

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making.
—MILTON.

Ingersoll Triumphant.

OUR readers will recollect our previous article, a fortnight ago, in which we answered Dr. Torrey's slanderous statements about Colonel Ingersoll on the alleged authority of Dr. A. C. Dixon—who happens to be a member of the clerical profession, and therefore a remarkably impartial "authority" as to the character of a leading "infidel." Dr. Torrey stated that Ingersoll had brought a libel action against Dr. Dixon for charging him with "assisting in the dissemination of obscene literature in America," and that Dr. Dixon prepared to defend his statements in open court, but Ingersoll requested that the action should be tried in private, and this not being assented to the action was withdrawn. Dr. Torrey professed to have written to America for "details" and to have obtained them; but he preferred not to publish them "damaging as they were to Colonel Ingersoll" because he "had no desire to blacken his reputation." Now we also wrote to America for information, and we were able to show that Dr. Torrey's statements were a mass of falsehood. Ingersoll never requested that "the trial might be in private," and as far as the case went the pleadings were perfectly public. Neither did he withdraw the action. It was Dr. Dixon who did all he could to prevent the case from being heard in open court. "Ingersoll," as Mr. E. M. Macdonald, of the New York *Truthseeker* writes, "wanted the case tried, but could never get Dixon to the point. Ingersoll demurred to all of Dixon's defences, and the judges sustained his demurrers. Dixon simply staved it off till the Colonel got tired and dropped it."

We shall now deal with the court record, as we promised. But we want to say a few words first. It may be asked *why* Ingersoll got tired. Well, it seems that American legal processes are very dilatory—a fact which is largely responsible for the lynchings that take place in the United States. Ingersoll travelled all over the States lecturing. Dixon lived at Brooklyn, which was practically a part of New York. Ingersoll, therefore, might have had to stay at home for a year or more in order to be on the spot to meet Dixon when he chose to come up to the scratch. That would have been an impossible price to pay for the luxury. But this is not all. Ingersoll succeeded in making Dixon show his hand by calling upon him to state his defence. Dixon had to state it, and it was no doubt published in the American papers generally, just as it was published in the *Truthseeker* of May 20, 1893. Such publication must have realised Ingersoll's principal desire, for it showed what facts Dixon relied upon to prove his case. And there were really *no* facts, as we shall see. Ingersoll's letter to Dixon before taking action was bold and straight, like everything he ever wrote. Perhaps we had better give it in full:—

New York, Feb. 8, 1892.

"Rev. A. C. Dixon, My Dear Sir: My attention was called for the first time this morning to a report that

appeared in the Brooklyn edition of the New York *World* of Feb. 1, 1892, of a lecture delivered by you on the 31st day of January, at the Hanson Place Baptist Church, and in that report the following is said to have been uttered by you:—

'A few years ago it was found that pictures and impure publications were passing through the mails. Anthony Comstock decided to stop it. On investigation, whom should he find representing publishers of impure literature but Colonel Ingersoll, paid to pollute the minds of the young of this generation.'

I write for the purpose of giving you an opportunity to retract either by stating that you used no such language, or that the statements are absolutely untrue.

If you do not make such retraction, I shall commence an action against you for having uttered a malicious libel.

Yours truly, R. G. INGERSOLL."

45 Wall-street.

Dixon replied that he did not use the words attributed to him; the reporter of the *World* got them through his private secretary from some notes that he had spoken into a phonograph in course of preparation; but he was "willing to be responsible for them as they appeared in the *World*—for (he added) I believe them to be true." "I believe, sir," he concluded, "that these charges against you are true, and if you desire to test them before a Court of Justice, I will be happy, indeed, to represent the purity of this country as against the defenders and propagators of obscene literature."

This would have been courageous enough if Dixon had anything behind it. But he had not. He was simply trusting to the power of orthodox bigotry against an "infidel," or else he was accidentally cornered by the indiscreet private secretary, the enterprising reporter, and the babbling phonograph, and had no alternative but to brazen it out as well as he could.

Ingersoll commenced his action and Dixon had to file an answer. Ingersoll moved to strike out the greater part of it as irrelevant and immaterial to the issues raised. Dixon then obtained leave to file an amended answer. His first defence admitted the publication and denied malice. To this Ingersoll did not demur. He did demur, though, to nearly everything else. His attorney, Robert H. Griffin, of 20 Nassau-street, who acted for him (Ingersoll, of course, having to be much away), conducted the plaintiff's case with great ability, and made the defendant look quite ridiculous.

Now what was Dixon's defence? What was it that he relied upon to prove Ingersoll had been "paid to pollute the minds of the young of this generation?"

Dixon's statement of defence is long-winded. All the substance of it may be put in a few words. He declared (1) that Ingersoll had signed a petition against the Comstock laws, (2) that Comstock successfully opposed the petition, (3) that Ingersoll, in 1879, at a Convention of the National Liberal League held in Cincinnati had claimed that the United States Congress had no right to make laws prohibiting the dissemination of literature, obscene or otherwise, (4) that Ingersoll had expressed sympathy with D. M. Bennett and his family upon his conviction for the dissemination of obscene literature, and (5) that "the natural and necessary effect of the position and acts of the plaintiff was to show him to be a defender of the propagators of obscene literature."

Let it be noted, first of all, that Dixon says nothing whatever to justify the charge that Ingersoll was "paid to pollute the minds of the young of this generation." This horrible charge was not justified, or sought to be justified, in the slightest degree. The only thing Dixon had to say about it, later on, was that Ingersoll's audiences would be increased by the advertisement he got out of the petition against the Comstock laws, that therefore he profited by his action, and that he was thus "paid" indirectly. But this is really *too* silly, even for a minister of religion.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

When Did the Gospel Win Europe?

IN his reply to my review of his lecture on "How and Why the Gospel Won Europe," Professor Bartlett maintains that I fell "into error on several points," and denies that I succeeded in convicting him of any "palpable inaccuracy." Let us consider the points on which it is said that I have fallen into error. The first is an *arithmetical* one. I claimed that, according to all the best authorities, the number of Christians in the Roman Empire before the days of Constantine never exceeded, and perhaps never quite reached, one-twentieth of the entire population. This is how Gibbon puts the case:—

"According to the irreproachable testimony of Origen, the proportion of the faithful was very inconsiderable when compared with the multitude of an unbelieving world; but as we are left without any distinct information, it is impossible to determine, and it is difficult even to conjecture, the real numbers of the primitive Christians. The most favorable calculation, however, that can be deduced from the examples of Antioch and of Rome will not permit us to imagine that more than a twentieth part of the subjects of the Empire had enlisted themselves under the banner of the Cross before the important conversion of Constantine" (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*) vol. ii., p. 74).

This is an extract from Dr. Boyd-Carpenter's article, entitled "The Christian Church," in the third supplementary volume to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, p. 54:—

"Bishop Lightfoot so far agreed with Gibbon that he regarded (*Historical Essays*, pp. 70-80) the estimate as too favorable, but he accepted it as a sufficiently just one for purposes of comparison. He reckoned that the Empire of Rome ruled over from one-seventh to one-tenth of the then population of the world; thus the Christian population in the close of the third century could only claim at the most one-twentieth of one-seventh of the human race—*i.e.*, only one in every 140. Bishop Lightfoot, in conclusion, adopted 1-150th as the proportion of Christians to the world population at that time."

Lightfoot was a man of enormous learning, and he had made the period under consideration a subject of special study. Then, upon the high authority of Gibbon I said that "even at Antioch, one of the oldest and most prosperous Christian centres, sixty years after Constantine's conversion, the Church numbered only about one hundred thousand out of half-a-million." This estimate Professor Bartlett challenges in the name of Professor Harnack. I have read with deep interest the first volume of Harnack's *Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*; but the second volume, from which Professor Bartlett quotes, has not yet been published in an English version. It is promised, however, this week; and in a future article I hope to deal with it. Meanwhile, I must content myself with pointing out that as quoted by Dr. Bartlett, Harnack asserts, without adducing any proof whatever, "that Gibbon mistakes the number attached to the chief church in Antioch for the total number of Christians in the city, who even earlier, under the anti-Christian Emperor Julian actually formed the majority in Antioch." Surely, the distinguished German scholar would not make such an assertion were he not sure of his ground; but Dr. Bartlett

gives us no hint as to the evidence on which such a bold statement rests. Until the evidence is forthcoming I, for one, prefer to adhere to the calm conclusion arrived at by Gibbon and supported by others.

Has the Gospel ever won Europe? I still hold that it has not. Adopting Dr. Bartlett's distinction between the Gospel and Christianity, I maintain that when the latter was nearest universal acceptance the former was farthest from practical exemplification. I am not now discussing the teaching of Christ, nor am I concerned as to whether it is, as a whole, worthy of translation into conduct, my only point being that, as a matter of fact, Europe has never chosen it as the basis and rule of its life. We are often told that Christianity is Christ; but who knows anything about Christ apart from his teaching? Harnack himself regards Christianity as, to all intents and purposes, synonymous with the teaching embodied in the Four Gospels. Personally, I look upon the Christian Religion as a product of evolution, as a thing, in fact, even of the possibility of which the Jesus of the Gospels never dreamed. Organised Christianity is, indeed, a conglomeration, an accumulation, a mixed mass, and many Protestants, of the advanced school, have renounced it, and returned to what they call the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus. Such men as Harnack are anxious to define Christianity anew, and to make the teaching of Jesus the only vital point. But practically it is of very little importance what definition of Christianity, or of the Gospel, be accepted, the one outstanding fact being that as a law of human conduct the Gospel has never won Europe.

But let us confine ourselves to the first three centuries. Professor Harnack's language is exceedingly vague. He names a number of provinces in which, before Constantine began to favor Christianity, it could claim "nearly a half of the population," and was already "the most widely spread, or at least the most influential (the italics are my own) religion." "Nearly a half of the population" only, even in the provinces in which it had spread the most, professed Christianity, "nearly a half of the population" only, in such districts, professed to have believed the Gospel and to be endeavoring to live in harmony with its principles. Let it be borne in mind that this is the most favorable estimate of the success of the Gospel that can possibly be formed. I utterly fail to see therefore on what possible ground Dr. Bartlett can make the following statement: "I claim to have shown that the Gospel had virtually won the Roman Empire, whatever the numerical proportion of its adherents to the whole population, before Constantine had ever published his edict of equal toleration for Christianity along with other religions." Certainly, the facts, as admitted even by Harnack, do not substantiate this claim.

If the Gospel had won Europe, Europe would have shaped its life into harmony with Gospel teaching. Dr. Bartlett knows quite well that during these three centuries the Church was never at peace even with itself. We know that even in Apostolic days it was generally rent asunder by opposing parties and factions, by bitter theological controversies and vehement social jealousies and animosities. Later on Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Montanism disturbed the concord of the saints. These were rival schools constantly at war with one another. We are not surprised to find that the Christian writings of this period, at least a large proportion of them, were termed Polemics. Irenæus and Hippolytus wrote almost exclusively against heretical parties. The works of Tertullian are characterised by a great deal of extravagance and passion. Demetrius both envied and hated Origen, and did his utmost, as his bishop, to rob him of the esteem of the churches. This was a period during which numerous forgeries and frauds were perpetrated in the name of religion. Apocryphal and spurious writings, such as the *Sibylline Oracles*, the

Pseudo-Clementine Homilies, the *Recognitions*, and the *Epitome*, circulated widely, and were frequently quoted.

Under such conditions we could not reasonably expect the early Christians to surpass all their neighbors in the sphere of morality. Dr. Bartlett tells us that they lived out their ideal by a power "beyond that of mere humanity, as such," that they loved one another with heroic fidelity, and treated even their persecutors with compassionate regard; but it is as well known to the Professor as to me that "while the early writers laud Christianity for the effects wrought by it, in contrast with the influence of Paganism, the complaints which they make of the faults of Christians, such as vanity, untruthfulness, and covetousness, show that ideal perfection is not to be claimed for the Church even in the days of its comparative purity" (*The History of the Church* by George P. Fisher, p. 60). With such an admission in my mind, I have no hesitation whatever in characterising the picture of the Christians drawn by Justin the Martyr in his "open letter" to Diognetus as purely imaginary. No such people as he described were to be found on earth. The following is simply absurd: "In a word, what the soul is in a body, this the Christians are in the world..... The soul is enclosed in the body, and yet itself holdeth the body together; so Christians are kept in the world as in a prison-house, and yet they themselves hold the world together." When did they hold the world together? Did they arrest the decadence of the Roman Empire? Did Christianity, after its adoption as the State religion, prevent the Empire from tumbling into ruin?

I have now sufficiently vindicated my contention that the Gospel has never won Europe. Dr. Bartlett distinguishes between nominal and genuine Christianity, and states that since the days of Constantine the Gospel has not had fair play. Nominally, Europe is composed of Christian countries; and in drawing up comparative statistics of the different religions it is customary to lump together all the inhabitants of such countries and call them Christians. But would Dr. Bartlett maintain that Russia, or even England, is in any true sense a Christian country? In what sense can it be held that either country excels Japan, which is admittedly a Pagan country. I know how apt sentiment is to warp judgment. Only the other day a man said: "I hope Russia will win, because, after all said and done, Russia is a Christian country." So it is, *nominally*; but is there a sense in which it is morally a better country than Japan? Nominally, England is a Christian country; but would Dr. Bartlett contend that if the Christ of the Gospels were to visit England He would be satisfied with it? Would our laws, our social customs, our class distinctions, our idle rich and starving poor, our gorgeous palaces and our horrid slums—would they please him? If He would be dissatisfied and displeased with the conditions of life among us, on what ground can anyone pretend to believe that England is really a Christian country? But if Russia, Germany, France, Italy, and England are not really Christian countries, or countries in which Christ truly reigns, then the claim that the Gospel ever won Europe falls to the ground.

Now, if the Gospel, or genuine Christianity, has not won Europe, does it not of necessity follow that the Gospel, or genuine Christianity, has proved a colossal failure? The Bishop of Carlisle is manly enough to make such an admission openly. I am firmly of conviction that everyone who boldly faces the facts will be irresistibly drawn to the same conclusion. But if the Gospel had been of a supernatural origin, had there been a Personal God of omnipotent love behind it, had there been a Holy Ghost coequal with the Father and the Son to administer it and make it effectual, it would have proved a complete success from the beginning, and every human being, in all the Christian centuries, would have been a bright and shining Christian.

I am confident that Dr. Bartlett is perfectly sincere in his attitude to the Gospel; but I am equally certain that his faith controls his intellect,

and that he writes from sentiment rather than from knowledge. It is not his honesty I challenge, but the accuracy of his reading of history. I am profoundly convinced that Christian love to God has, times without number, diverted men from the love of man. The Ages of Faith did not excel in the love and service of humanity as such. Christianity has never made a single serious attempt to heal the bleeding wounds of society, and to initiate the reign on earth of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. The love of man is natural to us; and if we were naturally trained in our youth to exercise it would be our chief delight. In reality, it is the love of man that renders love to God possible. St. John had a glimpse of this truth when he said: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen." St. John identified the two loves; and so do we, only in our case the identification is so complete that we have no consciousness of God at all, and so are free, if we will, to pour out our whole love on our brother whom we *do* see and whose need we know from day to day.

J. T. LLOYD.

What Christianity Owes to Civilisation.

A GREAT deal has been written concerning the debt civilisation owes to Christianity. Much, too, has been written on the other side, traversing the claims set up, and asserting that the latter's effect has been at best of a negative, and at worst of a positively evil, character. The latter class of writing, while smaller in quantity, has had the advantage in quality, for it is not by any means difficult to show that religion, at best, never does more than reflect the nature of the social and intellectual medium in which it exists, while all the *facts* are in direct opposition to the religious claims set up. The difficulty is to separate the religious factor from the social, moral, and intellectual factors with which it is associated, and for the operation of which it takes credit; and as this requires close study and careful thinking, the advantage of the religionist over his opponent is exactly proportionate to the disinclination of the general public to mental effort.

Much smaller notice has been taken of the effect of civilisation on Christianity, although there is here a wide and fruitful field of investigation. For a full and detailed study in this direction would be a study of the humanising of God, the gradual moralising of religious teachings by the insidious and insistent pressure of purely secular or non-religious forces. It is one of the lessons of evolution that civilisation is a natural and an inevitable process, of a piece, as Spencer has said, with the unfolding of a flower or the growth of a planet. And just as adaptation to environment is the condition of life of all organisms, so too it is with ideas and beliefs. A changing medium demands modification and adaptation on the penalty of extinction; and in the process of civilisation Christian beliefs have of necessity been modified, time after time—sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously—or the very name of Christian would long ago have disappeared.

It is this process of adaptation that is responsible for the "corruptions" of Christianity about which unthinking believers cry out. The very condition of existence for Christianity has been, and is, that it should become "corrupted." For what the believer calls a "corruption," the unbeliever recognises as a necessary modification of a teaching too extravagant and too anti-social to exist otherwise. Primitive Christianity could no more flourish in the twentieth century than could the cults of Osiris or Mithra. Even the cry of a return to primitive Christianity is a fresh attempt at "corruption," for what is really aimed at is not primitive belief, but a form of faith that will better harmonise with the beliefs of a certain number of contemporaries. Corruption and improvement are, in brief, the names for the single process of adaptation, and this has to be explained in terms of the surrounding medium.

As a mere statement of historic fact, the social medium has never yet been favorable to the growth of Christianity in a complete form. So long as Christianity was a mere sect struggling for existence it could develop certain special features, more or less extravagant and more or less anti-social, because it was able to select from society its disciples. In this way one finds numerous extravagances existing among the primitive Christians that were suppressed at a later period. But in proportion as Christianity gained control of the secular power, and so took upon itself the responsibilities of social existence, the necessity of controlling these extravagances became evident, and the process of "corruption" began. In other words, the moment Christianity ceased to hold the position of an irresponsible sect, maintaining itself by attracting a sufficient number of irresponsible persons, and became invested with the control of social life, the forces of civilisation began to operate, and Christian teachings were modified as an inevitable consequence.

For a time the Church fought stubbornly against these civilising influences. The contest was a fairly lengthy one, but the Renaissance marked, above all else, the definite overthrow of the principle of government by religion, and the inauguration of control by secularising forces. Hereafter, in spite of the great influence wielded by religion, it was to be held in check, more or less effectually, by non-religious forces; and under all the forms taken by the contest during the next three or four centuries, one can see that the essential question at issue is whether secular or religious forces are to have the supreme voice in the direction of the affairs of the State. More than religion, this was the underlying question of the Protestant Reformation; and although the Protestant leaders succeeded in checking the cry for reform in the holding of land and in the conditions of labor, and gave the contest an ultra religious form, it was only for a time; the end of the eighteenth century saw the matter settled once and for all, leaving the Churches to snatch at what power they could, by methods more or less courageous and more or less honorable.

The establishment of the Copernician system gave the next great instance in which civilisation compelled a modification of Christian teaching. Like all great religions Christianity rested upon a cosmology; and ideas that were tolerable with the old cosmology, became simply ridiculous with the new. It was comparatively easy to believe that as man was the principal creature on a small globe, itself the centre of a small system, with sun, moon, and stars existing for no other purpose than that of ministering to his needs, that the creator of all this took a special interest in human welfare, and could and did manipulate cosmical forces to that end. But how when it was seen that the earth was not the centre of the system, that it was but a mere fragment of a system, and not the most important fragment, and that man could no longer regard himself as the centre of the cosmos? This meant not merely a deposing of the earth from its position, it meant a complete revolutionising of human thought; and although the revolution effected was gradual and largely imperceptible, save in its results, it was no less complete. It was a sure instinct that led the Church to fight against Copernicianism. It felt the inauguration of a life and death struggle; and its banning of Copernicus's book, when the author was beyond reach, was an act of defence against a "corruption" of Christian teaching by the forces of civilisation.

Logically, indeed, Christianity died with the establishment of the Copernician theory. Its essential teachings were bound up with the old system, and although it survived, it was by a series of evasions and apologies as dishonest as they are in the long run useless. So long as the new teaching could be resisted it was resisted by Catholic and Protestant alike. When this could no longer be done, a new reading of Christian beliefs was framed, all texts, teachings, and implications

to the contrary being conveniently ignored. But the logical basis of Christianity was destroyed with the Ptolemaic astronomy, and although hard pressed apologists are in the habit of referring to the re-statement of Christian doctrines in the light of the newer teaching as proof of the vitality and adaptability of Christianity, others see the process in its truer light as a change due to the pressure of progressive secular forces upon discredited religious dogmas.

(To be concluded.)

C. COHEN.

National Secular Society's Annual Conference, 1905.

REPORT OF BUSINESS MEETINGS.

THE Annual Conference of the N. S. S. was held in the Alexander Hall, Islington-square, on Whit-Sunday, June 11.

MORNING SITTING.

The chair was occupied by the President, Mr. G. W. Foote. After the General Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, had called over the roll of delegates, it was proposed by Mr. J. Ross (Liverpool) and seconded by Mr. Dawson (Manchester) that the Minutes of last Conference, as printed in last year's *Freethinker*, be taken as read. This was agreed to.

The Presiders read letters of apology for absence from Messrs. Victor Roger, J. G. Fisher, and G. Weir; also a telegram from Miss Emma Bradlaugh, with her best wishes for the Conference.

The Executive's Annual Report, which appeared in last week's issue of the *Freethinker*, was read by the President.

Mr. Chapman (South Shields) moved its adoption, remarking that it was the most interesting report that had ever been presented to the Society. Mr. C. Pegg (Manchester) seconded; and the report was adopted unanimously.

The Financial Report was then presented. Its adoption was proposed by Mr. F. A. Davies (Camberwell) and seconded by Mr. Chapman (South Shields). After slight discussion it was carried.

Mr. Foote then vacated the chair, which was temporarily occupied by Mr. C. Cohen, during the election of the President for the forthcoming year. Mr. T. J. Thurlow (Finsbury) moved "That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President." He considered that Mr. Foote's re-election was inevitable; he had borne the standard of Secularism bravely in the thickest of the fight since he took it from the hands of Charles Bradlaugh. The seconder, Mr. J. Ross (Liverpool), referred to the ability and determination with which Mr. Foote carried out whatever he took in hand. Mr. Pegg (Manchester) pointed to Mr. Foote's organising capacity. Mr. Davies (Camberwell) said that Mr. Foote should be elected because he was the best man, and Mr. G. Scott (Glasgow) spoke of the late President's magnificent services in the past. Mr. Roliffs (Liverpool) and Mr. Whitwell (Birmingham) also supported the motion. Mr. Foote was then unanimously re-elected President, amid prolonged applause.

Mr. Foote then retook the chair, and, when the hearty cheering with which he was greeted had subsided, said how much he appreciated the honor they had once more conferred upon him. He took that opportunity of referring to several domestic matters that concerned them as a Society, which it was not politic to say in public print. In conclusion he gave them his old promise—a promise he had ever striven to fulfil in the past—"Wherever the call is for the fight, I'll be there."

On behalf of the Executive, the President nominated the following for re-election as vice-presidents:—

J. G. Bartram, J. Barry, Victor Charbonnel, H. Cowell, R. Chapman, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, F. A. Davies, J. F. Dewar, R. G. Fathers, Léon Furnémont, T. Gorniot, John Grange, J. Hammond, W. Leat, W. O. Middleton, J. Neate, Dr. R. T. Nichols, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, William Pratt, C. G. Quinton, J. H. Ridgway, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, J. Ross, F. Schaller, W. H. Spivey, Charles Steptoe, Joseph Symes, S. R. Thompson, W. B. Thompson, T. J. Thurlow, John H. Turnbull, E. M. Vance, Frederick Wood, W. H. Wood.

Mr. Whitwell (Birmingham) seconded; and the re-election was unanimously carried.

The President also moved, in the name of the Executive, "That Mr. S. Samuels be elected a vice-president." Mr. Samuels merited the office because of his past devotion to the Cause. Dr. R. T. Nichols seconded, and the motion was carried.

It was agreed, on the proposition of Mr. Pegg (Manchester) that Messrs. F. Cotterell and W. B. Thompson be re-elected auditors.

The General Secretary read correspondence from the South Shields, Kingsland, Newcastle, Coventry, West Ham, Finsbury, Glasgow, and Liverpool Branches regarding item eight on the Agenda which deals with the question of Branch subscriptions to headquarters. The Conference decided to drop this item entirely and to consider the motions on the subject by the Glasgow and Liverpool Branches together, which ran as follows:—

Motion by Glasgow Branch:—

"That the fee of 1s. per member at present payable by Branches to headquarters be reduced to 6d. per member."

Motion by Liverpool Branch:—

"That the affiliation fee for Branches be 3d. per member, and that a Certificate of Membership be issued to all members of the Society, as formerly."

A lengthy discussion followed in which Messrs. Chapman (South Shields), J. Ross (Liverpool), R. G. Fathers (Birmingham), G. Scott (Glasgow), C. Pegg (Liverpool) and Miss E. M. Vance took part. Eventually the following amendment was framed by the President, proposed by Mr. G. Scott (Glasgow), seconded by Mr. J. Ross (Liverpool) and unanimously adopted:—

"That the affiliation fee payable by Branches to headquarters be reduced to sixpence per member annually; that all names and addresses be sent to London with the members subscriptions; and that all members cards be issued from headquarters and endorsed annually by the General Secretary."

The Conference then adjourned for lunch.

AFTERNOON SITTING.

On the President taking the chair, Mr. Percy Ward (Coventry) moved on behalf of the Liverpool Branch:—

"That it be decided at each Conference where the succeeding Conference shall be held."

Mr. Pegg (Manchester) seconded. Messrs. F. A. Davies (Camberwell), Whitwell (Birmingham), Hird (Manchester) and G. Scott (Glasgow) spoke, and the President urged that the motion was impracticable. The proposition was lost.

The motion by the Manchester Branch:—

"That in place of the late *Secular Almanack** the Society should publish yearly the President's report, together with particulars of the Society, for general distribution."

was moved by Mr. Pegg (Manchester) and seconded by Mr. Chapman (South Shields). On the suggestion of the President the words "Society should" were deleted and the words "Executive should if possible" substituted. Thus amended the motion was carried.

Mr. Cohen moved:—

"That this Conference, while noting with pleasure the growth of Freethought opinions, and bearing in mind the fact that advanced opinions have always had more reason to fear lukewarm and timorous friends than open and avowed enemies, records its conviction that a definite and uncompromising Anti-Christian propaganda is more than ever necessary in order to avoid distinct and important issues being lost sight of or slurred over as the effort of a desire to placate a certain section of the liberal public, and which for temporary ease or gain risks, or at best postpones, ultimate victory."

The N. S. S. was faced with the competition of half-hearted Freethought bodies who were really helping the churches and fighting real Freethought without being aware of it. Organisations like the Sunday Societies were a danger to the Movement because they deprived it of a number of fighting Freethinkers. Mr. J. Ross (Liverpool) seconded, and deplored the lack of courage shown by a certain class of so-called Freethinkers. Mr. F. A. Davies (Camberwell) supported the motion. Mr. W. Kaye (Bradford) thought that Sunday Societies and Ethical Societies did good work. Mr. Chapman (South Shields) considered that they should make use of Sunday Societies and get Mr. Foote to speak for them. The President stated that he was not anxious to lecture for Sunday Societies. He was first of all an apostle and preferred to speak for a Branch of the N. S. S. even for a much lower fee. Freethinkers who worked for Sunday Societies and similar bodies frittered away their time in channels which were useful in their way, but which were not so necessary as was genuine Freethought work. Messrs. C. Pegg (Manchester) and G. Scott also spoke and the motion was heartily adopted.

Mr. T. J. Thurlow's motion:—

"That the sole object of the National Secular Society should be the carrying on of an effective propaganda against all phases of supernaturalism embodied in the religion of Christendom."—

raised a fair amount of discussion. It was re-modelled and agreed to, with two or three dissentients, as follows:—

"That the great object of the National Secular Society should be the carrying on of an effective propaganda against all phases of supernaturalism."

Mr. J. Hammond (Liverpool) moved in the name of the Liverpool Branch:—

"That having regard to the fact that many unattached persons have followed with interest the recent theological controversy in the *Clarion*, the Executive be instructed to issue a manifesto to be published in that paper, drawing attention to the Principles and Objects of the N. S. S. and inviting all in sympathy to become members. In addition, it might be stated that the Executive will, on receipt of a requisition, signed by six persons who are prepared to assist in carrying out the necessary arrangements, send a lecturer to deliver Freethought lectures and organise new Branches in districts where none at present exist."

Mr. Pegg (Manchester) seconded, pointing out that the great difficulty in carrying out the motion was a financial one. On the President's suggestion, the mover and seconder agreed to substitute "five persons" for "six persons." Mr. Hird (Manchester) supported the motion. Mr. Hurford (Cardiff) spoke very earnestly on the necessity of having a Welsh Freethought lecturer in Wales, and the President promised him that whatever could be done should be done. The motion was carried.

The President formally moved for the Executive:—

"That the N. S. S. be strongly and independently represented at the International Freethought Congress at Paris in September, and that the Executive take the necessary steps to secure this object."

Mr. J. T. Lloyd, who seconded the motion, spoke of the necessity of keeping in touch with Continental and American Freethought, and the proposition was agreed to.

The President also proposed on behalf of the Executive:—

"That Secularists should make a special effort to withdraw their children from religious instruction of any and every kind in the elementary public schools."

The importance of the resolution could hardly be over-estimated. It was difficult to eradicate falsity from the mind of a child when it was implanted there by authority. Freethought parents who imagined that they could rub off the brain whatever theology was taught at school were seriously in error. Theology was not something plastered on the mind that could be pulled off; it was a growth.

The President further moved in the name of the Executive:—

"That Secularists should do their utmost to promote the increase of civil marriage before the Registrar, as one of the most important means of breaking the power of the Churches."

This was agreed to without discussion.

The last motion on the Agenda—also placed there by the Executive—was moved by Mr. C. Cohen, and ran as follows:—

"That this Conference reaffirms its conviction that the whole difficulty of the religious education question in the elementary schools of England and Wales has been created by the treachery of the Free Churches to the essential principles of Nonconformity in relation to the State; and that this Conference reaffirms its belief in Secular Education as the only just and wise solution of the problem, and hails with satisfaction the return of the *Daily News* to the 'secular solution' which it had unfortunately abandoned in the supposed interest of Nonconformist Liberalism."

Mr. Cameron (Liverpool) seconded, and the motion was carried.

The President then proposed a vote of thanks to the Liverpool Branch for the excellent arrangements it had made for the Conference, and congratulated the Branch on the manner it was forging ahead. Mr. John Ross, the president of the Liverpool Branch, briefly responded on its behalf.

In declaring the meeting closed, the President congratulated the members upon the spirit of amity that had pervaded their proceedings, and wished the Society a year of harmony and success.

W. P. P.

The following Branches were represented:—

Bethnal Green, C. Cohen; *Bradford*, J. W. Gott, W. Kay; *Birmingham*, R. G. Fathers, C. J. Whitwell; *Camberwell*, F. A. Davies, F. Cottrell; *Cardiff*, S. Hurford; *Coventry*, H. P. Ward; *Finsbury*, T. Thurlow; *Glasgow*, G. Scott; *Huddersfield*, W. H. Spivey, T. Ollerenshaw; *Liverpool*, John Ross, Gustav Roleffs; *Manchester*, S. L. Hurd, Chas. Pegg, J. Dobson; *Newcastle*, J. Fothergill, J. Chapman; *South Shields*, T. Horseman, R. Chapman; *Stockton-on-Tees*, G. Thwaites; *Wigan*, W. E. Bell, E. Eastham; *West Ham*, Dr. R. T. Nichols; *Wolverhampton*, M. Christopher.

Amongst the individual members present at the Conference were Mr. R. Johnson (Manchester), W. McLean (Dundee), R. Dowding (London), John T. Lloyd (London), Mrs. Pegg (Manchester), and Mrs. Forrer (Liverpool).

Acid Drops.

In the June number of *The Guide*, the monthly organ of the Scottish Young Men's Christian Association, the Rev. Norman Macleod Caie asks the question "Can we get on without a religion?" Naturally he answers it in the negative. Nothing else could be expected. Who is going to cry stinking fish?

Mr. Caie, being a Scotchman, has his own idea of humor. Otherwise he might have seen that his question is somewhat ambiguous. To "get on" is a common expression for making one's way in the world. In that sense, of course, it is not easy to get on without a religion. All the great swindlers of the day know that. The Glasgow Bank Directors who built churches and robbed the people, Jabez Balfour, and men of that kind, all know that you must have a religion to get on. Whitaker Wright was not a Freethinker. Mr. Terah Hooley thought it a good thing to present St. Paul's Cathedral with a set of gold communion plate. Decidedly it is not easy to get on without a religion—especially when you want to get on the backs (and into the purses) of other people.

We have read Mr. Caie's article through and have found nothing fresh in it. The old platitudes of Christian Evidence are uttered, without the slightest reference to the answers that have been given to them—just as though repeating a thing were a reply to all objections. Mr. Caie is not even sound in his history. There is something quite ingenuous (or is it only ingenious?) in the statement that "Just so long as Greece and Rome kept their religions pure and strong they prospered and they conquered." This is a remarkable explanation of the rise and fall of empires. No doubt it had a certain vogue a hundred years ago, in churches, chapels, and other places where dogmatism addresses ignorance. But to advance it to educated people nowadays is either a joke or an insult, according to the temperament of the hearer.

Mr. Caie relates a conversation between Goethe and Heine which, he says, took place in the Cathedral at Amiens. Will the reverend gentleman add to our obligation by telling us *when* this conversation occurred? We were under the impression that Heine, then a young man in his twenty-fifth year, visited Goethe, then an old man of seventy-five, at Weimar in 1824. The youth paid his addresses to the veteran while on a walking tour; and he tells us, in his *Pictures of Travel*, that although he had lain awake at night meditating what he should say to the laurelled chief of German literature the only thing he could find to say when face to face with him was that the plums on the road from Jena to Weimar were very good. These facts will explain our curiosity about that conversation between Goethe and Heine in the Cathedral at Amiens.

While the Rev. Norman Macleod Caie is getting ready the details we have asked for we may deal with a little more of his address. Here is a peculiar passage:—

"History and experience unite to prove that religion has been the needed inspiring force behind all that is noblest in the music, art, and poetry of the world. What are the masterpieces in all these departments but Christian productions, by Christian authors, very frequently on actual Christian themes? Where are the atheistic oratorios, pictures, poems to match these?"

This is slapdash stuff. Let us discriminate. To begin with, Mr. Caie talks as though Christendom and the world were the same thing. He forgets that there was the very greatest art, and the very greatest literature in the world before Christianity appeared. Mr. Caie also talks as though there could be Atheistic pictures and Atheistic poems. But this is absurd. There cannot be such a thing as Christian music, or such a thing as Atheistic music. All that can happen is the application of music to the service of Christianity or the service of Atheism. Music itself is independent. And the same is true of every other form of art. Nevertheless musicians—though not *as* musicians—can be Christians. They can also be Atheists. It would probably surprise Mr. Caie to learn what were the views of Beethoven and Wagner—the two greatest names in the musical world. And now let us turn to literature. Mr. Caie declares that religion has inspired "all that is noblest" in poetry. Not *some* that is noblest, but *all* that is noblest. Well, we will not go back to Homer, but take the greatest poet of modern times. How did religion inspire Shakespeare? Are his themes religious or secular? And does he treat them in a religious or in a secular spirit? Let us even take the greatest poet of Mr. Caie's own country. Was it religion that inspired the finest work of Robert Burns? We hear a

great deal about the *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, but it is far from being Burns at his best; to tell the truth, it is imitative work. The real genius of Burns shines in *Tam O'Shanter*, *The Jolly Beggars*, *Holy Willie's Prayer*, and the scores of songs that flowed from his great heart as the pure water gushes from a perennial fountain. Shakespeare and Burns disprove Mr. Caie's theory. The plain fact is that he is simply talking pulpit nonsense—though it appears to be thought good enough for the Christian young men of Scotland.

Mr. Raymond Blathwayt, the well-known professional interviewer, does a sketch of the Bishop of London for *Great Thoughts*. In the course of it he relates how this right reverend father in God, who gets £10,000 a year and publishes a balance-sheet to show how he loses on the job, once silenced a blasphemer in Victoria Park:—

"Preaching once to a number of avowed atheists, as he used to do every Sunday morning at one period of his life, a man interrupted him with some blasphemous remark. Instead of affecting the shocked and pained attitude of the ordinary mission preacher, the Bishop smartly shut the man up with 'Don't be a fool.' It was such an unexpected smack in the face that the man reeled, while his companions cheered the Bishop to the echo."

What an idea these Christians have of Atheists! But the whole story is romantic. The Bishop of London never lectured in Victoria Park to audiences of avowed Atheists. He lectured from his own Christian platform, and the Atheists held meetings of their own. Romantic as it is, however, the story shows Mr. Blathwayt's idea (and perhaps the Bishop's idea) of wit. "Don't be a fool" is evidently looked upon by these gentlemen as a masterpiece of sarcastic retort. Such is the sense of humor in orthodox circles!

"The Swami," a fat adventuress who figured in the filthiest criminal case of modern times, and is now doing seven years' penal servitude in Aylesbury prison, is reported by the *Weekly Dispatch* as preaching to her fellow convicts, particularly on "The Righteous Life." She professed, and still professes, to be a direct disciple of Christ; and if she should be released on account of ill-health there is no reason why she should not join the Torrey-Alexander troupe before they return to America.

Dr. Torrey's revival hall at Brixton has been purchased by the War Office for removal to Aldershot, where it will be "converted" into a drill hall. What an unfortunate building! But one misery has a way of treading on the heels of another.

Kensitites visited Consett lately, and the result was a free fight with hammers, shovels, and other effective weapons. Several people had to be medically treated. The lovely household of faith!

Religious fanaticism brings all sorts of small creatures into notoriety. A man who cannot do anything else may shout at the head of a bigoted mob. Such a man was the late John Kensit. Such a man, too, is J. A. Kensit. It is reported that he is going to stand as the "Protestant candidate for Birkenhead." There ought to be a Catholic candidate also. In that case the Birkenhead election would be the liveliest in the kingdom.

J. A. Kensit says it would be "an answer to the whole world" if he succeeded in becoming representative of the town "where my father received his death blow." Let him take care that the family does not supply a second "martyr."

The dear old *Daily News* is getting so very pious that we should not be surprised to see prayers for fine weather inserted instead of the meteorological report.

In the days of "old lang syne" the notice board of the City Temple announced that Dr. Parker would preach on Sundays and Thursdays, D.V. ("God being willing"). This is all changed. The present "pastor" doesn't worry about Omnipotence. The only thing that matters is that Mister Campbell should be agreeable.

The *Southend Standard* has been giving the Salvation Army "hell with the lid off." In its issue of June 15 it contains a warm criticism of "Commissioner" Booth Tucker and the Theology of the Salvation Army. It says that the S.A. propaganda appeals "to the brute instinct of physical fear rather than to the higher emotions," and that the man or woman reached only by such appeals is "hardly worth damning." The *Freethinker* said this years ago, and only got abuse in return. We hope our contemporary will be more fortunate.

These Christians will not read their Bible. Most of them leave that to the Freethinkers. Here is the *Meath Herald*, writing in defence of flogging boys and certain criminals (particularly boys), and incidentally talking of "King Solomon or whoever is responsible for the adage of 'sparing the rod and spoiling the child.'" Now two things may be said in regard to this; first, that King Solomon is not a writer known to actual literature; second, that "spare the rod and spoil the child" is not a Bible text at all.

While pious people are standing up for flogging (not their own flogging) in Great Britain and Ireland, China—yes, China—is actually abolishing it and introducing a rational criminal code in her prisons. Really the brag of the Westerns is more than disgusting; it is quite ridiculous. The East will have to send missionaries here before long.

The *Sunday Circle* tells a pious story about Ingersoll's being "silenced" by an old lady. Perhaps it was the same old lady that "silenced" Bradlaugh. According to this pious story Ingersoll was "offensively voluble" against Christianity in the train, and asking what good it had ever done; and the old lady told him "It has kept Robert G. Ingersoll from being governor of the great State of Illinois." Whereat the noisy infidel "turned literally pale with rage and remained silent." People who knew Ingersoll will be amused to hear that he gave gratuitous lectures in trains. They will also be amused at the best-tempered and wittiest man in America getting into a speechless rage at such a feeble effort of orthodox humor.

Two wills appeared together in a newspaper some days ago. One was Lady Huddleston's, who left large sums of money to her servants, and the balance of her estate eventually to the Reading Hospital. The other was the Rev. Prebendary William Walton Herringham, of Bath, who left over £24,000 all to his own family. Contrast the large-hearted lady with the miserable man of God!

According to the *Daily Telegraph* the Archbishop of Canterbury "displays remarkable strength and endurance" considering his "sixteen or seventeen hours working day." We should have greater respect for this feat if it were performed under a time-keeper.

Annie Brown, having made 156 appearances before the Sunderland magistrates for drunkenness, and having been sent to an inebriates' home in vain, was brought up for the 157th time, and sent to prison again for a month. She left the dock singing the "Glory Song." An excellent testimonial for Mr. Alexander! If he doesn't like it he can pass it on to Dr. Torrey.

The telephone would be doomed if the Old German Baptists of America had their way. They have just passed a resolution at their annual conference in Indianapolis calling upon all members of their Church to give it up as "a device of Satan, which makes people lazy, and the use of which is not warranted by Scripture." It is well to know the real inventor of the telephone.

Why on earth can't the Sabbatarians leave the sweetie-shops and the kids alone? There are 40,000 retail confectioners protesting against the Sunday Closing (Shops) Bill, which has passed the second reading in the House of Lords—consisting of gentlemen who have seven Sundays a week.

Secular Education is frightening the clericals. Dr. Wallace, at the recent annual congress of the General Association of Church School Managers and Teachers, said that "there was danger of religion being excluded from the school." Sensible people will be glad to hear it.

A fire occurred recently at a church in South London, and some wax angels caught fire. When the flames reached those "waxy" angels they must have thought that they had inadvertently strayed into the place so often mentioned by the parson in his sermons.

The theatrical aspect of religious emotion was never better illustrated than when four little children toddled on to the stage at the "Torrey-Alexander Circus" at Brixton and sang the "Glory" song. Similar tricks have been known to move a music-hall audience to tears.

Stands Scotland where it did? Not exactly. At Aberdeen, for instance, the Rev. James Smith, of St. George's-in-the-West Church, has addressed a piteous letter to his congregation. He deplores that so many of them show "utter

contempt and neglect for public worship on Sunday, by irregular attendance or hardly ever attending at all. And "everything else suffers."—"Interest in the church as a whole decays or dies out altogether; the finances necessary to keep the church going and the church buildings in proper repair are wanting." Unless there is a speedy and considerable change, the reverend gentleman intimates that he must regard his ministry as "in vain" and throw up his too heavy responsibility. From what we hear we judge that this sort of thing is becoming rather common in the land of John Knox. It is clear that Caledonia badly wants the religious revival that Lord Rosebery left his hunting-stables to talk about the other day.

How some magistrates can play the fool on the bench! Mr. Mead, of the Thames Police-Court, had a "conscientious objector" before him the other day. The applicant stated that he had a conscientious objection to vaccination. "That is no ground," said the magistrate; although it is the ground, and the only ground, assigned in the Act. Then the applicant stated that he and his three brothers were all vaccinated and had all caught small-pox. That also, the magistrate said, was no ground. What he meant, of course, was that it is useless to apply at his Court for an exemption order until he himself had become an anti-vaccinator. This is absurd enough—but not too absurd for Mr. Mead.

Criticism is at a low ebb occasionally at the *Morning Leader* office. Our contemporary reviews Dr. Barry's monograph on Renan as "brilliant and valuable." As a matter of fact it was a literary outrage to select a Roman Catholic doctor of divinity to write a popular volume on a great French Freethinker.

Sir Charles Warren, the hero of Trafalgar Square and Spion Kop, is a very pious gentleman. Perhaps he would have done better in the Church than in the Army. He couldn't well have done worse. Certainly he has a taste for preaching. The other day he actually occupied a pulpit. More recently he has deplored that "the letters D.V. on a letter are now looked upon as cant." He regards this as part of the awful spread of agnosticism in England. Sir Charles Warren should go out to South Africa and live amongst the Boers—if they will have him. We do not know of any other people quite pious enough for his companionship.

"Education Harmonies" was the title of a recent Cartoon in the *Yarmouth Mercury*. On one side a Nonconformist sky-pilot plays on an harmonium "I am a little pilgrim." On the other side an Anglican sky-pilot plays "Jerusalem the Golden." In the middle a snivelling "kid" drops tears over "O for a thousand tongues!" Behind the lot stands the poor ratepayer, crying: "Gentlemen! gentlemen! For the kid's sake, let's have harmony. And remember I am financing the show!"

"Immoral Literature in the Parks" was a sub-heading in the *Mercury* report of a late meeting of the Leeds City Council. The Parks Committee continued its old policy of refusing to allow the National Secular Society to make collections and sell literature at their meetings in the various parks and recreation grounds. This policy was objected to by Mr. Wormald, who had no sympathy with Secularist views, but did not believe in the Committee acting as a censor of opinions. If the literature were obscene or improper, the police were the proper authorities to interfere. Mr. Henry moved that the matter be referred back to the Committee. He could not understand why Secularists should be allowed to hold their meetings but not to sell their literature. Mr. Charles Wilson seconded.

Mr. Jas. Brown expressed surprise at Mr. Wilson's "clap-trap," and the "lot of rubbish" he had been talking. The literature sold by these people was absolutely disgusting, and it was absurd that the Council should tolerate it for a moment.

Mr. Kinder supported the amendment, and declared that the Council was not the guardian of public morals.

Mr. Jas. Brown: It ought to be.

Mr. Kinder added that the propaganda of these people could do no harm to properly-balanced minds, and a good deal more harm would be done by the advertisement they had received in that chamber than would be done by the society on Woodhouse Moor in twenty years.

Mr. H. Brown, for the sake of his own boy as well as for the sake of the children of other people, supported the committee in refusing sanction to the secularists to sell their blasphemous literature in the public parks.

Mr. T. C. Wilson thought the police could safeguard the public morals, and it was unwise of the committee to give the secularists a sort of Brummagem martyrdom.

Ald. Currer Briggs said he was far from being orthodox in his views, but he found that religion was at the bottom of all

good work, and to encourage people like these secularists was to strike at the morality of the city.

Mr. Appleton held that the Council was in fact the guardian of public morality so far as the public parks were concerned.

Dr. Wainman expressed a similar opinion.

Mr. Ogden thought that having granted the society permission to speak in the parks, they could not consistently refuse them permission to sell their literature and take collections.

Mr. Thaxton, while dissociating himself from the views of the society, thought they should treat all organisations alike.

Eventually the motion to refer back to the Committee was lost by 25 votes to 20. But this is one of those defeats that are really victories. The bigotry of the Parks Committee is on the road to its doom.

The *Leeds Mercury* printed a letter from Mr. George Weir, honorary secretary of the local Branch of the National Secular Society, protesting against the silly idea that Secular literature is "immoral." "The only book in our possession," he added, "which might be included in an Index Expurgatorius is a fabulous history of the Jewish nation, containing the amatory adventures of Judah, Onan, Lot, Solomon, and other lascivious Oriental potentates. This work, of course, is quite unfit to be put into the hands of the young, but possesses a unique interest as a record of obsolete customs and superstitions." No doubt it is easier (at present) to boycott Secular literature than to answer Mr. Weir's letter.

When Hamlet said "'Tis as easy as lying" one would imagine he had an extensive acquaintance with the American revivalists and English religious newspaper editors. The *Christian Globe* prints Dr. Torrey's address on "Infidelity: its Causes, Consequences, and Cure," and describes it as "Special to the *Christian Globe*." This is a barefaced lie. Those who don't like the word "lie" can call this a "Torreyism."

England is a Christian country, and tradesmen realise this. A large firm of carriers advertise the fact that they convey luggage in advance by a big poster of a devil carrying a portmanteau.

Religiosity is usually divorced from a sense of humor. We saw recently a lady distributing a leaflet, "Prepare to Meet Thy God," outside a sausage shop.

Labor not for the meat that perisheth! Take no thought for the morrow! Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth! These elegant Gospel texts were evidently much appreciated by the Rev. William Macjinlay Oliver, rector of Bobbington, Chipping Ongar, Essex, who died in April at the age of ninety-five, leaving property which has been sworn at the total value of £93,587 14s. We wonder how this holy camel will get through the needle's eye with a hump like that on his back.

Rev. Dr. Monro Gibson, the well-known Free Church minister, having completed his twenty-fifth year as pastor of St. John's Wood Presbyterian Church, was presented with a beautiful silver salver and inkstands, while Mrs. Gibson received a solid silver rose bowl. In addition the reverend gentleman pocketed a handsome cheque for £750. This is what "Blessed be ye poor" leads to nowadays. How different it was when Judas Iscariot sold up the whole Christian Church for £3 15s! This is the highest estimate. The real figure may have been thirty "bob."

In answering a correspondent in this week's *Freethinker* we have said that people do not kill themselves in consequence of reading articles on suicide. We may mention in this connection the recent address by Dr. Wynn Westcott, the well-known coroner for the north-eastern district of London, before the Medico-Legal Society. The following passage from the *Daily Mail* report is significant:—

"What makes a suicide? It is not, said the doctor, a question of cowardice or bravery, or of the presence or absence of Christian principles. Suicides are not deterred by the law, and their brains are frequently indistinguishable from the brains of other people. The most usual causes of suicide are disease, poverty, alcoholism, a fit of passion or an attack of pain, or disappointed love."

Dr. Westcott has apparently not found that "reading infidel literature" is one of the principal causes of suicide. But then he is a man of science, while Dr. Torrey is only a quack.

The first duty of wisdom is to throw into light the humbleness of the place in the universe that is filled by man.—*Maeterlinck*.

To Freethinkers.

92 St. Peter's-road,

Great Yarmouth,

June, 1905.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

I am making my annual appeal once more on behalf of Mr. G. W. Foote, who is too well known to all of you to need any praise of mine. As editor of the *Freethinker*, president of the National Secular Society, and chairman of the Secular Society, Limited, his name is familiar to all who take any interest in the liberation of the human mind from the yoke of superstition.

Mr. Foote's health has continued to improve since I wrote to you last year, and you are all aware that he has been working very hard indeed of late. And in order that he may keep up his improved form I think it is highly advisable, if not absolutely necessary, that he should make the most of the summer by giving himself a complete rest from platform work, and even minimising his work on the *Freethinker*, which, of course, he cannot escape altogether.

A long half-holiday of this kind is not possible unless we, in our turn, show a little of the spirit which he throws into our movement. Unfortunately he is not at present able to draw any salary for his heavy weekly work on the *Freethinker*. Some one must suffer in this respect until things improve, and, with his customary self-denial, he prefers it should be himself and not others. You will see, therefore, that it is our duty to exert ourselves on his behalf, and to do it generously.

Donations may be sent to me, or direct to Mr. Foote, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C. Every donation will be acknowledged by Mr. Foote personally.

Trusting to receive from you a prompt and liberal response, believe me to be

Yours faithfully and fraternally,

JOHN W. DE CAUX, J.P.

[Those whom the above may concern must please understand that it will not be repeated in any form in the *Freethinker*. One insertion should be sufficient for the interested.]

THOUGHT AND PERSONALITY.

Some vital or organic function seems to precede, and perhaps to follow, every manifestation of mind. There can hardly, therefore, be a branch of study of greater interest than that which traces the connection between physical or purely vital properties and psychical properties. But these last, which in their nature are clearly distinct from the physical or vital properties on which they are grafted, can define themselves only to the man reflecting on them. This reflection on ourselves is simply indispensable. We can know ourselves as conscious beings in no other way. This very self, this personality, this *I* that rings for ever through human speech, belongs essentially to the consciousness. What my consciousness rests on is a distinct and specific inquiry. It may rest on the brain; the brain destroyed, it may cease; but while it exists it carries within it its own personality. The light of thought may go out when the lamp is shattered; but while it burns, that, and not the lamp, is the self—the *I* of human speech. Whether thought and feeling rest directly on the brain or on some intermediate substance we call spirit, shall be an open question if you will; but the personality lies in the thought itself. It lies, as I take it, in the union of memory and anticipation. It is thought embracing the present, the past, the future, travelling on for ever—an ever-present thought, that embraces a future that will be a past, and a past which has been a future. I have been, I shall be, are but the past and future seen constantly in the present.—*William Smith*.

The simplest lie to myself, buried though it may be in the silence of my soul, may yet be as dangerous to my inner liberty as an act of treachery on the market-place. And from the moment that my inner liberty is threatened, destiny prowls around my external liberty as stealthily as a beast of prey that has long been tracking its victim.—*Maeterlinck*.

It is a mistake to suppose that the heart will long cherish within it the ideas that reason has banished.—*Maeterlinck*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(Suspended during the Summer.)

To Correspondents.

OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£133 16s. 6d. Received this week:—A. Paul 10s., T. Stevens 5s., Wigan N. S. S. Branch 5s. 3d., W. P. Murray 2s., T. Dixon, Jnr. 2s., Richard Rees 2s. 6d., James Baker 1s., Hugh Hotson £1, Dr. W. Mortimer 5s., C. J. Blackburn 2s., B. and T. 1s., R. Taylor (2nd sub.) 2s. 6d., A. A. 6d., J. E. Batten (2nd sub.) 2s. 6d., J. Chapman 2s., G. Arnold 2s., F. W. Thompson 2s. 6d., R. H. Side (3rd sub.) 10s., R. E. H. 1s., T. Young 1s., E. W. H. 2s.

A. GARLAND.—We shall venture to make an extract from your interesting letter next week.

J. E. BATTEN.—Thanks; in our next.

J. CHAPMAN (S. Shields).—Thanks for your effective efforts to promote our circulation. Glad to hear that you will "never forget Picton Hall on Whit-Sunday, 1905," also that the Annual Report repaid you for your 100 miles ride.

G. ARNOLD.—Delighted to learn that our lectures and Mr. Cohen's at South Shields were the means of lifting you—a Sunday-school teacher—"out of the darkness of superstition."

J. SHORT.—Too late for this week, but see next.

P. W. THOMPSON.—Torrey pamphlets sent. Glad to have your encouraging letter.

M. ROCHE.—Your verses are not without some merit; they show an idea, but little power of expression; the lines do not scan, and your grammar is faulty.

J. W. DIXON.—Body and mind are separable in fancy but not in reality; and while some labor involves more thought than others, there is no labor without thought at all. The common notion, therefore, of a distinction between bodily work and brain work has no scientific foundation. The difference is simply one of more or less. So much for the theory that "working people" are an inferior species to the "intellectuals." You will now understand that we are glad to have your letter; and you may also understand why we look upon everyone (whatever his social station—which is often much of an accident) who does anything for Freethought as a comrade. Mr. Cohen will, of course, be pleased to know that you found his articles on Anthropomorphism so helpful.

W. P. MURRAY is "pleased to see what good effect the Torrey pamphlets have had."

G. SCOTT.—The last answer should be enough for the correspondent, though it is kind of you to write. We were much pleased to meet you at the Conference. We hope to meet you at many more.

J. F. PARTINGTON.—Colonel Ingersoll did write two essays on Suicide. Both are printed in pamphlet form and sold at our office. You would do well to read them for yourself instead of accepting the Rev. J. E. Hindle's version of them. When the reverend gentleman says that Ingersoll's essays "produced a harvest of suicides in New York" he is talking nonsense, and probably echoing the stupid falsehoods of Dr. Torrey. Why not ask him for the figures? How many suicides were there in New York the year before Ingersoll wrote, and how many the year after? You may be quite certain that people don't commit suicide because they have read Ingersoll—or anybody else. They kill themselves because they are sick of life, or unable to bear more pain, or afraid to face their responsibilities.

J. S. C.—Thanks for the picture postcard of Swinburne's birth-place.

THOMAS DIXON, JNR.—We note your hope that we may convert Dr. Torrey to the truth, but we fear he is a "lost soul" in that respect. Thanks for your letter. See paragraphs.

A. R. WAUGH.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Mangasarian made himself known to our Torrey pamphlet distributors outside the Strand mission-hall, and shook hands with them, and seemed pleased to find them engaged in the work.

HUGH HOTSON, sending a further subscription to our Anti-Torrey Mission Fund, writes: "I am glad to see that your manly attempt to silence the shuffling libeller has met with such success. I am also glad to see the Annual Report at the Conference so encouraging."

W. MORTIMER.—Pamphlets, etc., sent as requested. Always pleased to hear from you.

W. H. DOWLING.—We shall be happy to visit Bristol in the autumn if a decent hall can be obtained. What has become of the St. James's Hall? We had some shares in it. Torrey pamphlets sent.

ANTI-BIBLICAL.—Torrey pamphlets sent. Glad to hear the recipient of the *Freethinker* is becoming a subscriber. We note your little story of the bigoted Christian who didn't mind working on Sunday if he were paid well enough.

T. H. ELSTOB.—A paragraph was already in type. Thanks for your good wishes.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

E. C. CORNET.—We never said that "any man and woman who choose to live together are true man and wife." We are only responsible for our own words, not for blackguardly "anti-infidel" inferences. George Henry Lewes and George Eliot had characters beyond the reach of orthodox ruffianism. Tennyson and Jowett visited them as well as Spencer and Huxley. Never mind the vermin you refer to.

G. L. G. MACRINNON.—Thanks: see paragraph.

E. V. S.—Cuttings are welcome.

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.

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

Sugar Plums.

We had not time last week to refer to the excursion to Chester organised by the Liverpool Branch the day after the N. S. S. Conference. A number of delegates and visitors from various parts of the country, together with a good contingent of Liverpool "saints," travelled to Chester, where they saw various objects of interest, including the old wall, and enjoyed a walk by the delightful river, and even visited the cathedral. A party, comprising Mr. Foote, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Ward, and Mr. Hammond, had the opportunity of going all over the fine old "house of God." Some eighty excursionists sat down to dinner at "The Golden Eagle." Amongst them was Mr. F. Bonte, who recently gave the Secular Society, Limited, a generous donation. Fortunately the weather was fine all day except for a brief spell of rain in the afternoon; and the excursionists pleaded guilty (as Puritans might say) to having had "a good time."

The humors of travelling are sometimes considerable. The Secular party travelled from Liverpool under the Mersey by electric car. At Rock Ferry they had to change for the train to Chester. When the train came in it was full up already. Stopping at Rock Ferry at all was a joke; rather heavy, perhaps, but passable for a railway company. The same thing occurred in the case of the next train. Finally the President of the National Secular Society, several vice-presidents, and a good many members, had to get into the guard's van, and ride to Chester in company with several dead sheep.

Mr. George Wise has earned the censure of the Liverpool *Porcupine* by defending the right of the Secularists to use the Picton Hall like other local bodies. We are glad to hear it, and shall think better of Mr. Wise for it in future. The *Porcupine* has the impudence to suggest that he should "draw the line at the advocacy of the hurtful bomb and the devastating dynamite." Our readers do not need to be told that there was no such advocacy at the Picton Hall meeting. The only speaker who referred to bombs at all was Mr. Lloyd, who actually declared that violence was always a mistake, and that the only thing that could help the world was love in the service of humanity. Right or wrong, that is what Mr. Lloyd said; and we repeat that his was the only reference to the subject.

Since writing the previous paragraph we have seen Mr. Wise's letter in the *Post and Mercury*, and we are bound to say that it does him very great credit. He characterises the opposition to the Secularists' holding their annual meeting in the Picton Hall as an "insane outburst of bigotry." "What I demand for myself," he says, "I grant to my opponent, and it matters not whoever that person may be. Should he be an Atheist, Anarchist, Roman Catholic, Theosophist, or 'This-World-ist,' it matters not; he shall have the Englishman's birthright—the right of free speech." Whatever else Mr. Wise may regret, he will never regret writing that.

Mr. Cohen's visit to Newcastle-on-Tyne during "race week" has become quite a fixture. He lectures morning and evening on the Town Moor to-day (June 25). No doubt there will be large audiences, and we hope the local "saints" will rally in strength around the platform. On the previous evening (Saturday) Mr. Cohen lectures at Hetton-le-Hole.

"Mr. George W. Foote, of London, is not persecuting but pursuing the Rev. Dr. Torrey of Chicago, who is at present living in London. Torrey has again abused the name of Paine and thrown insulting epithets at the late mighty Ingersoll. Instead of confining himself to the ideas of these men, he has attacked their characters. If we did not wish to be impolite, we would say he has inexcusably lied about Thomas Paine and Ingersoll. Mr. Foote has invited Torrey to meet him in a public debate. Of course, Torrey has declined. When Torrey has saved London and returns to saves us in Chicago, he shall hear from us, as he has from the brave and scholarly Mr. Foote of London."—*Liberal Review* (Chicago).

Dr. Torrey has been put under pressure by some of his Christian friends with respect to the Paine-and-Ingersoll

matters raised in our pamphlets. There is every likelihood of some very interesting correspondence being published before long. We should violate confidence by saying any more at present.

It has been suggested that, as a good many readers of the *Freethinker* may not see our new Torrey pamphlets, it would be well to print at least the *Guilty or Not Guilty* in full in our columns; and it will be seen that we have acted on the suggestion. One result is that some excellent articles have to stand over till next week.

There has been a great run upon our new Torrey pamphlets. In addition to the distribution outside the Strand mission, packets have been sent to applicants all over the kingdom. Miss Vance has been quite busy seeing to them. Evidently we shall have to print a further supply. And it is to be hoped that this will be borne in mind by those we must look to for the sinews of war in this campaign.

"You will be glad to hear," a correspondent writes, "that the *Freethinker* has got another reader. I have a friend in a sanatorium in this county who asked me a few weeks ago to send her the *Freethinker* there for a lady who was very anxious to see it. I sent a copy and heard immediately that the lady thought it the best paper she had ever seen. I have been sending a copy for her ever since, and have heard that she intends to take it for herself when she returns home." This should be a hint to other friends of this journal. The best way of advertising it is placing it in the hands of fresh readers. We hope all our friends will take the hint.

"I had the pleasure," the same correspondent says, "of hearing you at South Shields, and I brought with me a young lady who had never heard a Secular lecture before. She is very slow to applaud, but could not help showing her satisfaction in the usual way at the conclusion of both your lectures." Another hint for the "saints"—who really ought to try more than they do to bring their friends and acquaintances to Freethought meetings.

Freethinkers in the Edmonton and Wood Green districts are invited to communicate with Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C., with a view to forming an N. S. S. Branch.

Guilty or Not Guilty ?

AN OPEN LETTER TO DR. R. A. TORREY.

SIR,—I write you this open letter as the most convenient and effective way of addressing you and others at the same time. The subject it deals with is a matter of public interest and importance. You have therefore no reason to complain of injustice or incivility. I desire to be just to you as well as to the truth—and to the truth as well as to you; and if I have occasion to express myself severely I shall keep well within the limits of allowable language.

To come to the point then. It is widely known that a pamphlet of mine bearing the title of *Dr. Torrey and the Infidels*, was distributed outside the Albert Hall on the opening night of your Mission there, and continuously afterwards. You have yourself admitted that this pamphlet was distributed in tens of thousands. It was also reprinted in the *Clarion*, whose editor, Mr. Robert Blatchford, thought he was performing a public duty in promoting its circulation. I should add that it was printed for "free distribution," my friends having subscribed the means for that purpose. You will thus understand—or at least others will—that there was a principle involved in its publication and distribution.

In that pamphlet I endeavored, and I believe successfully, to vindicate the characters of Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll against your slanderous aspersions. You had represented Paine as having taken away another man's wife and lived with her. I proved that this was an absolute falsehood. You had represented Ingersoll as having assisted in the dissemination of obscene literature in America. I also proved that this was an absolute falsehood.

You entered into conversation with some of those who gave their evenings to distribute my pamphlet

outside the Albert Hall. This happened on several occasions. When they asked you why you did not substantiate or withdraw your charges against Paine and Ingersoll you gave various replies. You said that you had something better to do; you said that my pamphlet would do you no harm and you did not care; you also said that it was anonymous, and that anonymous attacks were beneath your notice. This last statement you repeated in letters that came under my own observation. I therefore thought it advisable to send you the following letter, which I registered for security, and with which I enclosed a copy of my pamphlet for the same reason:—

"2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street,
London, E.C.,

March 27, 1905.

DEAR SIR,—

I understand that you are professing ignorance as to who is the author of the pamphlet "Dr. Torrey and the Infidels," of which thousands of copies have been distributed outside the Albert Hall. Indeed, I have seen letters by you stating that this pamphlet is anonymous. I have therefore to draw your attention to the fact that every copy of the pamphlet contains an announcement at the end that it was written by the editor of the *Freethinker*. This is a perfectly sufficient identification of the author. The editor of the *Freethinker* is a well-known person, and his name appears in bold letters right under the title in every copy of every issue of that paper. However, in order to destroy that loophole of escape, I hereby inform you that I am the editor of the *Freethinker*, that I am the author of the pamphlet "Dr. Torrey and the Infidels," and that I am determined to continue my public exposure of your infamous libels on Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll until you have the manliness to retract them as openly as you made them.

Yours truly,

Dr. R. A. Torrey,

G. W. FOOTE."

66 Sinclair-road, W.

This letter elicited from you the following reply, in which—as I want it to be noted, even now—you do not challenge any specific allegation in my pamphlet:—

"66 Sinclair-road, London, W.,

March 28, 1905.

Mr. G. W. Foote,

2 Newcastle-street,

Farringdon-street, E.C.

DEAR SIR,—

Yours of March 27 received. You say, "I understand that you are professing ignorance as to who is the author of the pamphlet on 'Dr. Torrey and the Infidels.'" In reply would say, I am not professing any ignorance of the kind. I have referred to the pamphlet as "anonymous," and so it is. After the pamphlet was handed me I looked at the front to see if the name of the author was given, and it was not. Then I looked at the end, and the name was not given there. Thereupon I treated it with the same silent contempt that I do all anonymous pamphlets and letters. I had not noticed the little note at the bottom. I am not in the habit of reading advertisements at the end of anonymous pamphlets; but even since you have called my attention to this advertisement of your paper, this does not alter the essential fact at all. The name of the author is not given in this advertisement. I think you are aware that it is not the usual custom of authors of pamphlets and books to declare their authorship by advertisements, and then not to declare it by name. I suppose a great majority of those to whom the pamphlet was given at the Albert Hall neither know nor care who the editor of the *Freethinker* is. I take it for granted that you know the meaning of the word "anonymous," and the pamphlet is anonymous.

Now as to the other matter in your letter, permit me to say that as soon as you or anyone else will show me anything that I have said in any of my books, in any of my lectures as correctly reported, or in any authentic letter regarding Mr. Thomas Paine or Col. Ingersoll that is not strictly true, I shall be more than glad to retract it. But I am not likely to retract anything that I have not said, or to retract anything that I have said that is true. I am not willing to be held responsible for incorrect reports in papers of what I have said, nor any mere hearsay reports which are always inaccurate, nor am I willing to be held responsible for deliberate falsifications of my statements.

Sincerely yours,

R. A. TORREY."

To this letter of yours I returned the following answer:—

“ 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.,

April 4, 1905.

DEAR SIR,—

Yours of March 28, apparently posted later, reached me safely, and I should have given it an earlier reply if I had not seen by the newspapers that several important personages, including the Queen and yourself, were taking a holiday on the Continent.

You use a great many words to say very little. I infer rather than perceive from your letter that, in your opinion, a drama by the author of *Hamlet*, a poem by the author of *Paradise Lost*, or a novel by the author of *David Copperfield*, would be anonymous. Etymologically you may be right, but when such hair-splitting involves a pretence of ignorance, and an evasion of responsibility, it is more worthy of a prisoner in the dock than of a public teacher of religion and morality. However, I will take care that this hole of escape shall be closed up. Further impressions of my pamphlet shall state, not only that it is written by the editor of the *Freethinker*, but that the name of the editor is G. W. Foote.

You say that the majority of your auditors who saw my pamphlet did not know who was the editor of the *Freethinker*. Do you really believe this?

The last part of your letter is the unworthiest of all. You must know what you have said about Paine and Ingersoll, and if you were a straightforward person you would either admit what you did say or deny what you did not say. Instead of doing this, you stand absolutely on the defensive, like a person indicted for a criminal offence.

You want to know what you have said about Paine or Ingersoll that is “not strictly true.” I have told you in my pamphlet. I shall not waste time in telling you again. My object now is to place the pamphlet in as many hands as possible.

When you come to your senses, which will probably be when your own people are tired of your perpetual evasions; when you lead the procession to your own penitent form, and confess your “sin” and resolve to make atonement; I shall rejoice to know that the revivalist is revived, and that the soul of the soul-saver has found its “Resurrection.”

Yours truly,

G. W. FOOTE.”

Dr. R. A. Torrey,
66 Sinclair-road, W.

You know perfectly well, sir, why I did not put my name on the title-page of the pamphlet. Had I done so I should have defeated my object. When you told your friends inside the Albert Hall, with a meaning smile, that they “knew what to do” with “those pamphlets,” you only indicated what I had foreseen. I wished to put the pamphlet into the hands of your auditors, and I wished it to be read. For that reason I kept my name off the front. But I also wished its authorship to be known. For that reason I had the announcement made at the end that it was written by the Editor of the *Freethinker*. It was honest information for those who had read the pamphlet through, and for those who had not it was unnecessary.

My pamphlet has been distributed in tens of thousands all over Great Britain as well as at your Mission meetings, and I have not heard of anyone being in doubt as to its authorship. You yourself were not in doubt. You cleverly avoided saying that you were. But even if your ignorance had been so phenomenal you could easily have enquired of your English friends, and you would soon have ascertained my identity. The *Freethinker* is a paper that everybody affects not to know, and that everybody knows. Men who have suffered a long imprisonment for their principles are not so numerous in England that any one of them can easily be forgotten. It may be different in America. I do not know. But I have not heard that you ever suffered for your convictions, and I do not suppose I shall live to see your name in any genuine list of martyrs.

So much for the “anonymous” character of my pamphlet, and the technical excuse you pleaded for not answering it. That excuse was utterly unworthy of a public teacher, one who sets himself up to save other people's souls, and incidentally to elevate their morals. This is not simply my opinion. It is

the opinion of many of your Christian friends. I happen to know that some of them have expostulated with you on your embarrassing silence. You begin to feel that you are in a tighter corner than you thought. You have too much pride to admit a mistake, and not enough honesty to admit a more serious offence. Your only possible line of escape, therefore, is to suggest—for you are too astute to assert—that you never uttered those slanders against Paine and Ingersoll. And this is the line you are taking.

Now I have proved that what I alleged you said about Paine and Ingersoll was flagrantly false. I will now prove that you said it. And the fact that this task is forced upon me will enable candid men, even of your own party, to understand the kind of person you are.

To begin with I beg to observe that, so far from the libels on Paine and Ingersoll being *unlike* you, as I hear you are suggesting, they bear all the marks of your parentage. Specific libels are really no worse than general libels—although they may prove more dangerous. You denied during your Dublin mission, as reported in the *Irish Times*, that an “infidel” could “remain an honest one.” You declared that “infidelity and whisky went together,” and that the “stronghold of infidelity” was “the public-house, the racecourse, the gambling-hell, and the brothel.” This is general slander, it is true; but a general slander is a slander by presumption against everyone in the category who is not expressly exempted. You may reply, as I am told you do reply, that you will not be responsible for “unauthorised” reports of your addresses in the newspapers. This is a very convenient policy when you are challenged. But it is easy to checkmate you in this instance; for in your article in the *Daily Chronicle*, on the eve of your London mission, you wrote that “Infidelity and immorality are Siamese twins. They always exist and always grow and always fatten together.” This covers by implication everything in the *Irish Times* report of your speech—and as much more of the same kind as your own charitable imagination could possibly invent. I must point out, also, that I quoted in my pamphlet a passage from your *Hard Problems of Scripture* in which you stated that “The unclean classes, both men and women, were devoted admirers of Colonel Ingersoll” and that they “did frequent his lectures.” This could only mean that Ingersoll's audiences were largely composed of drunkards, prostitutes, and whoremongers. And it passes my comprehension how you could say this, and then expect anyone to believe that the slanders I confuted as to Paine and Ingersoll are so *unlike* you. They are *perfectly* like you; they smell and taste of their natural source. And the source is unique. You alone, I believe, amongst men of any considerable position in the Christian world, are capable of treating the public to such delicacies.

So much for the presumption, and now for the precise evidence of your guilt.

I lay no stress upon the fact that your reflections on the characters of Paine and Ingersoll were reported to me by several correspondents in different places. Your cue is to dispute everything at a venture, and to take the chance of what can be proved, and you are prepared to deny everything that would not be considered strict evidence in a court of law. I shall therefore go at once to a particular speech of yours at Liverpool in the latter part of 1903, and to a correspondence which gathered round it.

Mr. W. Cain, of Liverpool, wrote me the following letter, which I published in the *Freethinker* of October 11, 1903 (and here let me say, to prevent misconceptions, that my paper is dated for Sunday, but is printed on Wednesday, and is on sale all over the country on Thursday):—

“ SIR,—Dr. Torrey, in his course of evangelistic entertainments in this city, included two addresses to business men, on the causes and cure of “infidelity.”

I attended at the City Hall, Eberle-street, on Tuesday and Wednesday last to hear the Yankee savior's views

on this subject, and learned that almost all cases of 'infidelity' ought to be attributed to one at least of the following five causes, viz., misrepresentation (either of biblical teaching and interpretation, or of true Christianity by the inconsistent conduct of professed Christians), ignorance of the Bible, conceit, sin, resistance to the spirit of God.

On Tuesday evening I wrote to Dr. Torrey a letter, in which I gave the names of several men whose life records I thought would justify us in seeking elsewhere than in the above list for an explanation of their 'infidelity.' The names were—John Morley, Charles Bradlaugh, Professor Haeckel, Charles Darwin, Professor Huxley, Colonel Ingersoll, and Thomas Paine.

On Wednesday Dr. Torrey read out my letter, and replying to it, made reference first to Haeckel, whose writings, he said, indicated the Professor's complete ignorance of the Bible. Then of Darwin, he stated that this great man had declared that at one time he resisted the spirit of God lest it should interfere with his scientific labors. Huxley, we were told, was not remarkable for his candor, as anyone reading his works would discover. Ingersoll also, was found guilty of complete ignorance of the Bible, whilst Thomas Paine, according to the wonderful Doctor, 'ran away to Paris with another man's wife, and eventually died in America, leaving her deprived of all hope.'

It is significant that the names of Bradlaugh and Morley were passed over without any remark, perhaps because their reputations are too popularly known in England to be tampered with.

Proceeding with his lecture Dr. Torrey made a further statement regarding Ingersoll, who, he said, had been charged with assisting in the dissemination of obscene literature in America, and having instituted an action for libel, wished the case to be tried in private. On his request being refused, said Dr. Torrey, Ingersoll withdrew the case.

It would be a great pleasure and advantage to myself, and doubtless to others, to read any remarks you may make upon these utterances, throughout the whole of which no instance was quoted, nor reference to any authority given. Simply bald statement and nothing else. Of the story of Ingersoll and the libel case, will you state the true facts of the case, if such there was?

Perhaps you will devote at least a good substantial 'acid drop' to this matter.

WILLIAM CAIN."

To this letter from Mr. Cain I appended an editorial note, advising him to write you another letter and ask you for *particulars*. Mr. Cain took my advice, and received the following letter from you, which I published in the *Freethinker* of November 1, with a long criticism from my own pen:—

Mr. Wm. Cain, "Mather's Hotel, Dundee,
Liverpool. October 14, 1903.

DEAR SIR:—

Your note of October 8 at hand, and also the clipping sent me from another source containing your letter to the 'Free Thinker.' You have quoted me very inaccurately in this letter, in regard to what I said about Ingersoll, about Payne, and about Darwin. I presume this misquotation was unintentional, but it allows a loophole for one to deny the statement. However, the main facts stand. Does the editor of 'The Free Thinker' deny that Thomas Payne took another man's wife with him to France and lived with her? If this commonly believed outrageous action of Thomas Payne's is not correct history, it should be known and I certainly for one should be glad to know it, for I believe in giving any man his due. I did not suppose that infidels denied the conduct of Thomas Payne. In regard to the statement about Robert Ingersoll, the alleged libellous statements about him were made by Dr. A. C. Dixon at that time of Brooklyn, now of Boston. Dr. Dixon did not show any disposition to take back his statements when Col. Ingersoll brought action against him for libel; on the contrary, he prepared to defend his statements in court then, had secured considerable evidence to do it, and Col. Ingersoll requested that the trial might be in private, but to this Dr. Dixon would not assent and the action was withdrawn. I am surprised that the editor of the 'Truth Seeker' did not know this, as it is a matter of common knowledge in America. I am writing to America by this mail for more details concerning the matter.

I am somewhat surprised at the difference of tone toward me that you take in your letter to me and in the public letter that you sent to the editor of the 'Free Thinker.'

Sincerely yours,
R. A. TORREY."

In the *Freethinker* of December 6, 1903, there was an editorial paragraph referring to another letter you had written to Mr. Cain, in which you said that you had "received the facts" from America, but that you would not use them "damaging as they were to Colonel Ingersoll" because you had "no desire to blacken his reputation, even though it could be justly done." You added that you were "concerned with principles, not with men." Which led me to ask why you advanced grave charges against leading Freethinkers, and only made "insolent faces and cowardly retreats" when "asked for proof."

Now I ask, in the name of common sense, if it can be imagined that all that correspondence and comment, printed in a public journal eighteen months ago, was *invented*? Is human cleverness equal to such an amazing feat? How could Mr. Cain know that you were staying at Mather's Hotel in Dundee? How could he forge letters bearing the marks of your composition in every sentence? How could they be printed in my paper, which is watched with cat-like vigilance by its enemies, without provoking a prompt denial?

I cannot produce the original of your letter to Mr. Cain dated October 14, 1903. It was typewritten and it went up into the composing-room as copy. But I still have the original of your last letter to Mr. Cain, which was not printed in the *Freethinker*, but only referred to; and this letter proves the correspondence and establishes its character. I have also the originals of a correspondence you had with Mr. James, of Liverpool, at the very same time; and in your part of it you refer to your correspondence with Mr. Cain, and repeat in almost identical words your slander against Thomas Paine.

Your last letter to Mr. Cain ran as follows:—

"Grand Hotel, Aytoun-street,
Manchester,
November 19, 1903.
Mr. Wm. Cain,
Wavertree, Liverpool.

DEAR SIR,—

Yours of November 15th received. In reply would say I have not seen the article in the 'Free Thinker.' I am not a regular reader of the 'Free Thinker.' I have a better use for my time. Quite likely I should not have replied to it if I had seen it, for it is absolutely impossible to keep up with all the attacks that are made upon a public man. If I should do this, I could do nothing else, for everywhere I go these attacks are made. I have a large and important correspondence for people who are sincere seekers after truth. I try to answer their letters as far as possible but in order to do that, it puts me at the expense of hiring someone to do this work. If one answers a letter of this kind, it leads to endless discussion. Your own correspondence is a case in point. You wrote me apparently an innocent letter, which I thought I ought to answer. It was you who drove me into making those personal statements. I seek to avoid them, and you see what a correspondence it has involved at a tremendous cost of time.

I have received the facts about the Ingersoll case and have them in my possession, but as damaging as they are to Col. Ingersoll I have no time to spend in endless discussion over them. I have no desire to blacken his reputation, even though it could be justly done. I am concerned with principles not with men. It was your letter that forced the personal statement.

Sincerely yours,
R. A. TORREY."

This letter has your personality written all over it. You talk of being *attacked* when you are brought to book for *your own* attacks on others; you doubt Mr. Cain's being an "innocent letter" because he had not warned you that he was a Freethinker; and you speak of being "forced" into personalities. You were evidently feeling uneasy. But the main point is that you admit having made "those personal statements." And what were they but the libels on Paine and Ingersoll? Libels, by the way, which you did not originate; for they had done duty in the gutter-walks of "Christian Evidence" long before you picked them out for your own campaign.

I come now to your letters to Mr. James. Much in them has no reference to this controversy. I therefore give only pertinent extracts. In your

letter dated October 14, 1903, from Mather's Hotel, Dundee, you write:—

"Yours of October 8th received. Please let me thank you for the clipping from the 'Free Thinker' that you have sent me. It has been useful to me. Does the Editor of the 'Free Thinker' mean to deny that Thomas Payne went with another man's wife to France and lived with her? Mr. Cain's quotations of what I said were not accurate, but if this part of the statement about Thomas Payne is not true, I should like to know it. I supposed that this was admitted as a fact of commonly known history."

In your next letter to Mr. James, dated October 20, 1903, also from Mather's Hotel, Dundee, you say something of still greater importance, while again referring to your correspondence with Mr. Cain:—

"In regard to Thomas Paine's name being misspelled, I am not responsible for the spelling in my letters. A person that has oftentimes a hundred letters a day cannot reply to them with his own hand, but has to dictate replies.

I do not think yet that his character has been cleared. If it can be cleared, I certainly for one, should be glad, for I like to see any man have justice done him. You ask why I refer to this moral obloquy anyway. Simply because a direct question was asked me by Mr. Cain, which I could not honorably dodge in answering. I dislike these personalities, but the question was asked and I had to answer it, which I did from the facts of history as commonly believed in spite of admirers and special pleaders to blot the course of recorded history. I think a man's character has a good deal of bearing upon his judgment of the Bible. Tom Paine attacks the Bible on account of its immoralities. If he is indulging in immoralities, which he says are justified by the Bible, he certainly is playing the part of a hypocrite and his judgment is not of much account. You ask, 'Why should you persist in attributing wickedness to your antagonists?' For the simple reason, in practical experience by the confessions of countless men, I have found that immorality lay at the basis of their infidelity and that when they give up their immorality, they get that clear vision of truth that enabled them to see there is a God and that the Bible is His Word."

Here you defend the wisdom of the very "personalities" you "dislike." You explain *why* you attacked the character of Thomas Paine. We have thus the fact and the justification—both from your own hand.

Your letters to Mr. James, which can all be produced, refer to your correspondence with Mr. Cain. They also contain the very libel on Thomas Paine which you uttered in your first letter to Mr. Cain, after having uttered it at a public meeting in Liverpool. Your guilt with respect to Thomas Paine is thus demonstrated.

Your second letter to Mr. Cain, which can also be produced, clearly shows that you had been attacking the character of Colonel Ingersoll; and your statement that you had "received the facts about the Ingersoll case" proves the authenticity of the first letter in which you said that you were "writing to America by this mail for more details concerning the matter." Thus your guilt with respect to Ingersoll is also demonstrated.

Your letters to Mr. Cain and to Mr. James further show that you were quite aware of what was appearing in the *Freethinker*. And when you said, in the second of the above letters to Mr. James, that you did "not think yet that his [Paine's] character had been cleared" you were obviously referring to my vindication of Paine in the *Freethinker*, to which Mr. James had drawn your attention.

These patent facts and inevitable conclusions, together with your present equivocal attempts at repudiation, make you look odious as a libeller and contemptible as a coward. I say this with sorrow as well as disgust, for I do not like to think ill of a fellow being, I have no delight in any man's humiliation, and I would rather hear of your repentance even at this late hour than see you continue in your evil courses. You probably entered upon them as sinners usually do, little by little, a step at a time.

You found that stories about "wicked infidels" tickled the palate of your orthodox audiences, and you went on from bad to worse, until ease and impunity made you reckless. You did not count on a day of reckoning. You overlooked the possibility of being challenged. You forgot, in defiling the graves of dead Freethinkers, that a living one might stride in and arrest you. I have done that. If I have nothing else I have love for the heroes you calumniated. And you who libelled them are but as a grain of sand which the wind lifts to the top of a pyramid.

Yours, etc.,

2 Newcastle-street,
London, E.C.,
May 29, 1905.

G. W. FOOTE.

Correspondence.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOLS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—No better evidence of the bad methods of discipline that prevail in our schools could be afforded than by the number of recent convictions of teachers for assault upon the children under their charge; and as several local education authorities have recently been and are being petitioned by teachers' organisations to grant extended powers to inflict corporal punishment, the following statement by Sir John Gorst may not be out of place. Sir John, writing on "Children's Rights" in the current issue of one of the reviews, says:—"If it is the duty of public authority to make school life healthy, the children have equally a right that school should be made a place of happiness. The lives of thousands of children are so wretched in their home surroundings that society owes it to them to make reparation at least by securing a measure of joy and contentment at school. In well-managed schools, under good teachers, this is done. But it is melancholy to record that there are numbers of public elementary schools where these desirable conditions are far from prevailing. The public is scarcely aware of the extent to which many schools are made a place of terror to young children by the cane—a practice which has been abandoned in schools in every civilised country except our own. Infants are frequently beaten, by ignorant and brutal teachers, for no worse crime than the failure to sit still. Everybody who knows anything about anatomy is aware of the necessity, to all young things, of moving the limbs almost incessantly. There is a sound physiological reason for it in nature, connected with the manner in which the circulation of the blood compels muscular activity in all living creatures that are young. It is shameful to reflect that this physical impulse is punished in a degrading fashion by the callous and uninstructed."

When are we to expect local education authorities to reform the present methods of school discipline, and thus prevent the cruelty that is so widespread?

LLEWELLYN W. WILLIAMS, B.Sc.,
Hon. Sec. of the Society for the Reform of
School Discipline.

3 Park-terrace, Crosshill, Glasgow.

Obituary.

REBECCA, wife of Mr. J. T. Ramsey, died last Sunday week from dropsy after a long and painful illness. She was buried on Saturday last at Manor Park Cemetery, the funeral address being delivered by Mr. W. J. Ramsey. The deceased was a constant attendant at the Hall of Science in the old days and took an active part in the various social functions in connection with the institution.—THEOMACHOS.

I REGRET to announce the death of Mr. Wallace Lupton, a Freethinker whose interest in our cause began in the days of the old John-street Institute. The deceased gentleman, who was in his seventieth year, his brother, the late Geo. E. Lupton, and his nephews and niece were all active members of the Milton Hall Branch, and generous supporters of the movement generally. The burial took place in the family grave at Finchley Cemetery on Friday last, in the presence of the family and the undersigned, Mr. John Lloyd reading a new and beautiful Secular Service.—EDITH M. VANCE, Secretary N. S. S.

The truth that seems discouraging does in reality only transform the courage of those strong enough to accept it; and, in any event, a truth that disheartens, because it is true, is still of far more value than the most stimulating of falsehoods.—Maeterlinck.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.30, Walter Hunt, "Missionary Enterprise."

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, E. B. Rose, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Christianity and Woman"; Brockwell Park, 3.15, E. Edwin, "The Noachian Deluge"; 6.30, F. A. Davies, "Heaven and Earth."

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., "The Origin of the Four Gospels."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S., Ramble at Dudley. Meet outside Dudley Station, 3.30. Thursday, June 29 (Coffee House, Bull Ring), 8, E. V. Deakin, "Some Problems of the Future."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "The True Origin of Religion." Outdoor Lectures: 3, Islington-square (if wet, inside Hall); Wednesday, 8, Edgell Church; Thursday, 8, Birkenhead Haymarket.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N. S. S. (on the Town Moor, near North-road entrance): 11, C. Cohen, "This World and the Next"; 7 (near Military Sports Stand) "Secularism and Life."

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