all this palming work."

Thus did Byron revenge himself for his short leg or club foot (whichever it was) that kept him from the dancing-room except as a spectator. Thus also (to compare great things with small) did Dr. Torrey compensate himself, before he came to London, by grinning diabolically at wicked dancers. In his younger days he had skipped himself; he had to give the fun up for the sake of his "salvation"—but he could not help thinking of what he missed, and he hated those who still enjoyed what he had to abandon.

Probably the common, healthy view of dancing was expressed by William Cobbett as well as by anybody. "Dancing," he said, in his *Advice to Young Men*, "is at once rational and healthful: it gives animal spirits: it is the natural amusement of young people, and such it has been from the days of Moses: it is enjoyed in numerous companies: it makes the parties be pleased with themselves and with all about them: it has no tendency to excite base and malignant feelings; and none but the most hateful and grovelling tyranny, or the most stupid and despicable fanaticism, ever raised its voice against it." Late hours and bad air are, of course, objectionable. The ideal dancing is dancing in the open air. What a pity it cannot be restored! John Keats dreamed of it in writing his magical Ode "To a Nightingale":—

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delv'd earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,  
Dance, and Provencal song, and sun-burnt mirth!

What a picture is that last line!

The biggest fool in England is doing a month's imprisonment. He stole a clergyman's travelling bag on the road to Scarborough—and it was full of sermons!

#### REAL PATRIOTISM.

No matter who rules a country, no matter what it is officially called, or how it is formally divided, eternal bars and doors are set to it by the mountains and seas, eternal laws enforced over it by the clouds and stars. The people born on it are *its* people, be they a thousand times again and again conquered, exiled, or captive. The stranger cannot be its king, the invader cannot be its possessor; and, although just laws, maintained whether by the people or their conquerors, have always the appointed good and strength of justice, nothing is permanently helpful to any race or condition of men but the spirit that is in their own hearts, kindled by the love of their native land.—*Nuskin*.

Victorious Wrong, with vulture scream,  
Salutes the risen sun, pursues the flying day!  
I saw her ghastly as a tyrant's dream,  
Perch on the trembling pyramid of night,  
Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilioned lay  
In visions of the dawning undelight.  
Who shall impede her flight?  
Who rob her of her prey?

—*Shelley*.



**Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.**

Sunday, March 26, Public Baths Assembly Hall, Coventry: 3 p.m., "The Truth About the Bible"; 7 p.m., "Silly and Sensible Salvation."

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 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, Failsforth.

R. MAYES.—The nearest to Dumbarton is the Glasgow Secular Society, and Branch of the N. S. S., holding its meetings in Brunswick-street. You do not appear to have heard of it. We do not care whether Theosophy is friendly or antagonistic to Christianity. Both are superstitions; and it is folly to fight one superstition for another.

UNKNOWN.—Thanks for your fourth subscription.

G. J. HOLYOAKE.—We are obliged to you for the subsequent correspondence. Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge appears to wish to be fair, and allowance must be made for his tenderness towards those who bore the family name, which, you know at least as well as we do, is an illustrious one.

C. D.—You justly observe that Evan Roberts's appeal to the Deity to "remove" him or his opponent, whichever is right, involves the very same principle as the old watch-story falsely told of Bradlaugh and other leading Atheists. With regard to your question, apply to the Clerk of the Council, Education Offices, Victoria Embankment, W.C., for "S. M. Form 41, L. Fill it in and return it. You should also try to interview a head mistress in your district.

J. ROSS.—Sending orders to Mr. Foote personally, instead of to the Company direct, necessarily causes delay. We wish friends would conform to the directions printed every week in the *Freethinker* with regard to this matter.

F. S.—Many thanks for papers and cuttings, which you will see have been useful.

C. MASCALL.—It is, as you say, a "lively year." Religion is doing its utmost to retrieve lost ground, and Freethinkers ought to be active on the other side. The idea that the nature of things will settle religion is a pestilent superstition. It has no warrant from history. Religion has again and again triumphed over civilisation. Professor Clifford, who knew what he was talking about, warned thinking people against coming to any terms with Christianity. He reminded them that it had destroyed one civilisation, and might destroy another.

H. J. HEWETT.—We have dealt with the matter in a special article headed "Dr. Torrey's Converts." Please show it to the "friends" you refer to.

OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £94 7s. 5d. Received this week: C. Mascal 5s., J. C. 1s., A. P. 2s. 6d., Unknown 2s. 6d., A. E. Elderkin 2s. 6d., W. Milroy 2s., E. Davies 3s., Mrs. Burgon 5s., G. M. N. 1s. 6d., P. Rowland 5s., G. Dargue 1s., James Baker 1s., C. Durrant 2s., A. Cayford 2s., J. Mitchell 1s., H. Brooks 1s. 6d.

A. E. ELDERKIN.—Glad you think, with respect to our Torrey pamphlets, etc., that we are "doing a noble work in exposing this malicious 'bounder.'"

L. B.—Glad to have your encouraging letter. Please see "Sugar Plums."

D. W. DAVIES, Bryn Cottages, Mason's-road, Gorseinon, near Swansea, would be glad to make the acquaintance of any Freethinkers in the neighbourhood. This correspondent is advised that his order and admittance are placed in the proper hands, and that we hope he will continue his praiseworthy efforts to circulate Freethought literature. He is taking his share of the "Underground Movement" we wrote about recently.

H. BROOKS.—Thank you for getting us seven or eight new readers. Keep doing it. We do not remember the date you refer to, but have handed it over to be looked up.

A. HURCUM.—Your argument in favor of flogging springs from a good healthy feeling on your part, but does it not go hand in hand with unreason? In other words, have you quite thought the matter out? Logically, you argue from the ground of your final statement that "there is no other method of appealing to such natures." We deny that statement. But, if it were true, we think it would be a foolish thing to flog a man and then turn him, brutalised and defiant, loose upon society again. You should go farther and either imprison him for life, or kill him right away. You are mistaken in supposing that flogging a man will make him more tender and considerate. The facts are against you, and psychology is against you. Brutality brutalises. You cannot escape from that law by alleging fine reasons for the brutality. And do you not fix your attention too much on one kind of cruelty? There are horrible cruelties to children and women (to all the helpless) that do not take the form of physical violence. Do you advise homeopathic treatment there too? And if not, why not? We suggest to you that the very idea of "punish-

ment" should be got rid of as barbaric. The criminal is as much a problem for science as is the lunatic. There is moral insanity as well as mental insanity. And, instead of being "wild" with the morally insane, ought you not rather to be glad that you are blessed with a better disposition? After all, you did not earn that blessing; neither did the vicious man earn his curse. In the lottery of Nature you were lucky and he was unlucky. The proof of it is that you would not change with him if you could.

J. CLAYTON.—Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation; also for the cutting.

W. BRADLEY.—Thanks for your reference to Mr. T. Miller, who had already written to us about supplying our publications. There is no active Freethought movement in Wigan now. It is a very long time since Mr. Foote lectured there. Could not some of the Wigan "saints" do something in connection with the Liverpool centre?

H. J. THORP.—You must expect these rebuffs from Christians. Bigotry always was, and always will be, the same; and Christian bigotry is "rather more so." Don't be discouraged. Think of what we have had to put up with.

R. POOLE.—Thanks for your trouble and good wishes. No doubt the *Socialist* you send us means well, but "A Foote for a Head" is a Christian Evidence "chestnut," which does not display much wit. Good puns are few, and puns on names are nearly always vulgar. Socialists who believe that Christianity has had no influence, either for good or ill, should settle with the *Clarion* before calling the *Freethinker* names.

A. GRIMSHAW.—Sorry we do not remember the Garrick inscription in Westminster Abbey.

W. P. PEARSON.—Glad to hear Mr. Lloyd's lectures at Liverpool were so highly appreciated.

H. T. GOULDING.—We do not wish to complain of Messrs. Smith and Son supplying other papers. Our only concern is with this one. Thanks for your letter, all the same.

A. E. SAUNDERS.—Thomas Paine was prosecuted for "treason" on account of his Republican *Rights of Man*. He went to France to take the seat to which he had been elected in the National Assembly.

C. L. S.—See "Special." Thanks.

J. S. CLARKE.—Will deal with it next week; no room this week to do it justice.

E. DAVIES.—Glad to hear from you in the Welsh Revival district, and to learn that you find the *Freethinker* "quite a treat." Bradlaugh's Oaths Act applies to all courts. It gives you the right to affirm, instead of swearing, as a witness or a jurymen. You may be asked for a reason. All you have to say is, either that the taking of an oath is contrary to your religious belief, or that you have no religious belief. Don't be entangled in any discussion.

W. H. BLOOR.—You wish our *Bible Romances* could have the same chance as Mr. Blatchford's *God and My Neighbor*. That is hardly possible. The bigotry and the boycott against us are too strong. Thanks for your letter and your efforts to promote our circulation.

J. G. STUART.—You are doing a good work. Keep on. Accept our best wishes.

INFANT.—Probably next week.

J. GOLDBERG.—Hope to give it a paragraph or two next week.

BEWILDERED.—Pleased to hear you have come across the *Freethinker* lately and are "delighted" with it. You do not quite understand our point of view on the Passive Resistance question. We regard Catholics and Churchmen as frank open enemies, but we regard the Nonconformists (on this matter) as hypocrites. They are not really fighting to abolish religious tests, but only religious tests as against themselves. What they want is to keep religious education in the nation's schools and to control it themselves. And in this policy they are traitors to their own professed principle that Religion and the State should be absolutely separate.

A. MILLAR.—Mr. Foote is responsible for all the unsigned matter in the *Freethinker* and writes ninety-nine hundredths of it with his own pen. We hope the lady you refer to will go on reading this journal.

W. APPEBY.—Have handed your cheque over to business manager. Thanks for good wishes.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

T. E. MILLER.—We have handed your letter to the business manager, who will try to open up practical relations with you. We hope you will succeed in finding many customers for our publications in Wigan. Thanks.

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.

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

## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (March 26) in the Public Baths Assembly Hall, Coventry. This is a large place and an effort is being made to fill it. There have been good meetings before, but it is hoped that this occasion will prove a record.

Tyneside "saints" are, of course, making a good note of Mr. Foote's visit to South Shields next Sunday (April 2). The large and handsome Assembly Hall—the one in which the evening meeting of the 1903 N. S. S. Conference was held—has been engaged for his lectures, and every effort is being made to give them the character of a Freethought demonstration.

The Stanley Hall experiment is proving very successful. Mr. Cohen had an excellent audience on Sunday evening, and Mr. Foote's pointed appeal, at the close of the proceedings the previous Sunday, seems to have had a favorable effect upon the collection. Mr. Cohen's lecture was a capital one and much appreciated. It was followed by questions and some discussion, in which a Christian Evidence representative made a foolish statement about N. W. London Branches of the N. S. S. that Miss Vance was able to contradict on the spot. The last of these Stanley Hall lectures will be delivered this evening (March 26) by Mr. John Lloyd. We hope there will be a first-rate attendance.

Mr. Cohen lectures at Manchester to-day (March 26)—in the Secular Hall, of course—and should have first-rate audiences. His subjects, "The Truth About Free Will" and "Christian Revivals," are quite up-to-date and ought to prove attractive.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place, as usual, on Whit-Sunday. The place of assembly this year is Liverpool. We hope there will be a big gathering of Secularists from all parts of Great Britain. Some of the Welsh Freethinkers will probably attend from the "revival" district. A trip to Liverpool should also attract some "saints" from Ireland. The business sittings of the Conference will take place in the Alexandra Hall. The great Picton Hall has been engaged for the evening public meeting, which will, of course, be a Freethought Demonstration, and will be addressed by Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. John Lloyd, Mr. H. Percy Ward, and other well-known speakers.

Notices of motion for the Conference Agenda, either from Branches or from individual members of the N. S. S., should be sent in to the general secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, not later than May 1. We may as well mention the fact that individual members from any part of the kingdom—or, indeed, of the world—have a right to attend the Conference and take part in its deliberations. They have the same rights in this respect as Branch delegates, only their votes count but singly if a poll is demanded.

We do not pledge ourselves to the statement (not being a disciple of Dr. Torrey's), but we hear that the Liverpool Branch has arranged for local fine weather on Whit-Sunday.

Mr. Foote is writing a lengthy notice of Mr. G. J. Holyoake's *Bygones Worth Remembering*. The first instalment will appear in our next issue.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake sends us a letter on "Lord Coleridge's Charter," which we are obliged to hold over till next week. It did not reach us till Tuesday, when we had no space left for its insertion.

Miss Vance will be pleased to hear from the persons who applied some time ago for copies of the "Dresden Edition" of Ingersoll's works. She could not supply them then, but she has a few copies for disposal now. As it will be a case of first come first served, those who want to secure a copy should apply immediately. The price is £5 cash. Application to Miss Vance at our publishing office, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

Mr. John Morley, in his Queen's Hall speech on Monday evening, reaffirmed his theoretical adhesion to "compulsory, free, and secular education." Unfortunately he said as little as possible about it, and went off into a glowing praise of the Free Churches, who have voted down "secular education" again and again. How is it that Mr. Morley, Lord

Rosebery, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, are all theoretically in favor of "secular education" yet never do anything to advance it? Perhaps the explanation is that we are all politicians.

The Hull *Daily Mail* prints an excellent letter by "E. B." on "Dr. Torrey and the Infidels," calling attention to the revivalist's libels on Paine and Ingersoll, and to the refutation of these in our pamphlet bearing that title. We understand that "E. B." is a lady. This fact should stimulate Freethinkers of the other sex to do all they can in the same direction. Writing to local newspapers in this way is a capital method of promoting Freethought.

The *Northern Daily Echo* has apparently seen one of our Torrey pamphlets. "That eminent revivalist," it says, "is a peculiar letter-writer. Somehow, when brought to book regarding his statements, be they concerned with attacks on Unitarians or so-called infidels, he shifts his ground so frequently that it is impossible to know where he is." Our contemporary goes on to say that Dr. Torrey did not go to Newcastle in consequence of a dispute over the cash. A guarantee of two hundred pounds was wanted for a week or a fortnight, but this was strongly opposed by a prominent Free Church minister.

There is an old saying—"They do these things better in France." They do some things better even in Spain. Madrid has been doing honor to Don José Echegaray. He is not a soldier, nor a big financier, nor what is nowadays called a statesman. He is merely a philosophical writer of plays, who was awarded one of the Nobel prizes for literature for 1904. Saturday, March 18, was proclaimed a national holiday in the Senate House. The King, the Government, the diplomatic body, and the Royal Academies, joined in paying tribute to the playwright. In the evening there was a magnificent theatrical performance in his honor. On Sunday there was a procession of 30,000 people, comprising academical, political, and industrial organisations, as well as the universities, schools, and clubs, with banners, flowers, and presents. Such a beautiful tribute to a man of genius would, alas, be impossible in England. We only go mad over successful soldiers and silly revivalists. Our present heroes are Evan Roberts and Dr. Torrey.

It is a pity to break the continuity of "Abracadabra's" able and effective articles on "The Book of Daniel," but we have found it impossible to fit in the fifth of the series in this week's make-up of the *Freethinker*. "Abracadabra's" readers must therefore wait a week for his next instalment.

Dr. E. B. Foote, the veteran American Freethinker, recently celebrated his seventy-sixth birthday. He resides at Larchmont, on Long Island Sound, some twenty miles from New York City. The local paper said, apropos of his birthday: "We consider it an honor that his residence has been chosen in this village, and that he is one of our townsmen." Dr. Foote is an appreciative reader of the *Freethinker*. No doubt this paragraph will meet his eye. We beg to assure him of our affectionate esteem. We would gladly cross the Atlantic again, if we had the time and money at command, for the pleasure of meeting him once more.

The February issue of the *Liberal Review*, Chicago, edited by Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, was the first number of the second volume. According to accepted notions it is an odd thing to begin a volume in February, but what does it matter if the contents are all right?—as they are in this case. We wish the new American monthly a long career of usefulness and prosperity. In the editorial "Notes" at the end we see that Mr. Mangasarian reproduces what he is pleased to call some "sober and sensible criticism" of ours on Dr. Stanton Coit's fantastic idea of Ethicists becoming a part of the Established Church of England.

According to the *Christian World*, an article by M. Bourrier, in the *Chrétien Français* "gives a gloomy account of things religious in France," and says that "Christians of all the Churches and creeds are being beaten along the whole line." Our contemporary quotes the following significant passage:—

"An apostle of Atheism has just been traversing France, endeavoring to prove, before masses of applauding people, that the hypothesis of a God is a danger and a criminality ..... It must be admitted that in presence of the ravages of Atheism all the efforts tried so far have been in vain. We do not gain ground; we are losing it. Is it to be that the future generations will bring a new mentality, from which the religious idea will be excluded?"

All this will be good news to our own readers.

### Thomas Paine.

[In view of Dr. Torrey's libels on Thomas Paine, it has been thought advisable to give a brief sketch of his career, for the sake of new readers, with particular reference to the story of his death-bed recantation.]

GEORGE WASHINGTON has been called the hero of American Independence, but Thomas Paine shares with him the honor. The sword of the one, and the pen of the other, were both necessary in the conflict which prepared the ground for building the Republic of the United States. While the farmer General fought with unabated hope in the darkest hours of misfortune, the soldier-author wrote the stirring appeals which kindled and sustained enthusiasm in the sacred cause of liberty. *Common Sense* was the precursor of the Declaration of Independence. *The Rights of Man*, subsequently written and published in England, advocated the same principles where they were equally required. Replied to by Government in a prosecution for treason, it brought the author so near to the gallows that he was only saved by flight. Learning afterwards that the Rights of Man can never be realised while the people are deluded and degraded by priestcraft and superstition, Paine attacked Christianity in *The Age of Reason*. That vigorous, logical, and witty volume has converted thousands of Christians to Free-thought. It was answered by bishops, denounced by the clergy, and prosecuted for blasphemy. But it was eagerly read in fields and workshops; brave men fought round it as a standard of freedom; and before the battle ended the face of society was changed.

Thomas Paine was born at Thetford, in Norfolk, on January 29, 1736. His scepticism began at the early age of eight, when he was shocked by a sermon on the Atonement, which represented God as killing his own son when he could not revenge himself in any other way. Becoming acquainted with Dr. Franklin in London, Paine took his advice and emigrated to America in the autumn of 1774. A few months later his *Common Sense* announced the advent of a masterly writer. More than a hundred thousand copies were sold, yet Paine lost money by the pamphlet, for he issued it, like all his other writings, at the lowest price that promised to cover expenses. Congress, in 1777, appointed him Secretary to the Committee for Foreign Affairs. Eight years later it granted him three thousand dollars on account of his "early, unsolicited, and continued labors in explaining the principles of the late Revolution." In the same year the State of Pennsylvania presented him with £500, and the State of New York gave him three hundred acres of valuable land.

Returning to England in 1787, Paine devoted his abilities to engineering. He invented the arched iron bridge, and the first structure of that kind in the world, the cast-iron bridge over the Wear at Sunderland, was made from his model. Yet he appears to have derived no more profit from this than from his writings.

Burke's *Reflections* appeared in 1790. Paine lost no time in replying, and his *Rights of Man* was sold by the hundred thousand. The Government tried to suppress the work by bribery; and that failing, a prosecution was begun. Paine's defence was conducted by Erskine, but the jury returned a verdict of Guilty "without the trouble of deliberation." The intended victim of despotism was, however, beyond its reach. He had been elected by the departments of Calais and Versailles to sit in the French National Assembly. A splendid reception awaited him at Calais, and his journey to Paris was marked by popular demonstrations. At the trial of Louis XVI., he spoke and voted for banishment instead of execution. He was one of the Committee appointed to frame the Constitution of 1793, but in the close of that year, having become obnoxious to the Terrorists, he was deprived of his seat as a "foreigner," and imprisoned in the Luxembourg for no better reason. At the time of his arrest he had written the first part of the *Age of Reason*. While in prison he composed the second part, and as he expected every day to be guillotined, it was penned in the very presence of Death.

Liberated on the fall of Robespierre Paine returned to America; not, however, without great difficulty, for the British cruisers were ordered to intercept him. From 1802 till his death he wrote and published many pamphlets on religious and other topics, including the third part of the *Age of Reason*. His last years were full of pain, caused by an abscess in the side, which was brought on by his imprisonment in Paris. He expired, after intense suffering, on June 8, 1809, placidly and without a struggle.

Paine's last hours were disturbed by pious visitors who wished to save his immortal soul from the wrath of God. Rickman says:—

"One afternoon a very old lady, dressed in a large scarlet-hooded cloak, knocked at the door and inquired for Thomas Paine. Mr. Jarvis, with whom Mr. Paine resided, told her

he was asleep. 'I am very sorry,' she said, 'for that, for I want to see him particularly.' Thinking it a pity to make an old woman call twice, Mr. Jarvis took her into Mr. Paine's bedroom and awoke him. He rose upon one elbow; then, with an expression of eye that made the old woman stagger back a step or two, he asked, 'What do you want?' 'Is your name Paine?' 'Yes.' 'Well then, I come from Almighty God to tell you, that if you do not repent of your sins, and believe in our blessed Savior Jesus Christ, you will be damned and—' 'Poh, poh, it is not true; you were not sent with any such impertinent message; Jarvis make her go away—pshaw! he would not send such a foolish ugly old woman about his messages: go away, go back, shut the door.'

Two weeks before his death, his conversion was attempted by two Christian ministers, the Rev. Mr. Milledollar and the Rev. Mr. Cunningham.

"The latter gentleman said, 'Mr. Paine, we visit you as friends and neighbors: you have now a full view of death, you cannot live long, and whoever does not believe in Jesus Christ will assuredly be damned.' 'Let me,' said Mr. Paine, 'have none of your popish stuff; get away with you, good morning, good morning.' The Rev. Mr. Milledollar attempted to address him, but he was interrupted in the same language. When they were gone he said to Mrs. Hedden, his housekeeper, 'do not let them come here again; they intrude upon me.' They soon renewed their visit, but Mrs. Hedden told them they could not be admitted, and that she thought the attempt useless, for if God did not change his mind, she was sure no human power could."

Another of these busybodies was the Rev. Mr. Hargrove, a Swedenborgian or New Jerusalemite minister. This gentleman told Paine that his sect had found the key for interpreting the Scriptures, which had been lost for four thousand years. "Then," said Paine, "it must have been very rusty."

Even his medical attendant did not scruple to assist in this pious enterprise. Dr. Manley's letter to Cheetham, one of Paine's biographers, says that he visited the dying sceptic at midnight June 5-6, two days before he expired. After tormenting him with many questions, to which he made no answer, Dr. Manley proceeded as follows:—

"Mr. Paine, you have not answered my questions: will you answer them? Allow me to ask again, do you believe, or—let me qualify the question—do you wish to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? After a pause of some minutes he answered, 'I have no wish to believe on that subject.' I then left him, and know not whether he afterwards spoke to any person on the subject."

Sherwin confirms this statement. He prints a letter from Mr. Clark, who spoke to Dr. Manley on the subject. "I asked him plainly," says Mr. Clark, "Did Mr. Paine recant his religious sentiments? I would thank you for an explicit answer, sir. He said, 'No, he did not.'"

Mr. Willet Hicks, a Quaker gentleman who frequently called on Paine in his last illness, as a friend and not as a soul-snatcher, bears similar testimony. "In some serious conversation I had with him a short time before his death," said Mr. Hicks, "he said his sentiments respecting the Christian religion were precisely the same as they were when he wrote the *Age of Reason*."

Lastly, we have the testimony of Cheetham himself, who was compelled to apologise for libelling Paine during his life, and whose biography of the great sceptic is a continuous libel. Even Cheetham is bound to admit that Paine "died as he had lived, an enemy to the Christian religion."

Notwithstanding this striking harmony of evidence as to Paine's dying in the principles of Freethought, the story of his "recantation" gradually developed, until at last it was told to the children in Sunday-schools, and even published by the Religious Tract Society. Nay, it is being circulated to this very day, as no less true than the gospel itself, although it was triumphantly exposed by William Cobbett over eighty years ago. "This is not a question of religion," said Cobbett, "it is a question of moral truth. Whether Mr. Paine's opinions were correct or erroneous, has nothing to do with this matter."

Cobbett investigated the libel on Paine on the very spot where it originated. Getting to the bottom of the matter, he found that the source of the mischief was Mary Hinsdale, who had formerly been a servant to Mr. Willet Hicks. This gentleman sent Paine many little delicacies in his last illness, and Mary Hinsdale conveyed them. According to her story, Paine made a recantation in her presence, and assured her that if ever the Devil had an agent on earth, he who wrote the *Age of Reason* was undoubtedly that person. When she was hunted out by Cobbett, however, she shuffled, she evaded, she affected not to understand, and finally said she had "no recollection of any person or thing she saw at Thomas Paine's house." Cobbett's summary of the whole matter commends itself to every sensible reader.

"This is, I think, a pretty good instance of the lengths to which hypocrisy will go. The whole story, as far as it

relates to recantation,.....is a lie from beginning to end. Mr. Paine declares in his last Will that he retains all his publicly expressed opinions as to religion. His executors, and many other gentlemen of undoubted veracity, had the same declaration from his dying lips. Mr. Willet Hicks visited him to nearly the last. This gentleman says that there was no change of opinion intimated to him: and will any man believe that Paine would have withheld from Mr. Hicks that which he was so forward to communicate to Mr. Hicks's *servant girl*?"

I have already said that the first part of the *Age of Reason* was entrusted to Joel Barlow when Paine was imprisoned at Paris, and the second part was written in gaol in the very presence of Death. Dr. Bond, an English surgeon, who was by no means friendly to Bond's opinions, visited him in the Luxembourg, and gave the following testimony:—

"Mr. Paine, while hourly expecting to die, read to me parts of his *Age of Reason*; and every night when I left him to be separately locked up, and expected not to see him alive in the morning, he always expressed his firm belief in the principles of that book, and begged I would tell the world such were his dying opinions."

Surely when a work was written in such circumstances, it is absurd to charge the author with recanting his opinions through fear of death. Citing once more the words of his enemy Cheetham, it is incontestible that Thomas Paine "died as he had lived, an enemy to the Christian religion."

One of Paine's intimate friends, Colonel Fellows, was met by Walt Whitman, the American poet, soon after 1840 in New York. Whitman became well acquainted with the Colonel, who was then about 78 years of age, and describes him as "a remarkably fine old man." From conversations with him, Whitman became convinced that Paine had been greatly calumniated. Thirty-five years later, addressing a meeting at Lincoln Hall, Philadelphia, on Sunday, January 28, 1887, the democratic poet said: "Thomas Paine had a noble personality, as exhibited in presence, face, voice, dress, manner, especially the later years of his life. I am sure of it. Of the foul and foolish fictions yet told about the circumstances of his decease, the absolute fact is that as he lived a good life, after its kind, he died calmly and philosophically, as became him." G. W. F.

## Correspondence.

### "FRIENDSHIP AND FREETHINKERS."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have been reading the letters of your numerous correspondents *re* the lack of the social element in our movement.

Perhaps a word might not be out of season regarding young people who are thinking of being married. They should begin by ignoring the minister as far as the marriage ceremony is concerned; this is a most important item. I have come across so many people who get married by the minister "just to please their relatives," or some such nonsense. I consider this the first big mistake they make. When children come they are christened for the same reason; they are sent to Sunday-school because "their companions go"; and so on.

Now, I would have all people of our way of thinking to act honestly. There is nothing to be ashamed of in being a Freethinker. Let them be married properly, without prayers; then, when children come, and have grown up to be of school age, they should be withdrawn from religious instruction.

I have never really come across a case where a child was made to suffer through not having Bible lessons in school; but should there be any bother, a note to the headmaster will set that matter right.

On Sunday, instead of permitting them to go to Sunday-school, the parents' duty should rather be to entertain them at home—play games with, or read to, them; or, if the parents go to a lecture, the children should be taken—they get to like it; and if this were always done there would be no lack of a social feeling in the movement, because, as the young folks grew up they would quite naturally become friendly with one another, and could form classes or whatever else they had a liking for.

I would urge all young men who are Secularists to bring their sweethearts to the lectures, if they do not already come. Too often they put this matter in the background till they are married; then there is a tussle for the upper hand, and very often the man goes under "for peace sake," rarely coming to lectures, and always alone, the children going to church with their mother, and so becoming lost to us.

I myself have never known any church but the Secular hall. My parents took the family with them on all occasions, and since I have been married my husband and I have done the same. If this were done by all people holding our

views I can assure your correspondents that there would be no lack of the "social side" to our movement. I can heartily endorse a sentence in "Juverna's" letter that "if you wish the seed to fructify you must prepare the soil."

I am positive that if the thousands of young men who have at one time or another been connected with our movement had stuck firm to their convictions when contemplating marriage, and had accustomed their children after marriage to come to the meeting-place, we would by this time have been as well organised as the Churches are on social matters. The children are the materials from which we must build a friendly, sympathetic, and lasting fellowship.

As my children are the fourth generation of a family who, as Freethinkers, have intimately connected themselves with the movement, I can speak from experience.

FLORENCE ROBERTSON.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have followed the above subject with great interest, and should like to add my views to those already expressed.

I think it will be admitted by Freethinkers generally that something ought to be done towards creating an enthusiasm among the general body of Freethought adherents.

Mr. A. E. Randall is evidently one of those sturdy Freethinkers who are a credit to the cause, and there is much to be said for his line of argument. On the other hand, I think we must admit that Freethought methods are lacking in those social amenities which make for success; there seems to be little or no encouragement given to the "young blood," which, after all, will be the future Freethought party. Our Secular halls ought not to be used merely as lecture halls for use only on one evening per week; we want something on the lines laid down by "E. B." in your issue of the 12th inst. We are too much isolated to be effective as a striking force, and a concentrative movement is badly needed.

Certainly "we want Freethinkers in the Freethought party," as Mr. Randall says; but he must remember that we have to draw upon those who are not Freethinkers for our supplies, and we can only do this by making the movement more attractive. Everything possible would have to be done to prevent abuses, of course, but I think the end would justify the means.

This isolation undoubtedly has a baneful effect upon Freethinkers generally; I myself, although only just past my majority, not enjoying the companionship of any Freethinker.

Perhaps you, Mr. Editor, will now favor us with your views on this matter, and with the co-operation of existing bodies up and down the country we might accomplish some good which might be a lasting benefit to the cause.

Judging from the enthusiasm displayed in this correspondence the iron is getting hot; therefore let us prepare to strike.

In any case something will have to be done, and that quickly.

FREDERICK WROE.

### ANOTHER CONVERTED "INFIDEL" ?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am pleased to see by your current issue that my old friend Mr. E. P. Luke is alive, and, I hope, doing well. I have an impression you have met the gentleman, although you appear to have forgotten him.

Mr. Luke kept a cheap tailoring and hosiery business of the advertising order in Plymouth, and utilised his spare time preaching in chapels, little Bethels, temperance halls, out-door Christian services, and occasionally offering opposition to Freethought lecturers. He failed in business and left Plymouth, Dame Rumor crediting him with having "gone to the dogs," which I can hardly believe, as even in his convivial moments he carefully kept within the bounds of decorum.

From what I know of him, he would not have left many Freethinkers in ignorance of his existence if he had embraced their cause. The son of a father who reduced advertising to a fine art, he even surpassed his teacher in the gentle art of letting everyone know he was about. An eloquent and engaging speaker, he was a trifle careless in dealing with matters of fact when upon the platform, and it certainly does not surprise me that he claims to be a "converted infidel"; rather I am surprised at his moderation, and I should have imagined he, to make a point in his address, would claim to be the whole Secularist party, or anything else necessary to the immediate object he had in view. When he left the platform he left its manners and wildness of statement behind, and became a decent, social man.

W. J. LIVINGSTONE ANDERSON.

### "Free" Press Christ Puffers and Profits.

O WHAT shall it profit a man if he gain  
The world, if he's damned when he "snuffs it?"  
If Christism's true, everlasting's the pain  
In store for the fellow that puffs it.

The Christ puffers gain the applause of the world  
And most of the money that's in it.  
If Christ told the truth, into Hell they'll be hurled  
As sure as a linnet's a linnet.

O what shall it profit the *Daily Express*  
By puffing the Torrey Revival?  
All liars are damned; so their fate you can guess  
Who puff Ananias's rival.

O why doth the *Daily*, oof-gathering *Mail*,  
Whose coffers would dazzle our vision,  
Dub Dowie the Prophet a "Profit" and rail  
And treat him with scorn and derision?

The luck of his rival Sir Alfred bemoans,  
And ditto Elijah the Little.  
They live in glass houses and keep throwing stones,  
And glass is so deucedly brittle.

The *Mail* likes to dip in the pockets of all,  
So tries all its utmost to please us;  
It caters for "Bung" and the friends of the ball,  
The backers of jockeys and Jesus.

What gaineth the paper that puffeth the views  
Of one who gets fat upon cocoa,  
The *Daily* and weakly, grandmotherly *News*,  
By Cadbury led by the "boko"?

O what does she gain, this illiberal rag,  
By puffing the public hoodwinkers?  
She boycotts Freethought, if she could she would gag  
All genuine "liberal" thinkers.

O what shall it profit this rag if she gain  
The money of fools and their praises,  
And lose the respect of the honest and sane,  
And finish by going to blazes?

To blazes she'll go if she doesn't repent  
And show herself truly progressive;  
For men are awaking, her views they'll resent,  
And think that her price is excessive.

ESS JAY BER.

### A REVIVAL PREACHER.

The preacher enters the pulpit. He is a coarse, hard-faced man of forbidding aspect, clad in rusty black, and bearing in his hand a small plain Bible from which he selects some passage for his text, while the hymn is concluding. The congregation fall upon their knees, and are hushed into profound stillness as he delivers an extempore prayer, in which he calls upon the Sacred Founder of the Christian faith to bless his ministry, in terms of disgusting and impious familiarity not to be described. He begins his oration in a drawling tone, and his hearers listen with silent attention. He grows warmer as he proceeds with his subject, and his gesticulation becomes proportionately violent. He clenches his fists, beats the book upon the desk before him, and swings his arms wildly above his head. The congregation murmur their acquiescence in his doctrines; and a short groan occasionally bears testimony to the moving nature of his eloquence. Encouraged by these symptoms of approval, and working himself up to a pitch of enthusiasm amounting almost to frenzy, he denounces Sabbath-breakers with the direst vengeance of offended heaven. He stretches his body half out of the pulpit, thrusts forth his arms with frantic gestures, and blasphemously calls upon the Deity to visit with eternal torments, those who turn aside from the word, as interpreted and preached by—himself. A low moaning is heard, the women rock their bodies to and fro, and wring their hands; the preacher's fervor increases, the perspiration starts upon his brow, his face is flushed, and he clenches his hands convulsively, as he draws a hideous and appalling picture of the horrors preparing for the wicked in a future state. A great excitement is visible among his hearers, a scream is heard, and some young girl falls senseless on the floor. There is a momentary rustle, but it is only for a moment—all eyes are turned towards the preacher. He pauses, passes his handkerchief across his face, and looks complacently round. His voice resumes its natural tone, as with mock humility he offers up a thanksgiving for having been successful in his efforts, and having been permitted to rescue one sinner from the path of evil.—*Charles Dickens.*

### The Good God.

ONE day the good God got out of bed  
In a very good humor for us 'tis said;  
He put his nose to the window light,  
"Perhaps their planet has perished quite."

Not yet: in its corner very far  
He saw it twining, our little star.  
If I can think how they get on there,  
Said he, the devil may take me, I swear,  
The devil may take me, I swear.

Black or white, frozen or boiled,  
(He said, like a father to children spoiled,)  
Mortals whom I have made so small,  
They pretend that I govern you all;  
But, God be praised, you shall also see  
That I have ministers under me:  
If I don't give the sack to one or two pair,  
My children, the devil may take me, I swear,  
The devil may take me, I swear.

To make you live in peace divine,  
Have I not given you women and wine?  
Yet in my teeth with prayers and boasts  
The pigmies call me the Lord of Hosts,  
And even dare to invoke my name  
When they light the murderous cannon's flame!  
If I ever commanded column or square,  
My children, the devil may take me, I swear,  
The devil may take me, I swear.

Who are these dwarfs so richly drest,  
On gilded thrones in sumptuous rest?  
The head anointed, so proud and pert,  
These chiefs of your insect-swarms assert,  
That I have blessed their rights of place,  
That they are kings by my special grace.  
If it is by me that they reign thus there,  
My children, the devil may take me, I swear,  
The devil may take me, I swear.

Then these other dwarfs, all black, of whom  
My poor nose hates the incense fume:  
They make of life a dismal fast,  
And in my name fierce curses cast  
In their sermons, very fine, said he,  
Only, by gad, they're Hebrew to me:  
If I believe anything they declare,  
My children, the devil may take me, I swear,  
The devil may take me, I swear.

Children, enough of this: no sect  
But the good kind hearts shall be my elect:  
Make love to each other and live in joy,  
Without any fear that God will annoy;  
Laugh down the great and canting crew—  
But suppose the *mouchards* should hear me! adieu.  
If into heaven these fellows fare,  
My children, the devil may take me, I swear,  
The devil may take me, I swear.

—Beranger: translated by James Thomson ("B. V.").

That venerable structure, the Egyptian constitution, had been raised by no human hands. As the gods had appointed certain animals to swim in the water, and others to fly in the air, and others to move upon the earth, so they had decreed that one man should be a priest, and that another should be a soldier, and that another should till the ground. There are times when every man feels discontented with his lot, but it is evident that if men were able to change their occupations whenever they chose, there would be a continual passing to and fro. Nobody would have patience to learn a trade; nobody would settle down in life. In a short time the land would become a desert, and society would be dissolved. To provide against this the gods had ordained that each man should do his duty in that state of life into which he had been called; and woe be to him that disobeys the gods! Their laws are eternal and can never change; their vengeance is speedy and can never fail.—*Reade's "Martyrdom of Man."*

THE BEST PAID.—Mankind pay best—1. Those who destroy them; heroes and warriors. 2. Those who cheat them; statesmen, priests, and quacks. 3. Those who amuse them; as singers, actors, and novel writers. But least of all those who speak truth, and instruct them.

And thus they cease not to demand of you the cause of the cause, until you take refuge in the will of God, that is to say, in the asylum of ignorance.—*Spinoza.*

From the Useful, through the True, to the Beautiful.—*Goethe.*

## 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, J. T. Lloyd, "The Way to Heaven."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, Religious Freethought Parliament: G. Viggers, "Christianity and Progress, from an Atheistical Standpoint"; 7.30, Social Democratic Federation Special Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "The Originality of Jesus."

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Coffee House, Bull Ring): Thursday, March 30, at 8, Mr. Sullivan, "Phrenology."

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (Public Baths Assembly Hall), 3, G. W. Foote, "The Truth About the Bible: An Answer to Dr. Torrey"; 7, "Silly and Sensible Salvation."

FAIRSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Mrs. B. Hodgson Bayfield, "The Present Position of Women."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon F. L. Greig, "Does Duty Demoralise?"; 6.30, Social meeting.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): 6.30, J. Glen, "Man and Woman." Monday, March 27, at 8, Miss A. M. Muirhead, "India."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Sunday School Operetta.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, H. Percy Ward, "Which Came First, the Hen or the Egg?": An Address on the Origin of Life; 7, "Atheism Vindicated and Theism Confuted." Tuesday and Wednesday, at 8, Debate between Rev. W. Horner (of Bedford-street New Church) and H. Percy Ward, "Is there a Future Life?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 3, C. Cohen, "The Truth about the Free Will Controversy"; 6.30, "Christian Revivals, a Chapter in the History of Religion." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe), Thursday, March 30, at 8, W. Wright, "The Phenomena of Religious Revivalism."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Willie Dyson, "The Crowd: Its Beliefs and Opinions."

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

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