

# THE Freethinker

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*There is a strange analogy between the fertility of error and the fertility of the lowest organisms in Nature. Not the highest but the lowest organisms are the most prolific. Ephemeroids propagate in millions. So, too, in the region of human opinion. The history of mankind teaches us that whereas the breeding power of Error is immense, Truth and Justice increase with intolerable delay.*—W. R. PATERSON ("Benjamin Swift").

## A Defence of Thomas Paine.—II.

"Who says these things? Who relates these stories? That good person, your old fawning friend, O tyrants; your old comrade, O traitors; your old auxiliary, O bigots; your old comforter, O imbeciles!—Calumny....."

"These men have wounded the human race in her men of genius; these wretched hands for ever retain the color of the mud they have thrown."—VICTOR HUGO.

DR. TORREY'S "seven charges" against Thomas Paine were allowed to stand without a word of reply in last week's *Freethinker*—so sure was I of being able to vindicate his character. I know it was said by Cobbett that there is no overtaking a lie if you give it twenty-four hours' start; but Dr. Torrey's lies are as slow-heeled as he is slow-witted. He goes to work with such obvious malice that he half-defeats himself before he gets to the end of his calumnies.

Mr. Stead, as an honest Christian, feels bound to protest against "the injustice, the lack of charity, and the malevolence which strains every point and revives every accusation, even when they are admittedly untrue," with which Dr. Torrey frames his indictment of Thomas Paine. The American revivalist piles up all the slanderous filth he can find on that great man's grave. When he has completed the heap, he says that some of it is questionable, but he lets it all stand and fester together. Surely a counsel who acted in this way in a court of law would soon be brought to heel by the judge. It is a rule of justice that things must not be said or suggested to a man's detriment unless they are afterwards to be supported by evidence. Counsel is not allowed to say: "Gentlemen of the jury, it is alleged that the prisoner, in addition to committing the robbery with which he is specifically charged, has committed other and more heinous offences; that he has, for instance, peculated certain trust moneys, and seduced the wife of a very intimate friend. Personally, I do not think that these allegations can be substantiated; but, gentlemen, they have been made, and you are entitled to know the fact, for it helps to show you what opinion is entertained of this man's character."

Dr. Torrey talks precisely in that way. The reader will notice his "not proven" dodge. When the charge against Paine is obviously a malignant lie, resting not even on a shadow of foundation, he says it is "not proven." On this principle no jury could ever return a verdict of "Not Guilty." Dr. Torrey ought to know, and if he does not he should learn, that the Scotch verdict of "not proven" is only returned when the case is doubtful. But if you charge a man with a crime, and bring not one scrap of evidence to prove his guilt, there is nothing doubtful in the case at all. He is innocent. This is

both law and common sense. Otherwise honest men would all be at the mercy of rogues; and a liar, whenever he pleased, could throw an ineffaceable stain on the brightest reputation.

Mr. Stead has, indeed, rendered a service to the cause of decency, as well as to the cause of charity, by framing an indictment of Jesus Christ on the lines of Dr. Torrey's indictment of Thomas Paine. This is done without going outside the New Testament. All the scandals and innuendoes against the Prophet of Nazareth are collected together, and the result is appalling. True, the scandals and innuendoes all came from the mouths of his enemies; but the very same thing is true of all Dr. Torrey's "charges" against Thomas Paine.

I want to close this section by saying that Mr. Stead's parody of Dr. Torrey, in which he brings that gentleman's methods of indictment to bear upon Jesus Christ, is a brilliant performance. Freethinkers should get it and keep it by them. They are certain to find it serviceable.

## Thomas Paine's Enemies.

My subordinate officer, but personal good friend, Miss Vance — But stop. Can I mention her safely? I belong to one sex, and she to the other—and Dr. Torrey is looking on. However, I cannot help the reference, and I must let it pass—keeping a weather eye open on the American revivalist. Miss Vance, I say, picked up and showed me, the other day, a pretty little American book on Thomas Paine. The writer is Ellery Sedgwick, and it is one of a series of "Beacon Biographies of Eminent Americans," edited by M. A. De Wolfe Howe, and published by Small, Magnard, & Co., of Boston—the London agents being Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. It has for frontispiece a beautiful photogravure of Bass Otis's copy of John Wesley Jarvis's portrait of Paine, which hangs in Independence Hall, Philadelphia. It shows Paine in the very prime of life. And perhaps the best answer to Paine's latest libeller would be to reproduce that photogravure and Dr. Torrey's photograph, and say "Look on this picture, and on this."

I began to turn over the pages of this little book languidly—for I had seen so much rubbish about Paine! But I soon saw that it had great merits. It is the best biography of Paine, in a brief compass, that I have ever seen. The spirit in which it is written is shown in the following extract from the author's Preface:—

"The purpose of this small volume is to tell the story of Thomas Paine without bias and without argument. It is difficult, indeed, to write of Paine without enthusiasm for his genius and a lively recognition of his great services to liberty. But his faults are set down frankly. The reader shall be judge and jury."

Let me add that this purpose is admirably carried out from the first page to the last. I do not always agree with Mr. Sedgwick, but I am sure he always tries to be judicial.

Well now, in the Preface of this valuable little book, the author plainly puts his readers on their guard. This is what he says:—

"Politics and religion have bred the best haters among men. Thomas Paine has been abhorred as a revolutionist and execrated as a heretic. He lived during the mightiest events of modern history, at a time when no

public man was safe from the bitterest assaults of rancor and of malice; but not one of his contemporaries has been slandered more relentlessly than he. He attacked all who differed from him in the two most sensitive spots in human nature, and richly has he paid the penalty..... Paine's earliest biographers, George Chalmers and James Cheetham, paused at no lies which could dirty their victim's reputation. Their volumes became the basis of a mythology which cannot bear casual investigation."

Who were those two libellous scoundrels on whom all the subsequent slanderers of Paine have depended?

The first was Francis Oldys, M.A., of the University of Pennsylvania. That is what appeared on his title-page. But the "Francis Oldys" was a lie, the "M.A." was a lie, and "the University of Pennsylvania" was a lie. The blackguard was not an American at all; he was an Englishman. His real name was George Chalmers. He was a clerk in the British Foreign Office, and he was paid by the government to defame the author of the *Rights of Man*. The sum he received, according to Sherwin, was £500. This was never denied, but it cannot be verified, for publicity is not given to Secret Service expenditure. What is certain is that he was well paid for his dirty work. Such fellows do not write for nothing, or anything like it. And when we consider this fact, together with the three lies on his title-page, we know how far honest and intelligent people ought to believe him. Chalmers-Oldys, indeed, performed trick on trick. His first edition pretended to be a "Defence" of Paine's writings, so that the malignant things said about him might be supposed to be the reluctant testimony of a friend. But gradually the cat was let out of the bag, and in the last edition Paine's portrait was surrounded by apes!

The second libeller was James Cheetham. Dr. Conway says of this man's "Life" of Paine that "it is one of the most malicious ever written, and nothing in it can be trusted." Cheetham was not only a blackguard, but a pompous blackguard; that is to say, a dull blackguard, for all pompous people are dull. He actually had the ridiculous impudence to say that Paine's *Common Sense* is "wretched in point of literary merit," and that the *Rights of Man* is "still its inferior." Moreover this pious biographer of Paine was actually a convicted libeller. Paine started an action against him, but it was not tried in consequence of Paine's death before it could come on for hearing. Madame Bonneville, however, lived to take her share of the libel before an American jury, and the jury found Cheetham guilty. The details of this case will be given under its proper number in my reply to Dr. Torrey's "seven charges." It is the fact that Cheetham was a convicted libeller that I wish to impress upon my readers at this point.

Here then we have two "Lives" of Paine written by a hired defamer and a convicted libeller; and these two precious "Lives" are the main sources of all the calumnies that have been cast at Paine for a hundred years. Could anything be more monstrous?

One would think, at any rate, that no one would have the audacity to rely upon a biography of Paine written by a man who was convicted of slandering him in connection with a lady whose reputation was vindicated in an open court of justice.

### The "Seven Charges" Against Paine.

#### CHARGES I. AND II.

The first two charges hang together. Here they are in Dr. Torrey's own words:—

"(1) That Thomas Paine on two occasions was dishonorably discharged from his office in the Excise."

"(2) That the cause of his discharge was, that while he himself was an Excise officer, that he himself dealt in the smuggled tobacco, and secreted thirty pounds entrusted to him by the Excise men."

Dr. Torrey says that the first charge is "Proven and undenied, a matter of record." Of the second charge he says: "I do not think that this is proven." And he adds that: "The charge is made by Oldys, one of the commissioners, but it does not appear in the official document."

Oldys one of the commissioners! This is a new avatar of George Chalmers. One wonders whether Dr. Torrey has looked the subject up in a hurry, and got all the details muddled; or whether he has not even taken the trouble to make himself acquainted with the elementary facts of the case.

Charge One is true or false according to the meaning attached to the word "dishonorably"—which, by the way, Dr. Torrey uses ungrammatically, for the *dishonor* does not apply to the persons discharging but to the person discharged.

What are the facts? That is always the important point in these cases.

Paine, as an Exciseman, had to watch smugglers. His salary was very small, his expenses were very heavy, and his risks were very great. What happened in consequence may be told in Mr. Sedgwick's words:—

"During the last century the average Englishman looked upon the excise as tyranny, and upon excisemen as publicans. The round of Paine's duties was thus extremely disagreeable; and, like others before him, he entered in his reports minutes of surveys which he had never made. The imposition was detected; and, upon his own confession, Paine was discharged from office."

Oldys (that is, George Chalmers) represented Paine as having been dismissed for scandalous misconduct. But this was too much even for Cheetham, who pointed out that Paine was reinstated the following year, and argued that his offence could not have been gross, and "was no doubt a venial one." Paine himself, in his petition to the Board of Excise for reinstatement, says: "No complaint of the least dishonesty or intemperance ever appeared against me." The Board read his letter, and at the same sitting (July 4, 1766) passed the following minute: "Ordered that he be restored on a proper vacancy."

It is evident, therefore, that his offence had been formal and not scandalous. Certainly it involved nothing that could be considered criminal, or even immoral, in any severe sense of the word. And to rake this paltry incident up against the author of the *Crisis*, the *Rights of Man*, and the *Age of Reason*, is perhaps an exercise in Christian charity, although every other form of charity would treat it with disdain.

Paine was discharged a second time. The real reason was his taking up the case of the Excise men, writing a brilliant pamphlet on their behalf (his first effort in authorship), and going up to London to promote their interests. He was a Labor leader before the era of Trade Unions, and he paid the penalty of being in this, as in so many other matters, a hundred years before his time. Here is the full minute of his discharge from Lewes:—

"Friday 8th April 1774. Thomas Pain, Officer of Lewes 4th O. Ride Sussex Collection having quitted his Business, without obtaining the Board's Leave for so doing, and being gone off on Account of the Debts which he hath contracted, as by Letter of the 6th instant from Edward Clifford, Supervisor, and the said Pain having been once before discharged, Ordered that he be again discharged."

Paine's absence in London, pleading the cause of his underpaid brethren in the Excise, was used as the pretext for his discharge. The "debts" referred to were business debts connected with his shop at Lewes, and for which, under the law then existing, he was liable to arrest at any minute. He kept away until his effects could be sold. They were sold by auction within a week, and his creditors were paid. The proof of this is that he returned to Lewes without difficulty.

There is nothing in the official record, and there was nothing said at the time, about Paine's having "smuggled tobacco" and "secreted thirty pounds entrusted to him by the Excise men." That charge was invented by "Oldys." It was not even endorsed by the wretched Cheetham. But it appears to be cherished by Dr. Torrey. He does not "think that this is proven," but he cites it with manifest pleasure. No doubt he understands the maxim that if you throw mud enough some of it will stick.

(To be continued.) G. W. FOOTE.

### Phantom Freethinkers.

AN article in the current issue of the *Hibbert Journal* has for a title the question, "Should Agnostics be Miserable?" The writer is not to be blamed for asking the question; on the contrary, his treatment of the question is worthy of all praise. The affirmation implied by the question is made by religious believers, and its existence serves as a queer commentary upon our boasted progress and culture. That there is room for a difference of opinion on the questions at issue between Freethinkers and others is admitted; but no one, except religionists, can find any valid grounds for believing or asserting—the two things are not always synonymous—that therefore the unbeliever is a poor, jaundiced, miserable creature, with whom laughter is only a mask for sadness, and inability to believe the cover for an uneasy conscience.

One would appreciate this position if there were even a modicum of fact to support it. But there is none whatever. The unbeliever does not show any blindness to the beauty or joyousness of nature, nor to the potentialities for happiness or goodness in human nature. Family and social life appeals to the Freethinker at least as strongly as to the Christian. The literature of Christianity is filled with sadness, with laments concerning the nothingness of this world, the worthlessness and evanescent character of human happiness, and the weakness and degradation of human nature. The literature of Freethought, whatever be its shortcomings in other directions, does strike, on the whole, a more hopeful note. Rightly or wrongly, it teaches the power of human reason and effort to overcome anti-human forces and conditions. It teaches that this life, whether it leads to another or not, is good as it is, and may be made much better. It leaves all truth, all beauty, and all goodness absolutely unassailed and untouched. The Freethought position *may* be a wrong one, but it is sheer midsummer madness to speak of it as an essentially hopeless or comfortless one.

The truth is that this trick of depicting the Freethinker as a hopeless, enervated, and despairing creature is part of the religious method of saddling its opponents with its own difficulties. In morals it creates a "problem of evil"—one that has simply no existence apart from Theism—and then tells the non-Theist that he has no solution for it. And in the present instance the religionist champions a theory of an intensely depressing and pessimistic character, and then asserts that those who will not accept his beliefs must be without comfort and without hope. But the "comfort" is only necessary for those who accept the theory. The antidote is only of use to such as have swallowed the poison. Those who accept the belief in an all-powerful and all-wise Deity, and in an after-life where men are either damned or saved in accordance with their belief here, must, when they come to face facts, fall back upon blind faith as the only way out of these self-created difficulties. But those who have not these beliefs do not, and cannot, feel any such necessity, nor are they conscious of any undue depression in facing the facts of life. They have no theory with which to square the facts, because their theory follows the facts, and is only of value so far as it correctly interprets them. If the Christian would only realise that the Freethinker has no need and no use for Christian "comforts" for the simple reason that the necessity is created *by* the beliefs, a great deal of useless writing and speaking would be avoided.

But this is what the religious person seldom or never does. Such a writer as the late Professor Seeley, in the act of correcting the word "Atheism," writes of Atheism as being in essence "a disbelief in any regularity in the universe to which a man must conform under penalties," and as "that demoralising palsy of human nature, which consists in the inability to discern in the universe any law by which human life may be guided." And so the Atheist is depicted as a helpless being, floundering

about without any clue as to the mutual relationship of himself and the general course of natural phenomena. Nothing could be wider of the truth. Modern Atheism not only believes in regularity in the universe; it asserts that regularity follows as a mathematical necessity, *once the idea of God is eliminated*. Determinism is as much of the essence of Atheism as indeterminism is of the essence of Theism. And, ethically, Atheism has always protested against the very view that Professor Seeley ascribes to it—that is, that the universe does not give man any desirable law by which human life may be guided. This, in fact, is precisely what Theism in general, and Christian Theism in particular, has always asserted. And it cannot be too often pointed out that need for the purely Christian moral sanctions only arises when the natural ones have been ruled out as illegitimate.

Where writers of the rank of Professor Seeley go astray, preachers of the type of the Rev. Silvester Horne may be dealt with leniently; although there is really no justification for the lapses of either class. The literature of Freethought is now extensive enough and accessible enough for anyone to become acquainted with the Atheistic position, if only religious writers could develop a sense of honesty sufficiently strong to induce them to understand an opponent's case before attempting a refutation. But this never occurs in the pulpit, and very seldom outside. Mr. Horne, for instance, deals with an agnosticism that may be found *inside* Whitefield's Tabernacle, but which cannot, I fancy, be found outside. There are, he says, two forms of Agnosticism. One says nothing is known (of God) because nothing can be known. And the man who says this is "unscientific," "he arrests progress," and "utters the counsel of despair." And Mr. Horne is "not going even to argue with a man like that." Which shows that Mr. Horne is possessed of some gleams of common sense. I do not agree that the man who says nothing can be known about God either arrests progress or utters a counsel of despair, because one may make that statement on precisely the same grounds that one may affirm that nothing can be known about three cornered circles, or circular triangles. But I do agree that a preacher is wise who will not argue with such a person. For he would be dealing with one who understood the nature of the question under discussion, one who understood the essential conditions of human thinking, and who could, therefore, dispose of a crowd of Silvester Horne's without feeling a penny the worse for the encounter—unless he experienced a feeling of sadness at the slow growth of human intelligence.

Mr. Horne prefers to argue with another sort of unbeliever, one who says, "You may be quite right, sir. All the religious people who have spoken in all the centuries must have had something to say for themselves, they can't all have been mistaken. Only I don't know. I wish I did." That is, Mr. Horne prefers to argue with an unbeliever who *already believes*, but would like a little more evidence. I have never met this kind of unbeliever, who says "with profound sorrow on his face" I don't know, but wish I did, and if Mr. Horne can meet this type, he may take it that it will be much easier fighting him than tackling an unbeliever who really knows what he is talking about. One begins to appreciate the conversions one reads about when the calibre of the convert is so ingeniously disclosed.

Mr. Horne assures us that his eagerness to destroy unbelief is not at all due to any professional feeling, not that it is because unbelief threatens religion. Quite so. Does not every quack in the market-place assure his audience that his desire to sell his pills is quite apart from any profit on the transaction, but due solely to philanthropic motives. And shall we not give the same credit to the one preacher as is given to the other? May not the motives that animate the parson in the pulpit be as lofty as those which animate the quack in the market-place? It would be downright bigotry to

deny their identity. Mr. Horne attacks unbelief because it is an attitude of mind that affects life. We cannot, he says, build life on an "if," or a "maybe," or a "perhaps"; the only men who have ever done anything in the world worth doing "are men who have acted from deep and profound conviction."

Well, any Atheist can agree with this. No Atheist pretends that you can build life on an "if" or a "maybe," and no Atheist denies the power and value of profound conviction. And a little less parsonic impertinence and Christian egotism might lead Mr. Horne to recognise that all the profound conviction is not on the side of Christianity, nor is the Freethinker in doubt about anything of real and certain value. The convictions of Atheists like Garibaldi or Bradlaugh, or Freethinkers like Darwin and Spencer and Haeckel, are quite as "deep" and as "profound" as are the beliefs of any Christian. Mr. Horne does not fail, because he never even attempts to recognise that the Atheist opposes conviction to conviction, and the fact that the expression of *his* conviction often invokes social ostracism and financial loss gives a guarantee of sincerity that can never be given by a profession of Christianity.

Mr. Horne's notion, too, that the unbeliever wishes to build life on an "if," is quite grotesque. When the Freethinker puts the notion of God on one side, he does so as a belief that is quite without value. He then proceeds to build life, not upon mere speculation, but upon an actual knowledge of natural forces and processes. And he finds that, having eliminated God, all that is worth having is still left. Nature is still here with its wealth of beauty and poetry. Human nature is here with its capacity for happiness, for co-operation, and for development. The preacher may travel from Dan to Beersheba with the pessimistic cry of "All is barren." The Atheist discovers many flowers by the way; and even where the plants are absent, perceives that the soil is fruitful enough to yield a goodly harvest in return for human labor intelligently applied.

C. COHEN.

### When Did the Gospel Win Europe?

I SINCERELY thank Professor Bartlet for his fine letter in the *Freethinker* for July 9, 1905. It is courteous in tone, temperate in statement, and manly in attitude. If I criticise parts of it unfavorably, it will not be for lack of genuine respect for the writer, who in this discussion has proved himself to be a perfect gentleman. It will be a happy day when we shall all be able to differ in our views, even on religion, without losing our tempers.

On matters of fact the Professor and I are now practically agreed. It is only in regard to the interpretation to be put upon, or the inference to be drawn from, the facts that we are at variance. In other words, it is our points of view merely that are antagonistic. He believes Christianity to be a supernatural religion, while I regard it as a purely human or natural product. Looking at it from his standpoint, I failed to perceive any just ground for the assertion that it ever won Europe. If the Gospel is a message to mankind from a personal God, who is infinite in all his attributes, if it provides an infallible remedy for the world's maladies, and if the physician who prescribes it as a cure was and is a Divine Being, I cannot, for the life of me, understand why there are still people who have not heard the good news, or why there is any moral and spiritual sickness still left in the world. Professor Bartlet has no faith in coercive measures; nor have I, in the ordinary sense. But is it not a fact that, in a higher sense, coercion is universal? Is there anything more certain than that the strong always coerce the weak? Is not law essentially coercive? Is not love the most coercive force in the world? Is not moral suasion itself a species of coercion? Indeed, mental

coercion is the commonest thing in life. And yet, according to Professor Bartlet, God must not coerce sick humanity into health, must not compel it, even by the holy compulsion of boundless love, to obey the true laws of life. Jesus is reported to have said that when He was crucified He would draw all men unto himself; but is not drawing or winning spiritual coercion? Why has that promise not been fulfilled? Another text tells us that no one can come to Christ unless God draws him. Has God neglected to draw, or has his drawing-power been unequal to the task, or why is it that the Gospel has not been the power of God unto the salvation of all men? Professor Bartlet may say that salvation is conditioned upon faith; but, then, the Bible assures us that faith is the gift of God. My point is that if men are the offspring of an infinite Being, who is love, it is utterly inconceivable that any of them should be able to resist, even for a moment, the omnipotent magnetism of their Father's affection.

That is the point of view from which I argued. It is not mine; but I argued from it because it is Dr. Bartlet's. To him, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation; and I assert that, if it be that, it never won Europe, but has proved a miserable failure down to the present time. Its one object is to save the world from sin and sorrow; but it has signally failed to do so. Relative success is not sufficient when we are dealing with a supernatural and absolutely perfect religion, because if such a religion fails on however small a scale, it cannot be perfect; and if it is not perfect, what proof have we that there is anything supernatural attaching to it?

Had I been arguing from my own naturalistic point of view, I would have admitted that the Christian Gospel achieved a marvellous success during the first three centuries, especially during the latter part of the third. The Christian Religion *did* become the most powerful religion in the Roman Empire. This is a fact which no student of history can deny. But to claim that Christianity *won* the Empire is to go beyond the facts altogether. Professor Bartlet knows well how hot was the fight against Paganism for many centuries after Constantine's day. It was the bloodiest fight in history. But if the Gospel had already won Europe, why was it necessary for the Church to draw the sword, and slay such countless myriads of persistent Pagans? Why had the Cross now to march through rivers of blood to its relatively triumphant position?

In the third paragraph of his letter Professor Bartlet seems to ignore his supernatural standpoint. Here Christianity is only "an ideal" to which men do homage in the depths of conscience. But, unfortunately, Christianity is *not* an ideal of human life, but a supernatural offer of an instantaneous deliverance to perishing souls. I am of opinion that the Professor makes a wrong use of St. Paul. Many eminent commentators regard the seventh of Romans as descriptive of the apostle's condition *prior* to his conversion to Christianity. Even then the great man's ideal was true and noble. "For we know," he says, "that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." Then follow the words quoted by Dr. Bartlet. Before he met Christ, Paul was a miserable slave. There were two laws within him, the law of God and the law of sin and death, and he was in captivity to the latter. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members." Dr. Bartlet does not give us the Apostle's complete statement. Paul's argument is that until he found Christ he was unable to obey the law of God in his mind, because he was in bondage to the law of sin and death in his members or flesh. But in the eighth chapter the music is all in the major key, and he soars aloft buoyant and triumphant. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death." To him, consequently, the Gospel was not "an ideal," but the

"power of God unto salvation." Its supreme gift was release, deliverance, redemption, new life. Does the Professor agree with the Apostle on this point? If so, then to him too the Gospel is something more than "an ideal system": in which case, this third paragraph cannot be accepted as a satisfactory reply to my observation that "if the Gospel had won Europe, Europe would have shaped its life into harmony with Gospel teaching."

Dr. Bartlet omits to inform us what he means by the "Christian ideal." If he means by it the ideal of individual and social conduct in this world, I must remind him that ethically Christianity does not differ materially from any of the other great religions, and, also, that ethically Christians are not superior, speaking generally, to non-Christians. And if this be the signification to be attached to the phrase, where does the supernatural come in? In a purely moral system theology has no place. Dr. Bartlet says that "moral success and failure are terms that have only a relative sense as applied to history, where human freedom has to be allowed for, in order to make morality a reality at all, and where many other factors, physical and intellectual, condition the effectiveness of a moral idea for a given time." I am partly in agreement with that sentence; but, pray, what connection has its sentiment with the supernatural elements in Christianity? Morality concerns itself with man's social relations. It begins and ends, so far as we know, upon this earth—why associate it with, or make it in any way dependent on an unseen world of which we know absolutely nothing, not even that it exists?

This is a most important point. Professor Bartlet says: "The supernatural origin of the Gospel, in this connection, to me does not mean that it dispenses with ordinary or 'natural' methods of persuading free human beings of its inherent truth; but that it convinces men in such a way that they become conscious in the process that they are being lifted above what they or their fellows could have reached, even in idea, by their own native resources." "Our own native resources" are capable of development, and are what they are, at any given time, as the outcome of the process of evolution. There is nothing to show that Christians transcend, either in knowledge or in practice, their own resources. Taking them on the average they are not better than other people. I believe that even during the first three centuries the average Pagan compared not unfavorably with the average Christian. But, surely, Dr. Bartlet cannot but be aware that the Gospel, if of supernatural origin, does employ other than 'natural' methods of persuading men of its own inherent truth. Who is it that persuades "free human beings" of the inherent truth of the Gospel? The Holy Ghost, a quite extraordinary Being, and certainly an extraordinary Being cannot persuade or influence ordinary beings by ordinary methods. According to theology, we who are finite have yet an infinite Father, who, of necessity, as our Father, is in personal relations with us. Can an immaterial and invisible but infinite and personal Father influence his finite children by ordinary human methods? An eminent preacher said the other day, that Christianity is the only religion which represents God as longing for and seeking men. "God has need of you," he passionately exclaimed, "God has need of you, and He cannot live without you." But if God, the infinitely powerful and loving Father, longs for and seeks the love and confidence and society of men, his finite children, why is it that He has not long ago found every one of them, or how is it that He ever lost them? If He wraps them round with his all-healing love, how is it that they are able to resist him?

The appeal to man's free-will is utterly irrelevant, because Christians pretend that they have surrendered their wills to God in Christ. God has drawn them, and in response they have yielded themselves up to him. If God be a magnet that draws some to himself, why is it that the magnetic

power is not successful with all alike, and at once? To us this alone is a sufficient proof that the Gospel is not a convincing witness to the objective reality of the supernatural. It is extremely curious that God is vocal, and active, and influential only to those who believe in him, and even to them only proportionately to the strength of their belief. Why does He not speak, and act, and influence in such a way as to enable all to hear, and feel, and respond? "Of all the superstitions into which" Christians "have fallen, the most patent, in the light of human history, is the idea" that our Father in heaven can and does, consistently with their freedom, win and completely subjugate the wills, and so save the persons, of some people, while to explain the non-salvation of the rest it is declared that He cannot resort to coercive measures.

On the assumption that God is, and that He is love, we maintain that the methods adopted by the Church are radically blasphemous. They are a distinct slight upon the Divine Name. Preaching is an insult to the Holy Ghost. Revivalism must be an insufferable stench in Heaven's nostrils. What do the Lord's official representatives say? This: "It is the Holy Spirit who does the saving work, but He graciously does it through us. Because of our feebleness and imperfection as instruments progress is small and slow. He could have fulfilled his mission without us; but in his good pleasure He has seen fit to take us into partnership, so to speak, with himself." To us such talk is the quintessence of folly. If there were a God of love, He would do his work direct, without the instrumentality of self-important agents, many of whom speak and act as if they knew "all mysteries and all knowledge."

But on the assumption that the God of love is a human creation, the whole machinery of the Church becomes perfectly intelligible. The ministry of the Gospel is a magnificent conception, and the methods by which it is sought to render it effectual commend themselves to our judgment. On this assumption two things are perfectly clear to us, namely, the first, why Christianity has survived so long and prospered so well, and the second, the supreme importance attached to faith. As the poet says:—

We have but faith: we cannot know;  
For knowledge is of things we see.

As Harnack observes, the causes that contributed to the spread of Christianity were numerous and various, but chief amongst them, I think, has been mankind's readiness to bow to external authority, to believe blindly whatever is dogmatically asserted by high-placed teachers and governors, and to cling tenaciously to whatever has come forth from the realm of wonder and mystery.

This concludes the present discussion of the subject in dispute between Professor Bartlet and me; and I hope it has been neither fruitless nor yet uninteresting.

J. T. LLOYD.

Men of the world hold that it is impossible to do a disinterested action, except from an interested motive,—for the sake of admiration, if for no grosser, more tangible gain. Doubtless they are also convinced, that when the sun is showering light from the sky, he is only standing there to be stared at.—*Hare*.

And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter? Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing.—*Milton*.

The earth-good Freedom, the lonely  
Face lightening, the footprint unshod,  
Not as one man crucified only  
Nor scourged with but one life's rod;  
The soul that is substance of nations,  
Reincarnate with fresh generations,  
The great god Man, which is God.

—*Swinburne*.

## Acid Drops.

Councillor George Wise, who has a tremendous name, and doubtless does his best to live up to it, is reported in the *Liverpool Evening Express* to have delivered a street-corner lecture entitled "An Exposure of Atheism." In the course of his remarks, which may have interested the illiterate audience he is accustomed to addressing, but were certainly of no importance to anyone else, he read out some musty old utterance of Mr. Foote's; and then, in his characteristic way, declared that he would give £5 to any Liverpool charity if it could be proved that Mr. Foote did not write those words. Of course it is gratifying to learn that Mr. Wise is able to flourish five-pound notes, but as he is the judge of whether he wins or loses he is not likely to part with this particular "five." Yet the quotation from Mr. Foote, as printed in the *Express*, cannot possibly be accurate. One expression—a "dead course"—is absolutely unintelligible; and Mr. Foote's worst enemy never accused him of obscurity. We will let that pass, however, and deal with the quotation substantially. Mr. Wise read out to his meeting a passage containing a certain criticism of Bradlaugh, which is not worth repeating. It would have been honorable if Mr. Wise had stated that it was written some thirty years ago, in Mr. Foote's salad days. But it is so like a Christian Evidence lecturer to quote what Mr. Foote said of Bradlaugh then, and to make no reference to the very different things he said when he was older and when he knew Bradlaugh better. One expects these manœuvres of Mr. Wise's profession. For there is really no great change since Herder declared that Christian veracity deserved to rank with Punic faith.

There is another thing to be said. When the passage that Mr. Wise quoted (accurately or inaccurately) was written the greater part of Bradlaugh's public career was yet to come. His grand opportunity came with the parliamentary struggle. That he went through as no other man in England could have done. It was a terrific struggle. It killed him. But he did not die before the hour of victory. And in that great fight he ploughed his name deep into English history.

There is yet another thing to be said. The passage quoted by Mr. Wise referred to Bradlaugh as an inferior organiser to Spurgeon. Mr. Foote wrote that passage when he had all the enthusiasm, and all the inexperience, of youth. He did not see then that Bradlaugh was a born fighter, just like Luther, and other great historical characters; that Freethought just wanted a great fighter; and that it was Bradlaugh's business to go on fighting. Happily he went on. He obeyed the law of his nature. The time for organisation had not arrived. Moreover, it was one thing to organise Christians, and another thing to organise Freethinkers. One good dog will organise a whole flock of sheep. But let him try it on the goats! The organisation of Freethought means long, slow, patient effort, in which many must co-operate. It is a work of time, and it can only advance as Freethinkers become numerous enough to be normal. Avowed and militant Freethinkers are naturally full of individuality. They have the qualities for stirring and perilous times. Tamer natures will be more suitable for the times of peace and prosperity.

Mr. Wise's chairman introduced him as "one of the greatest antagonists atheism or infidelity ever had." Perhaps it is inspiring to have such a devoted if reckless admirer. Anyhow, this estimate of Mr. Wise is not endorsed by the representatives of the other side. Most of them would consider it very extravagant. To the Freethought party in general he is utterly unknown. The Freethinkers of Liverpool might call him "great" but they would not put "genius" after it.

The fraternisation of the French and English fleets at Brest is a fine thing. It may not mean all it is said to mean, but it is at least a step on the road to a good understanding between two great nations that have everything to gain by mutual friendship. One incident, however, is not so pleasant, and we refer to it because it shows who are the real persecutors in France. The Maire of Brest was openly flouted by the naval authorities. He had provided a banquet of 1,500 covers on July 14, but the Catholic officials of the French fleet refused to let the men go on shore, and our own Admiral May was obliged to follow suit. The Town Council of Brest is very "advanced" and the Maire is a Freethinker as well as a Democrat. That is the explanation of the insult.

Henry Rees Hughes, twenty-six, a journeyman joiner, lived at 9 Roberts-street, Holyhead. His present address is unascertainable. His dead body was discovered in the Mersey, and the jury discreetly returned a verdict of "Found drowned." According to his father's evidence at the inquest the young man was sound and sane until Evan Roberts came to Holyhead. He attended the mission meetings and "the preaching seemed to have a great effect upon his mind." This case should be booked to Evan Roberts's credit.

The terrible Welsh colliery disaster shows that the laws of nature pay no respect to revivals. Evan Roberts would have fared like non-inspired mortals if he had been in the thick of the explosion. And here is a fine illustration of the efficacy of prayer. "The body of one man," the newspapers say, "was frozen stiff in the attitude of prayer, his hands clasped and his face turned upwards. He had been kneeling in a crevice down the pit, and the explosion had nailed him there stone dead."

More "Providence." At Fermo, in Italy, on Sunday morning, the floor of a chapel gave way during the mass, and sixteen women were killed and more than thirty injured.

"Providence" did not protect Milan Cathedral during the recent storm. One of the statues was blown down. Lucky it was no worse!

Not even upon distressed Russia does "Providence" cast an eye of pity. Famine is threatened in several provinces in consequence of the drought.

Guanajuato, a mining town in Mexico, has been devastated by a cloud-burst. Bodies floated about the streets in the raging water. Hundreds of families were rendered destitute. The theatre, lately built at a cost of £50,000, was destroyed. But this was not owing to any partiality on the part of "Providence," for a church fared just as badly. Many people gathered in it for shelter, and the flood caught them as they were on their knees praying for protection. This ought to figure in future sermons on the efficacy of prayer.

The President says he is praying for the success of the Harvard crew, while Secretary Taft is praying that Yale may win the coming regatta. As Providence would hardly presume to disregard the prayers of persons occupying the positions of Messrs. Roosevelt and Taft, there appears to be no way out of it except making the race a draw or drowning both crews. It seems to us that if we were in the habit of making appeals to Infinite Power we should not venture to bother it about college boat races, which generally go to the institution that can offer good oarsmen the largest bonus to attend, nor would we speak of praying in the same off-hand manner that one talks of betting a quarter.—*Truth-seeker* (New York).

Italian Catholics are more certain than ever that there is a hell. They had a foretaste of it during the great heat-wave. The temperature ran up to 109 degrees in the shade. Hundreds of persons died of sunstroke; but in Hades, of course, they have to learn to stand the climate.

Mr. Justice Barnes, following the verdict of a jury, has pronounced against a codicil to a will made in favor of Father Thomas Allan, a Roman Catholic priest of St. Mary's Church, Ulverston. The jury found that the codicil was duly executed, but that the testatrix was not of sound mind, and did not know and approve of the contents. The man of God drew up the codicil himself "in a hurry." Miss Sarah Eleanor Thompson was in a dying condition. The reverend gentleman confessed her, administered the communion, and had that nice codicil drawn up within five minutes of his entering the house. It provided that a very large sum of money should accrue to himself, for the benefit of his church. Of course it was a pretty way of going to work, but priests have often done that kind of thing before. In the case of Father Allan it was somewhat complicated. We take the following from the *Daily Chronicle* report:

"Sir Gorell Barnes, in summing up, said with regard to the evidence of Father Allan, it was remarkable that a person of his profession and culture should have shuffled and prevaricated as he had done. In the box he was apparently afraid to give a straightforward and direct answer to almost any question. That was a sight not pleasant to contemplate in a man in his position."

We are afraid that the worthy judge does not understand Father Allan's "profession."

General Booth has long wanted a State subvention. Rev. W. Carlile, of the Church Army, is going one better. It appears that he is looking forward to State aid in a "compulsory colony." This is one of the symptoms of the spirit of religious aggression which is a grave danger at the present day. We hope the Labor leaders will open their eyes to this social peril. Some of the Rationalists who think, or affect to think, that the battle between Faith and Reason is over, are perhaps too far gone to heed a warning.

The farewell performance of the Torrey-Alexander troupe in London, which took place at the Royal Albert Hall, attracted ten thousand people. All the "old favorites" were on the stage, including Dr. Torrey, Mr. Alexander, Lord Kinnaid, and secretary Putterill. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, they all claimed that the London mission had been successful—and they rolled over figures like Chicago pork-merchants. "There seems," however, "to have prevailed outside a feeling that the five months' evangelistic work of the American missionaries had not been a success." We have the satisfaction of knowing that our pamphlets contributed to the failure.

Mr. Keir Hardie has been criticised in the *Freethinker* for his ill-advised chatter about "Christ." We are glad, therefore, to be able to give him a word of praise. Turning to some "class" members of the House of Commons who were rejoicing over the fate of the Unemployed Bill, he called them "well-fed beasts." They deserved it. No doubt they all go to church.

During the progress of the World Baptist Congress at Exeter Hall the venerable Dr. Maclaren got those present to stand up and recite the Apostles' Creed. What was his idea? Did he fancy that reciting the Creed proved its truth? Or did he want to commit his brethren to an orthodox confession? If the latter was his object he only achieved a partial success, for the *Daily News* says: "It was whispered that some did not recite the Creed—whether from inability to follow the English, or from disinclination to repeat the words, cannot be told."

The Apostles' Creed is a big joke. In the first place, the Apostles never saw it, never heard of it, and would be astonished to read it. The tradition that they made it up together, each of the dozen uttering a clause, until the last said "Amen," is no longer defended by a single scholar; and it is nonsensical on the face of it. In the second place, the Creed does not contain a single sentence, or a single clause, that is of the slightest value to any man, woman, or child on this planet. Every word of it relates to Supernaturalism and Kingdom-Come. All the superstitious and metaphysical chaff of the New Testament is gathered together, and every grain of ethics and poetry is carefully excluded.

The Apostles' Creed, in fact, was entirely unknown during the first and second centuries. It dates from Rome about A.D. 340. Even then it did not contain the clause "he descended into hell," which was added after the fifth century. So much for the authenticity of this wonderful document. It is simply one of the innumerable frauds which the Christian Church (and in this respect all denominations are alike) have palmed off upon an ignorant and credulous world.

Of what use is it to the world, at this time of day, with the most terrible earthly problems staring it in the face, to be able to reel off the rigmarole of this so-called Apostles' Creed? Little children are taught to say "I believe in God the Father Almighty," when some of them don't know who are their own fathers, besides being perfectly incapable of understanding the metaphysics of this declaration. "And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord" is another piece of unintelligibility. And when it comes to "conceived of the Holy Ghost" and "born of the Virgin Mary," it is high time to call for moral disinfectants. The rest of the Creed is not valuable enough to save it from the fire or the top shelf in the antiquaries' library.

After the Baptists had gone through the Apostles' Creed performance Mr. Lloyd-George, M.P., talked the customary Nonconformist nonsense about religious liberty and the Education Act. His speech was "punctuated with cheers and laughter"—Nonconformist cheers and laughter. Other sections of the community would not have seen the jokes. Mr. Lloyd-George was soon on the track of the "priests." He denounced them as the enemies of mankind. But he forgot that there are Baptist priests as well as Catholic and Anglican priests. The Men of God of all denominations are really

in the same line of business. And with regard to Education, we beg to repeat what we have several times said before, that Dr. Clifford flourishing his Bible in the national schoolroom is as sinister and odious a figure as the Bishop of London flourishing his Church Catechism.

Mr. Lloyd-George declared that the Anglicans were not straightforward. Well, it would be impossible to be less straightforward than the Nonconformists. There is not an atom of principle in the whole of their policy. What they are fighting for is the control of religious education in all the state schools of England and Wales. When they have achieved that object this country will be free; until they do so it groans under the worst of tyrannies. Such is the rhodomontade in which they indulge! Mr. Lloyd-George went to the foolish length of saying that "It was a group of despised Dissenters that prevented the country from being governed like Russia." Just fancy now! Mr. Lloyd-George himself was once in danger at Birmingham, but he was in danger from the mob, and the police protected him at the risk of their own lives. So much for our being governed like Russia—except so far as the group of Dissenters save us from that terrible fate!

All the hackneyed platitudes of the Passive Resistance movement were trotted out by Mr. Lloyd-George—including the one about Nonconformists being excluded from teacherships in 14,000 schools. But what about the 30,000 schools from which Freethought teachers are excluded? On that point Mr. Lloyd-George, like the rest of his Free Church colleagues, maintains a hypocritical silence.

Dr. Clifford followed Mr. Lloyd-George and declared that what the Nonconformists wanted was "the establishment of State schools all over the land, with local option as to the use of the Bible with other ethical teaching." Now this is not what the Nonconformists have called for at their annual conferences. Their official demand is for Bible teaching of a religious character. "Local option" exists already. It has existed ever since the first Education Act. School Boards were never compelled to provide religious education for the children. They could omit it if they pleased; and, as a matter of fact, there were a few who did please. And the "local option" which belonged to School Boards now belongs to Town and County Councils. Evidently, therefore, Dr. Clifford must be playing an ulterior game. And we think we know what it is. He wants to avoid a national settlement of the religious education question; he wants to keep it in the control of local authorities; for he believes that the popular vote in the great industrial centres will decide in favor of the Nonconformist policy; and thus, under the pretence of democracy, he and his friends will secure a vastly important religious privilege for the so-called Free Churches.

Under the heading of "Religion and Morality" the *Primitive Methodist Leader*, prints the following:

"There is a story told of Sam Jones, the American revivalist, which will perhaps serve to introduce the subject. He was preaching to a camp-meeting of colored people and they were having an ecstatic time. Every face was bathed in rapture, every sentence was punctuated with hallelujahs. The preacher, however, who believed in a walk and conduct in harmony with the Gospel, became more and more practical in the treatment of his theme. And as he went on to speak with great point and plainness of such definite matters as chicken-stealing a change came over the assembly. Heads began to droop, the hallelujahs died down and the preacher continued his discourse in a frigid silence. At last a grey-headed old negro could bear it no longer, this was not what they had come for, so he stepped up behind the revivalist and said to him, 'Brudder Jones, don't you think you're kinder putting a damper on the meeting?'"

This story was printed long ago in the *Freethinker*. We are glad to see it brightening the pages of a Methodist paper now. They want brightening.

In a recent assault case it was given in evidence that the man of God, who was amusing himself in a chapel with some very young girls, heard footsteps coming and said, "you must all sit down. Let us have a text"; and he then gave out the following: "All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Evidently the "him" has a tremendous lot to carry.

The immense power of "the old religion" is seen in Poland, where the population, driven by force from the Catholic to the Orthodox Church thirty years ago, are taking advantage of the present troubles to go back to the old faith

in shoals. Whole villages in the province of Minsk have returned with absolute unanimity, leaving the Orthodox churches empty and the Orthodox priests without parishioners.

It was stated at the World's Baptist Congress that there were 3,220,913 native Christians in India. What ought to be added to these figures is the amount of money that has been spent in manufacturing these native Christians. It must be a very large sum. Perhaps, if it had been wisely expended at home, we should not have a million paupers, a vast army of unemployed, and men, women, and children living in city slums, not only without the comforts, but also without the decencies, of civilised existence.

People who know India, and are *not* missionaries, say that the native Christians are nearly all low-caste people who are practically kept by the missionary societies. The common name for them is "rice Christians." They are called so because they get free rice. And you can almost live on rice in such a climate. So that the "rice Christian" has very little to do in this world but sing "I love my Jesus." This is his return for "free maintenance."

We are glad that the *Times* printed that translation of a deeply interesting letter sent by a Japanese lieutenant to his brother in England. After describing the battle of Mukden as "a gigantic street brawl" of the bloodiest and most brutal character, he relates the following pathetic incident:

"What an ugly goddess is the goddess of war! Among the wounded Russians upon the field was a boy of barely sixteen or seventeen, a drummer boy, shot through both legs. He held a rosary in his hand, praying.....Covering him up with blankets and coats taken from the Russian dead, I was just walking away when he cried out after me. 'A moment officer, a moment. Kind officer, I have something to give you—this book. It was given to me by my father when I was leaving home for the front. I have nothing more valuable to offer you, Sir. It is the most precious thing I possess.' And he kissed my hand repeatedly, crying bitterly. I accepted the book, and without a word turned away to find another sufferer. I would not have broken down for a colonelcy before those bearers and my own men."

This is the romance of war! The only thing that relieves it is the humanity of that Japanese officer and his like. It does one good to think of that brave man striving to hold back his own tears over a wounded enemy. And it is to such feelings that we must look for the abolition of war.

The Christians keep at their old game of nobbling every movement when it pays. The recent annual meeting of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection swarmed with men of God, and those of them who mounted the platform talked in the regular professional style. The Rev. F. B. Meyer, for instance, said that: "Looking at the matter from the standpoint of religion, this movement was essentially a Christian one." That is how these men of God spoil every movement they patronise. They will talk "shop," and their unctuous insolence is insufferable. How this Mr. Meyer would protest if an "infidel" got up at an Anti-Vivisection meeting and said: "Looking at the matter from the standpoint of Freethought, this movement is essentially an Atheistic one"! Yet there is at least as much to be said for this view of the matter as for the one Mr. Meyer presents. To put the case in a nutshell, your ordinary man of God is a person of a distinctly anti-social type. He is incapable of associating with his fellow-men on the common ground of citizenship. He must bring in his paltry sectarianism. In short, he is a tradesman who is always looking out for business.

If a shop-keeper went to a public meeting, made a speech from the platform, and worked in a strong recommendation of his own goods—say boots, or furniture, or groceries—people would call it caddish. If a man of God goes to a public meeting, makes a speech from the platform, and works in a strong recommendation of the faith dispensed at his own gospel-shop, it is considered good form. *He* considers it so, anyway.

Here is more of the same sort of thing. Reginald W. Martindale sends us a circular from Clifton, pointing out that "the fourth Sunday after Trinity" is now known as "Annual Sunday," and observing that "doubtless the Church will generally recognise her Christian duty of preaching mercy and justice" to animals. The circular winds up with hopes for a "more Christianised civilisation." We should prefer a more humane civilisation.

After all the windy talk about "Christianity and civilisation," and the incalculable benefits the former has conferred

upon the latter, it is refreshing to come upon a confession like that made to a *Daily News* interviewer by Sir W. Willcocks, who has a project for reclaiming the desert of Mesopotamia, which was once a cultivated and fruitful Paradise. Long ago it teemed with a mighty population, and "on it there stood, Queen among many noble cities near her, what was then the capital of the world, the finest city men had ever built." Its name was Babylon.

Sir W. Willcocks explains the secret of the former fertility of Mesopotamia. It was primarily a matter of irrigation. The blessed water was carried everywhere:—

"We know from the ancient authors, Herodotus, Vliny, Berosus, and Ammianus Marcellinus, how wonderfully fertile this great stretch of country was in olden times. The problem of perennial irrigation had been entirely solved by the Chaldean sages of old. They were hydraulic engineers of no mean order.

Think of that! Long before Christ! And what has Christianity done with the blessed water? Nothing except introducing it into the heads of its adherents. Faith and filth always went together in the great days of Christianity.

The civic fathers of Douglas, Isle of Man, have decided not to run tramcars on Sundays. But the voting was only twelve to eight, so that Sabbatarianism is in serious danger even amongst the Manxmen.

A little girl, Gladys Vessey, has been turned out of the Bible Class at St. Peter's Vicarage, Derby, because her father is a publican. This is visiting the "sins" of the fathers upon the children with a vengeance. Who shall say after this that Christianity is not a religion of love?

Is the *Daily News* turning its office boys into the review department? Here is the opening sentence of a recent book notice in its columns: "Pascal said two things filled him with awe, the starry heavens and the human conscience." This comes of reading books about authors instead of reading authors themselves. People who never read Pascal and Kant can easily get them mixed up. What was it Pope said?—"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

A Scotch friend draws our attention to a terrible sarcasm in a newspaper report of the funeral of the first batch of victims of the Welsh mine disaster. At Pontygwarth a surpliced choir sang "Lead, kindly light" and "Jesu, lover of my soul." What a kindly light, leading a battered corpse from the coalpit to the grave! And how Jesu must have loved the poor fellows—and especially their wives and families!

There are some excellent articles in the July number of the *Humane Review*—a quarterly magazine carried on, unofficially, by some members of the Humanitarian League. One of the most important, from our point of view, is on "The Church Army and the Reclamation of Criminals," by H. J. B. Montgomery, who seems to know what he is writing about. "I tell Mr. Carlyle frankly," the writer says, "and I tell the public, that the reclamation of the criminal will never be effected by the methods of any of these Prisoners' Aid Societies." We have no doubt that he is right. Captain Arthur St. John sets forth "A Practical Policy" of non-resistance, in which he says some good and suggestive things, although they do not (in our opinion) rest upon a logical basis. E. S. Shuckburgh contributes a beautiful paper "On a Certain Passage in Vergil." G. G. Greenwood opens with a strong article against "The Setting of Steel Traps." We wish this magazine all success. It serves a good cause with courage and wisdom.

Japan gave a French "traitor," convicted of betraying her military secrets, ten years' penal servitude. That was for justice. Then she gave him a full pardon. That was for humanity. Wonderful nation! Even the *Daily News* is obliged to admit that this non-Christian nation, in which the educated classes are mainly Agnostics or Atheists, has the most enlightened prison system in the world, and "a national code of conduct much livelier and more universal than any known in the older States." "It is by this," our contemporary says, "that she lives so marvellously to-day; and it is only by learning that lesson of her that we shall live ourselves."



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

(Suspended during the Summer.)

**To Correspondents.**

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road-Leyton, Essex.—July 23, a. and e., Victoria Park; August 13, m., Camberwell, a., Brockwell Park; 20, Victoria Park; 27, Victoria Park.
- OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£142 7s. 2d. Received this week:—C. R. Niven 2s. 6d., F. R. Parfitt 2s., Poor Man 3d., F. Sowter 1s., J. E. Ballin 4s., A. Hurcum (third sub.) 5s., S. Hudson 5s., D. Gillespie 5s.
- THE RIDGWAY FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£2 17s. 6d. Received this week:—C. J. 5s., A. Lewis 2s. 6d.
- T. E. MILLER, bookseller and stationer, King-street, Wigan, writes: "Things are rather active here just now on account of Mr. Ward's series of lectures, and the last advertisement in the *Freethinker* brought me several "saints" and a few probable converts. I have ten orders now for the paper, and have always a copy on show at the door besides other Freethought literature. Every copy sold at the meetings has my name in relief, and I am hoping to do more business (in the cause) in the future." We hope so too.
- A. L. COATES.—Thanks for list of addresses. We are pulling through the hot weather fairly well, but we don't like it. Moderate temperature is best for all kinds of work, and especially for brain work.
- C. R. NIVEN.—The thanks of a man like yourself for "light" derived from our writings outweigh all the abuse of ignorant bigots.
- F. R. PARFITT.—Glad to hear that "Freethought is going strong" in Monmouthshire.
- J. B.—In England and Wales, under the Education Acts, any child can be withdrawn from religious instruction by means of a written notification from a parent or guardian to the headmaster or head-mistress of the school. We believe the same right can be exercised in Scotland. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation; also for your compliments and good wishes.
- E. C. CORNETT—We have dealt with the matter.
- STAN.—Copies shall be sent as requested. Thanks. Glad to hear you were so delighted at coming across our "common-sense paper" a few weeks ago, and are now doing all you can to push its circulation amongst your friends and acquaintances.
- C. J.—Thanks. See the Ridgway Fund acknowledgment in list. "ABRACADABRA" writes: "I was pleased to see in the *Guilty or Not Guilty* how admirably you brought home to Dr. Torrey his libels on Paine and Ingersoll. There can be no getting away from the facts now."
- E. V. S.—Thanks for cuttings.
- T. L. C.—Why should Freethinkers investigate Mrs. Jones's "lights"—which may have something to do with her liver? You will observe that the Rev. Llewelyn Morgan's account of them dates back as far as March. They seem to have gone out since then.
- T. C. RIGLIN.—We appreciate your good will.
- LIVERPOOL SAINT.—See "Acid Drops." Mr. Wise has all the tricks of his trade. Another man's words, and his interpretations, are not necessarily the same things; in this case they are far from being so. When we were nearer Christianity—or rather its sentiments, for we had cast it intellectually behind us for ever—thirty years ago, we fancied there was something in Christian "charities." We have lived and learnt that there is something in them, but not what we thought. They are devices for staving off the social salvation of justice, for comforting the consciences of people who live by exploiting others, and for giving Christianity a factitious reputation. Some of the greatest scoundrels in England, from the social and ethical point of view, are lavish subscribers to these "charities." And no doubt they know what they are doing.
- GEORGE TAYLOR.—Thanks for the little box with your card in the bottom. With regard to your query, which you want answered here, we do not know of any law compelling you to uncover in a church, but a magistrate could easily interpret your keeping it on as "improper" behavior. Personally, we find no difficulty in taking our hat off on entering a church; and we should expect Christians to do the same on entering a Secular Hall. We do not see any principle at stake. It seems a mere matter of etiquette.
- W. PEARSON.—Tuesday is our last day for *Freethinker* matter. Too many correspondents treat it as the first—which is inconvenient.
- J. E. BALLIN.—Thanks for your amusing letter. We guess they won't convert you in a hurry.
- H. O. STRONG.—Certainly the £17,000 spent on the Torrey-Alexander mission in London might, as you say, have been better expended on the poor and suffering. Dr. Torrey is by no means a tall man, yet he weighs sixteen stone. The editor of the *Freethinker* is taller, and weighs only twelve, keeping as "fit as a fiddle" under his clothes.
- E. CHAPMAN (South Shields) says: "We are deeply indebted to 'Chilperic' for his interesting article upon Life in Palestine, and also to you for inserting it in its entirety—a useful and welcome innovation."

- A. HURCUM.—Very glad to hear that you have recovered your health and taken up the presidency of the Cardiff Branch again, at the request of the members; also that you find "splendid educational" value in the *Freethinker*.
- T. E. BARLEY.—Pleased to know you are taking the paper from your newsagent after reading the trial numbers, and that you regard your visit to Liverpool on Whit-Sunday as a red-letter day in your life.
- A. RIVETT.—May be useful; thanks.
- D. GILLESPIE.—Torrey pamphlets sent. Glad to hear that after reading the *Freethinker* for years you would be "extremely sorry to miss" it.
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- W. BRADBURN writes: "Your reference to the unfortunate Florence Doughty in the *Freethinker* of July 9 I have cut out and posted up in our shop window, and this has obtained a good number of signatures to the petition for the revision of the sentence passed by Mr. Justice Grantham." This correspondent wants to know when "Chilperic" is going to take another party to the British Museum.

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

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

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

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

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

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**Sugar Plums.**

The Paris International Freethought Congress will be the subject of a special article, and a special appeal, in next week's *Freethinker*. It is imperative that militant Freethought, the Freethought of the National Secular Society, should be amply represented at this great gathering. A subscription for this purpose will be formally opened in our next issue. Meanwhile there is no reason why a zealous Freethinker should not start off the subscription promptly with a generous donation.

Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, of the *Liberal Review*, Chicago, who is travelling this summer in Europe, reports to his magazine the meeting he had with Mr. Foote in London early in June. He spent an evening listening to Dr. Torrey, and found him "very gloomy and discouraged." The "infidel" pamphlets were very largely the cause of this. "Mr. Foote," Mr. Mangasarian says, "is successfully keeping Torrey in a corner, where he fumes and frets, sweats and swears even, but without help." Of the pamphlets he says: "They are doing an immense amount of good, and both Mr. Foote and his generous supporters deserve to be congratulated. The whole Liberal world is under obligation to these brave and devoted men for their telling blows at superstition whenever and wherever it has the impertinence to raise its head. It will be well for us in Chicago to follow the London plan when Torrey opens his revival tent in our city."

Several papers have noticed Mr. Stead's article on Dr. Torrey, and his slanders on Paine and Ingersoll, in the *Review of Reviews*. But the great majority of the Christian papers maintain an ominous silence. It seems pretty clear that they are not going to join in any censure of a Christian for libelling "infidels." The *Daily News*, which is really a religious paper, says not a word. We believe it will not say a word. It will sustain its hypocritical reputation. The more we think of it the more we wonder that Mr. Stead has had the conscience and the courage to speak out as he has done.

Our own duty is clear. Dr. Torrey goes to Plymouth in October—and afterwards to a few other places before returning home to Porkopolis—where he ought to feel comfortable; that is, if the local Freethinkers leave him at peace, which we rather doubt. Well, the distribution of our

pamphlets will have to be organised at Plymouth, and we may go down and lecture there while Dr. Torrey is in the town. He will have to be followed up wherever he goes. We must give him no peace while he disgraces English soil.

Mr. Cohen had very large meetings at Brockwell Park on Sunday. A reverend Christian Evidence gentleman not far off was not able to draw any of the crowd away, although his drawing-powers are described (by his friends) as extraordinary.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd delivers two lectures to-day (July 23) at Cardiff and one on Tuesday at Mountain Ash. No doubt there will be fine meetings.

The general members' meeting of the Liverpool Branch will be held at the close of the lecture in the Alexandra Hall this evening (July 23). The outdoor lectures on Monday evening at St. Domingo Pit are well attended, though organised trouble is apprehended from the "Protestants," who seem ready to protest against everybody's rights but their own. Mr. Ward continues the indoor lectures at the Alexandra Hall till the end of August.

Freethinkers all over this country are requested to bear in mind the case of the veteran J. H. Ridgway, of Birmingham, which we introduced a few weeks ago to our readers. Mr. Ridgway has been a gallant Freethought warrior for nearly two generations; he is now nearly eighty and practically helpless; and his local friends, who admire and love him, are trying to raise a fund to provide for the physical necessities of his last days. We gladly join in this appeal, and have considered it an honor to contribute our own subscription. Many others should do the same—and we hope they will do it at once. They should send to Mr. J. Partridge, 183 Vauxhall-road, Birmingham.

Mr. J. Partridge, 183 Vauxhall-road, Birmingham, acknowledges the following subscriptions to the Ridgway Fund:—

Previously acknowledged, £10 18s. 6d. Since received: R. Taylor £1 1s., R. Lancaster 5s., J. C. Bridges 1s., Old Friend 5s., W. Dodd 5s., T. Stevens 5s., C. J. Whitwell 5s., C. Watts 10s., Editor "L. G." 10s., J. Sumner jun. 10s. 6d., A. H. B. 2s. 6d., G. Scott 2s. 6d., J. Martin 4s.—Total £15 5s.

Subscriptions sent to us direct are acknowledged in the "To Correspondents" column.

They do some things better in France—"infidel" France. On July 13 the French Chamber of Deputies unanimously adopted the Bill granting compulsory relief to the aged and infirm. While the government of "infidel" France goes on with its task of improving the lot of the people the government of "Christian" England goes on with its sport of bamboozling and plundering the people. Look on this picture—and on this!

The Gasworkers' and General Laborers' Union has given notice of the following resolution to be moved by its delegate at the approaching Trade Union Congress:—

"(1) That all State supported schools and colleges shall be under full public control.

"(2) That all grades of education be free, from the primary school to the university.

"(3) That the school age be raised, and that secondary education be placed within the reach of every child by a non-competitive system of maintenance scholarships, sufficiently liberal to enable every child, who can reach a certain standard, to remain at school at least until the age of 16.

"(4) That the religious difficulty be removed by providing that the education in State supported schools shall be secular.

"(5) That an adequate number of training colleges be provided, affiliated to the universities, in order to secure the most liberal education for the teachers of the nation's children.

"(6) That the cost of educating the nation's children be a charge upon the National Exchequer, and that the expense of the above-mentioned reforms be met by revenue obtained by broadening the basis of taxation, and by the restoration and democratic administration of the valuable misappropriated educational endowments."

Nearly all of this program has been passed at National Secular Society Conferences. We are glad to see it taken up now by Trade Unionists. Clause IV. has been carried already by the Trade Union Congress at Leicester. Clause V. is of the greatest importance. The training colleges should be taken out of denominational hands, and nationalised and secularised. We hope the 1905 Congress will see the necessity of this.

## The Dominion of Reason.

WHEN Freethinkers and Rationalists venture to argue amongst religionists that the orthodox religious notions are not consistent or logical, one of the commonest retorts is that whilst "logic" may be with the Rationalist, truth is on the side of the orthodox. And in the hands of clever sophists the matter frequently ends in an elaborate argument, conducted more or less logically, to prove that argument and logic are useless. There are few readers of this journal who cannot remember half-a-dozen variants of the theme, which at bottom simply represents the peevish cry of habit, irritated at being disturbed; the instinctive endeavor to ward off a conclusion which involves a deep intellectual and emotional change.

Now it is well, from time to time, to make clear that this retort is absurd and unintelligent. In the first place there can be no such permanent antithesis between reason and emotion. In the second place, if there are facts which any argument overlooks, then the argument is faulty and the "logic," however correct it may be as far as it goes, is practically incomplete. And the proper answer should be, not to impugn the logical process, but to complete it. Moreover, it must be remembered that "logic" is solely concerned with the truth of propositions. Thus, for instance, it would, strictly-speaking, be nonsense to say of a piece of music: "It is false." One might say it was crude, or harsh, or unpleasant, or that it did not properly interpret the mood it professed to interpret. But it could not be called "false" in the same way that the proposition, "Two and two make five" is called false. When, therefore, such assertions are made as that, some nineteen hundred years ago, a certain personage performed various prodigies in a remote corner of what was then the Roman Empire, that he was crucified amidst remarkable solar disturbances and so forth; or when such general propositions are made as that there is an "Infinite Personality" guiding and controlling the Universe (producing earthquakes, famines and tuberculosis out of sheer benevolence) or when any other theistic or atheistic propositions are put forward—all these are subjects to which the logical criterion is to be applied. Such statements are not primarily subject-matter for the feelings at all; they are not to be admired or disliked. Though from the way in which the ordinary apologist treats them, one would often think he was dealing with an opera, a landscape, or a new perfume. Rhapsody and rhetoric, however, on such matters are entirely out of place. These statements are put forth as statements of truth; it is, therefore, absolutely essential that we should apply to them the tests of truth. To say of the doctrine of an eternal hell or the doctrine of a personal God, "I like to believe them" either means that one would be glad to find that evidence and argument sustained them, a remark which is neither here nor there, or else it means that the speaker likes to harbor beliefs as to the truth or falsehood of which he does not concern himself. In most cases I think the latter is the frame of mind, as of one who refuses to open a letter that may contain bad news, yet is dimly conscious that not opening it does not alter the facts. So one finds many religionists who will not look at or consider the opposite case at all, yet knowing such a case exists, hug the self-delusion that it does not exist. Lest it should be thought we are thus imputing a peculiar moral deformity, after the religious model, to those who differ from us, let it be added that the whole phenomenon is perfectly natural and understandable. All beliefs, and especially religious beliefs, soon get entwined with emotions the breaking of which is painful, and the avoidance of pain is the natural instinct.

At the same time, the religious attitude towards reasoning and the logical process is that of the fox towards the grapes in the fable. No one ever derides logic until he feels it is against him, and no

religionist ever allows the depreciation of logic in the mouth of a religious opponent to possess any argumentative significance. The cult of irrationalism, like damnation, is to be used only against your enemies and may never be used against yourself. If a Mahomedan airily dismisses a Christian with the retort that, whilst Christianity may possibly have something to say for itself, yet he "feels" that Mahomedanism is true all the same, the Christian will never accept the Mahomedan's emotion as the sufficient justification of his creed. But the same Christian, in nine cases out of ten, will offer *his own* emotion as a conclusive argument against the Freethinker. The other day, for instance, I was reading an essay on Matthew Arnold by the late Mr. R. H. Hutton, a gentleman who took a very pious view of things, and in the course of it he remarked that "the insurrection of the agnosticism of the day against faith is no doubt one of its leading features; but the failure of that insurrection to overpower us, the potent resistance it encounters in all our hearts, is a still more remarkable feature." The "resistance" of course which Agnosticism "encounters" in the "hearts" of Christians is of exactly the same kind as the resistance which Protestantism meets with in the hearts of devout Catholics, or that which Catholicism "encounters" in the hearts of convinced Protestants. All the while, since Mr. Hutton's essay was written, in 1886, Agnosticism has convinced the minds of vast numbers of people, and with the convinced mind the "resistance" of the "heart" is no longer potent, the emotions accommodating themselves to the changed intellectual outlook. So that frequently the boot is now on the other leg, and we often hear the commonplace "revivalist" complain of the "hardness of heart" of the Atheist; that being hardness in an opponent's heart which is "potent resistance" in your own.

Curiously enough, a striking example of this irrational method and how it fares at the hands of religious critics, comes to me as I write. It seems that Bishop Gore has written a book on *Roman Catholic Claims*, from the Anglican standpoint, in which, amongst other things, he falls foul of logic and argument. The Arians, he says, in old times were the "logical" party, and the Catholics were in the *Via Media*, as Anglicans are now. Somebody, he says, has "most wisely said that argument is partial, and often then most effective when least one sided, and often then most effective when least embarrassed by seeing too much." How well do we recognise the accents! What Freethinker but has heard this sophistry elaborated a dozen times? Logic is one thing, we are often told, but there is a "spiritual faculty" which we unfortunates lack and which discerns the validity of arguments that are, it seems, not logical.

But it is exceedingly interesting to note the fashion in which Bishop Gore's verbiage is dealt with by a Catholic critic. In the *Catholic Times* for May 19 there is a facetious article, headed "Bishop Gore's Candour," by the Rev. Wilfrid Lescher, in which he deals with this question of argument. Is he impressed by Bishop Gore's assumption of possessing a "spiritual faculty" superior to that of the Catholic? Here is his answer:—

"Any position which is illogical is false. Logic is not our only guide, but it is a true guide, and it is a test which no error can pass. If the Anglican theory is illogical, it is certainly false. It would be more candid in the Bishop to vindicate his position on logical grounds than to decry logic. Again his plea against argument makes a very poor show. Somebody, he says, has 'most wisely said, that argument is partial, one sided, and often then most effective, when least embarrassed by seeing too much.' Some Anglican said this; no one else could have said it. Why this uncandid attack upon argument? Argument is reason in speech. Shall we do away with persuasion, with conviction by means of words? It is uncandid to meet our arguments in this way. It is not by any means a fair and open style of reply. It is to assume and to imply and to insinuate that the more clear, logical, and consistent a statement

is the more it is likely to be false. On this point indeed the author is singularly obscure. It is difficult to conceive why he depreciates logic and argument. How can we get on without them?"

All this could not be better put by any professed Rationalist. But one has a lurking suspicion that it is only intended to be applied against Bishop Gore, and dare not be applied by the wicked Freethinker against Father Lescher's own case. That is the trouble with all these religious "reasoners." There is an air of insincerity over them all, for you know that whilst they are keen on the rules of the game being observed whilst they think they are winning, they are ready to declare the game at an end when they feel they are losing; then they tell you that "faith" must come in, and that "faith" is higher than "reason." It is as if one were to play chess with a man who claimed the right of transforming any piece on the board into a king if you gave an effective check to his existing king, whilst denying your right to employ the same tactic.

An example is found in Father Lescher's own article of what I mean. Bishop Gore, it seems, had praised "candor," and by way of retort Father Lescher examines the frankness of the Bishop's implication that the Anglican Church is one homogeneous body:—

"Thus taking the book in its scope and basis it has no relation to facts as they are known to all, and there is hardly a statement in any page which is not fiercely denied by a party in his own Church. Even in his own school Lightfoot denies that episcopacy is of divine institution. As to the rest it is impossible to co-ordinate from this crowd of assertions a statement of what is Anglican doctrine and what is not. Who would guess that in every town in England there are at the present day Low Church, and High Church, and Broad Church, not teaching, some less and others more, but contradicting each other all day, pulpit against pulpit, minister against minister? High dignitaries assail the Faith in vital points. What are to Bishop Gore, and justly, articles of Faith, to Canon Henson and others are fables and fond deceits; yet the same Church tolerates them all, and all have equal rights to speak in her name. Yet the Bishop absolutely ignores it. Can he charge his opponents, then, with want of candor?"

No doubt this is very true and very effective. Only one must in justice add that nearly every Catholic apologist, in his way, is as absurd as Bishop Gore. For if you read Catholic apologists even of the first order, like Newman, you would imagine that the Pope had access to every member of the human race, and that every such member was aware of his mission. The case for Catholicism, in Father Lescher's phrase, has no relation to facts. From it you would never guess that the whole Catholic religion, from beginning to end, has been a sectional affair which never embraced and does not now embrace half the human beings on the globe. Until the sixteenth century it was almost absolutely confined, as it is now practically confined, to Europe and European colonies. The vast millions of China, India, Japan, the aboriginal inhabitants of Africa, of Australia, of America (until Columbus discovered it) never heard a word of this "divine message" which Catholics glibly represent as having been communicated to all men. They write as if Catholicism, or at least the opportunity of embracing Catholicism, was within the reach of everyone, when we know the facts are plainly otherwise. Why should a just God have freely given a chance of salvation to ancient Italy and withheld it from ancient Mexico, if all men are equal in his sight? Is it credible that "Omniscience," having something to communicate to men, should adopt the clumsy device of setting up an agent in the city of Rome, who, by the way, is nearly always an Italian? And if there must be such an agent, why has there never been a Japanese or a negro Pope? Is it that "Universal Justice" has a specially soft corner for the white races, and showers more favors on them than on their yellow or black brothers? Moreover, if the Pope be "the ambassador of God," why has "Universal Goodness" so often appointed scoundrels like Alexander VI. or

John XXIII. to such a position, men who on the admission of Catholics themselves would disgrace a human government if sent abroad as its envoys? Viewed in the larger light, apart from lawyer-like quibbles over texts and traditions, what is the Catholic case but pure farce? These are questions which Father Lescher's Church evades as skilfully as he accuses Bishop Gore of evading the problem of the dissensions among Anglicans. But if you pressed them on Father Lescher, who is so vigorous in defence of "logic," I have very little doubt he would give up the argument and tell you the whole thing is a "divine mystery," that we must have "faith," and so forth. To revert to the chess-metaphor, he would make a king out of a pawn and claim to go on with the game. That is why, as I said before, all these orthodox appeals to "reason" are intellectually insincere—that is to say, they are demonstrably partial and one-sided. For, obviously, the only people who can afford to be rational to the end are those who have no reservations in the pursuit of truth, and have no propositions which they are anxious to exclude from critical examination; a position which implies, in turn, that any conclusion honestly reached and sincerely held cannot possibly merit punishment of any kind at any just judge's hands. The moment you depart from the canons of reason and accept as other than tentative hypotheses propositions which are not demonstrated or demonstrable, it is a small matter, intellectually speaking, however important it may be practically and ethically, where you end. And the clash of rival systems of "mystery" continually going on around us, each claiming a "supra-rational" sanction, is evidence of the final futility on those lines of reaching any universally valid truth.

FREDERICK RYAN.

### The Indispensable (?) Priest and Civil Marriage.

IT will ever remain indelibly marked as one of the blackest reproaches against the Roman Catholic Church that for so many generations in the history of the race she worked persistently and insidiously to render the priest indispensable to the laity in all the concerns of life. Over a long period of time the Church so effectually inculcated the idea of the supreme utility and necessity of the priest in the scheme of salvation according to Roman Catholicism that he came to be regarded as a factor in our social life which could not be eliminated without danger to the stability of society. Even in these modern latitudinarian days—and amongst people who have entirely dropped church-going—the effect of the long-sustained paramountcy of the priest still survives—to this extent at least, that thousands who never enter a church still consider it essential to a due regard for the respectabilities that a clergyman should be resorted to whenever a birth, a marriage, or a death occurs in their family. To say truth, we are afraid even Freethinkers—who ought to be deadly enemies of ecclesiasticism in every shape and form—have, on occasions such as the above, lacked the moral courage to dispense with the services of the "gentleman in black" who has the blasphemous effrontery to pose as the representative of Deity at such times.

It is idle to tell us—as we were told in effect some time back by a Jesuit father in an article on the priesthood—that the priest exists not only because the priesthood was instituted by God, but because the people find that he ministers to their spiritual requirements, and thereby has his existence justified. According to the Jesuit writer, in trying to extricate the Faithful from the toils of the priest we are performing a work of supererogation, as "Catholics are not only content but grateful for God's provision for their spiritual needs, and, after all, they are the parties principally concerned." We may set aside for the present the claim that the priesthood is a

Divine institution. If the priesthood is to justify itself to humanity it must be on other and more human grounds. But we may admit that the plea that the priest persists because there is a demand for his services looks well on the face of it—that is to say, if it be not a very strong reason for the priest, it is at least a fairly passable excuse. But closer examination will show that this method of argument might be made to justify anything. There is not a single existing pest or abuse in our social life that does not in a more or less complete fashion meet the wants of somebody or other. Otherwise it could not exist at all. We, however, decline to subscribe to the theorem that whatever is, is right. Whatever is, is undoubtedly the necessary result of precedent or existent conditions, but is not therefore necessarily desirable to perpetuate. And while it is certainly true that demand leads to supply (we do not like the use of the word "create" in this connection), it is no less true that it is possible to foster demand. And this is just what the Roman Catholic Church has done.

In the long course of her evolution as a religious organisation she has continually added to the functions and dignity of the priesthood, and has unceasingly championed the inalienable privilege of the priest as the intermediary between God and man. The fact is, of course, that the Church of Rome has all along been largely engaged in manufacturing pretexts for the intervention of the priest, and carefully cultivating those very "spiritual needs" of humanity which it is her proud vaunt she alone can satisfy. Who teaches the Roman Catholic that the priest is necessary to his welfare here and hereafter but the priest himself? Who teaches the Roman Catholic he must have his children baptised by the priest? Who teaches Roman Catholic men and women that they must be married by the priest? Who teaches them they must come every Sunday to witness the priest going through that pantomimic representation called the Mass, under pain of mortal sin? Who teaches them that the priest is God's deputy? Did the belief that the priest is necessary in these and various other ways spring up spontaneously in the minds of the millions of present-day Catholics, or was it planted there by the priest? Common sense supplies the answer.

Freethinkers should consider it their bounden duty to assist, so far as they can, in elbowing out the priest from his remaining preserves. And when we use the word "priest" here we mean the clergymen of all denominations. As individuals we have no quarrel with them. If, and when, they stand down and take their position as ordinary members of society they will receive the consideration which is the equal need of every individual in the community. So long, however, as they occupy their platform of sacred privilege their interests are inimical to the wellbeing of the general public, and they must be treated accordingly.

There are many ways in which we may help to shake the priest finally from his tottering throne; one of these was mentioned above. Readers will remember that a resolution was unanimously adopted at the Conference of the N. S. S. calling upon all Secularists to encourage the celebration of marriage before the Registrar, in preference to patronising any clergyman for the solemnisation of that function. This we should do by our personal example and by every other legitimate means in our power. It is a matter that should be kept prominently before the Branches, and pressed home periodically upon the audiences that are drawn together by those Branches. We should miss no opportunity of loosening any of the remaining tentacles whereby the priest retains his grip on the people, and this is not the least important of them. If we can keep the finger of the priest out of the marriage pie his presence is not likely to be in request for any subsequent baptisms. And although the priest too often reaps his harvest out of the vague terrors of death, we may surely hope that if we can teach people to live well without the aid of the priest they will learn

also to die, when their time comes, without his assistance.

It is a matter for satisfaction that civil marriage is becoming more popular in Great Britain every year. In Scotland this is particularly so. In Glasgow there is a strong and growing inclination to have the matrimonial knot tied before the Sheriff. Needless to say this tendency towards the complete humanising of the marriage relationship is looked at askance by the clergy, and the Scottish Church Presbyteries have frequently animadverted in the usual religious fashion on these Godless unions. But it is not alone the opposition of the offended clergy—whose concern at the falling-off in church marriages is quite intelligible—that prospective candidates for civil marriage have to encounter. We all know how easy it is for unconventional conduct of any kind to have a disreputable label attached to it. It is a terrible offence in the eyes of many not to do things in what is called a respectable way—which generally means in accordance with stereotyped tradition and usage. In Glasgow, too, those men and women who hold that marriage primarily concerns the couples who have made up their minds to unite their lives, and is certainly an institution that antedates and can quite feasibly survive the extinction of Christianity, have another obstacle to encounter. One of the local Sheriffs—who is not paid for anything but the performance of his legal duties—takes it upon himself to hector the couples who have the audacity to appear before him on matrimonial purposes intent. He has made himself quite notorious in this respect, and his utterances have frequently—and rightly—come under the strictures of the local press. It is intolerable that people who are obeying the dictates of their conscience, and exercising their legal right to marry without interference of clergy should be brow-beaten by an official paid to carry out the intentions of the legislature and for that alone. Men who are government or legal officials or are otherwise in the service of the public should be reminded that they are not entitled to accept a brief for the clergy in business hours. If religious propaganda is their hobby let them ride it in their leisure time, which is usually granted them on a sufficiently liberal scale.

Of course, when the spokesmen of the churches reprobate civil marriage they do so ostensibly in their zeal for morality. One gets tired occasionally of this continual priestly prating about morality. One would imagine to hear all this clerical talk that Christianity had discovered, if not invented, morality, and alone possessed the secret of preserving it on this planet of ours. And one wishes at times that religious people had some clear idea of what morality really is and what it is not. Do they fancy it in any way affects the interests of morality that a young couple should undertake the contract matrimonial in the presence of a lay witness rather than in that of a clerical one? We have no means of ascertaining how God regards the matter, or if the ignoring of his anointed priest disturbs his reputedly immutable equanimity. We look at the question from the human standpoint, the only point of view from which the word "morality" is seen to have any meaning. Is there any magic in the formula the priest mutters over the heads of the couple which ensures the union being a happy one? Does not every intelligent person know that the happiness of any hymeneal union depends entirely on the inner characters of the parties so joined together, and is not superinduced by anything sacramental or supernatural connected with the formal marriage ceremony. Not forgetting the importance of such purely mundane ingredients of marital bliss as good health on both sides and a reasonable share of the world's goods.

We are told, further, that these unions entered into according to civil law usually wind up in the divorce court. This, to put it mildly, is a somewhat sweeping assumption. Figures are very often misleading. We are aware a great many divorces

occur in this country, and it may be a considerable percentage of the unions thus severed were originally consummated solely under civil sanction. But we must remember the Protestant Churches pointedly discourage divorce, while the Roman Church absolutely forbids it. The absence of divorce does not always prove that the marriages are happy, and that, after all, is the main point. The use of the divorce-court argument affords another illustration of the perverted view of morality held by representative Christians. Do those clergymen who rail against divorce ever read any of the newspaper reports of evidence led in connection with divorce cases? If they do can they honestly maintain that morality is outraged in the great majority of instances where divorce is granted by the courts? Would it not rather be a grossly immoral condition of affairs—granting that but one tithe of the revelations made in the divorce court be true—if such miserable couples could not break their hateful bond?

Let us look at these matters without befogging our intellects with any other consideration but the good of the individual and the race. Whatever ultimate shape the marriage laws may take, and without asserting that the divorce court, as we know it, is exactly an institution to rejoice over, we must recognise that under present conditions facility for divorce acts as a moral safety valve. And to argue as if there would be no need for a divorce court if people would all get married under priestly auspices is too ridiculous. The proceedings in the divorce court doubtless demonstrate very forcibly that all marriages are *not* made in heaven. He must be a very unsophisticated person who thinks they ever were. Although, on second thoughts, perhaps they are, if the incomprehensible jumble of inconsistencies worshiped by the Christians as God happens to be the presiding genius.

As regards the relaxation of the marriage laws the Protestant Churches have had reluctantly to accept the inevitable. But not even the lesson of the divorce court seems likely at an early date to convince the Roman Church of the fatuity of quoting *Matt. xix. 6* as her authority for opposing divorce.

G. SCOTT.

THE MUSIC THAT CARRIES.

I've toiled with the men the world has blessed,  
And I've toiled with the men who failed ;  
I've toiled with men who strove with zest,  
And I've toiled with the men who wailed.  
And this is the tale my soul would tell,  
As it drifts o'er the harbor bar :  
The sounds of a sigh don't carry well,  
But the lilt of a laugh rings far.

The men who were near the grumbler's side,  
O, they heard not a word he said ;  
The sound of a song rang far and wide,  
And they hearkened to that instead.  
Its tones were sweet as the tales they tell  
Of the rise of the Christmas star—  
The sounds of a sigh don't carry well,  
But the lilt of a laugh rings far.

If you would be heard at all, my lad,  
Keep a laugh in your heart and throat ;  
For those who are deaf to accents sad  
Are alert to the cheerful note.  
Keep hold on the chord of laughter's bell,  
Keep aloof from the moans that mar ;  
The sounds of a sigh don't carry well,  
But the lilt of a laugh rings far.

—S. W. Gillilan.

We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not ;  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught ;  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

—Shelley.

Kindness is the sunshine in which virtue grows.—*Ingersoll.*

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.30, Guy Allred.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen will Lecture.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., "Christianity and Woman."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Heaven and Earth"; Brockwell Park, 3.15, E. Edwin, "The Inspiration of the Bible"; 6, P. A. Davies, "The Downfall of Torrey."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, Mr. Marshall.

WEST HAN BRANCH N. S. S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, R. Rosetti, "Where and When was Jesus Christ Born and Crucified?"

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Coffee House Bull Ring): July 27, at 8, Debate: "Is there a Spiritual World?" Affirmative, H. Lennard; negative, A. Barber.

CARDIFF BRANCH N. S. S. (Roath Park): 3 and 7, J. T. Lloyd.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "Dr. Torrey and Colonel Ingersoll." Outdoor Lectures: 3, Islington-square (if wet, inside Hall); Monday, 8, Saint Domingo Pit; Wednesday, 8, Edgehill Church. *Special Notice.*—A General Meeting of Members will be held after evening lecture on July 23.

MOUNTAIN ASH BRANCH N. S. S. hold meetings every Thursday at the Workmans' Institute, where all Freethinkers will be welcome.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market Place): 7.30, Business Meeting, Picnic, etc.

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