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*For truth can never be confirm'd enough,
Though doubts did ever sleep.*

—SHAKESPEARE.

Sundries.

THE Rev. S. A. Tipple, of Upper Norwood, is by no means a popular preacher. His church is small and seldom crowded. He is of an excessively shy, retiring disposition; but his admirers acclaim him one of the most original and suggestive pulpit orators of the age. The other Sunday he delivered a remarkable discourse on the joy and the sorrow of Angels. As represented in the *Christian World* he is responsible for the following utterance:—

“This world is not an orphan world abandoned to its own splendid or shameful gyrations, but a theatre upon whose boards a whole army of angels direct their eyes. They see us, we do not see them. Angels watch our growth with joy; our deterioration with sadness. Our planet is the scene of remarkable developments worthy of the study of superior beings.”

Now, we all know that angels occupy a very prominent position in the Bible. Generally speaking, they are represented as supernatural beings, who serve as messengers of God. Their vocation is to help the Supreme Being in the salvation of mankind: “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?” According to Mr. Tipple, they are interested spectators and students of human life; but according to the Bible they are servants of God, in that they minister to the heirs of salvation.

As he discoursed about the angels Mr. Tipple's face kindled, and there was magnetism in his words. He spoke as one who had seen angelic forms and experienced angelic ministries. And yet he was bound to admit that he had absolutely no *proof* of what he said to offer. “I wish you to take Christ's word for it,” he said; “it might be wiser to take Christ's word than to flout it. We take the scientist's word for much, because he has apparatus that we have not. Why should we not take Christ's word for spiritual truth since He was an expert on these things?” I have no evidence whatever to adduce, said Mr. Tipple, I merely take Christ's word for it. I do not know that angels exist even, much less that they exert any influence upon human life; but Christ spoke of them as if they existed and were useful, and I merely believe what He said, because I believe that He spoke from immediate knowledge. We respect Mr. Tipple's honesty, but are amazed at his credulity. There is positively no evidence of angelic existence and activity. Jesus himself furnished no proof whatever—He merely asserted, or repeated a common belief of his time when He contended—that angels as well as the Heavenly Father exist and take an active interest in human life. Mr. Tipple may be a prophet or a seer; but no prophet or seer has ever been able to demonstrate the objective reality of a supernatural realm. We know that Jesus, as depicted in the Gospels, was radically mistaken on several points; and it is only a natural inference that his teaching about God and the angels, concerning whom no one possesses any

knowledge, may have been equally unreliable. And yet Christian ministers speak of the supernatural as if it were an object of knowledge, and make such affirmations regarding it as only a lengthy residence there could possibly justify.

On his way home from Mr. Tipple's service, the reporter, Mr. Frederic C. Spurr, was presented with something very like a demonstration that the Chapel teaching was nothing but a dream. These are his own words:—

“From the heights of Norwood I descend to the vale of South London, my head full of angels and their way of watching the progress of our race. I pass through a court—a short cut to the main road. In this frightful place two women are fighting. They are both drunk. From a horrible gash in the cheek of one of them blood flows freely. This wounded tigress is seeking, by way of revenge, to destroy the eye of her foe. Three children are tugging at the dresses of the warriors, beseeching them to desist. Around the court are women and—*men*—good God in heaven, *men*!—who urge on the fight. The place resounds with oaths; it is foul with the odor of bad beer. It is Sunday afternoon. I have been listening to a sermon on the delight of the angels in watching our planet. And now, sick at heart, I am asking what the angels think of this hell on earth!”

Yes, according to the Chapel doctrine, the God of boundless might and love, and all his holy angels, were watching that loathsome scene in the court, allowing it to begin, continue, and to be consummated without taking any action whatever.

In his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly* for July 27, the Rev. R. J. Campbell deals with the problem of evil. He says:—

“The existence of evil as shown in pain and struggle is not the wholly insoluble mystery that many seem to assume. It may seem paradoxical to say that if I were asked how I know of the goodness of God, I should answer—Because of evil. But this is the literal truth. Without some attenuation of the perfections of God, without some shadow on the sunshine of life, we should not know the meaning or the nature of the good we enjoy. This is why there is a ‘Nature red in tooth and claw,’ terrible and perplexing as her history has been. I do not believe that there is any meaningless suffering, not even that of the animal world. This world is not what it is because man has put it wrong: it is a great whole struggling into fuller life, the perfect life of God.”

The most prominent feature of that extract is its audacity. Can Mr. Campbell really mean what he says? Is it possible that the East End, with its unspeakable misery, wretchedness, and starvation, exists for the purpose of showing the West End, with its unlimited wealth, and luxury, and pleasures, that God is good? Here is a man who has spent his whole life in the grim shadow of an inherited and incurable disease. He has suffered and sorrowed and struggled in vain all his days. Can it be that the darkness and the hopelessness of his life were designed of God in order that some others might bask with all the greater comfort in the sunshine of theirs? Is it not a fact that the introduction of an infinitely wise and good Deity into the problem of suffering only complicates and intensifies it? If Nature is unguided, acting in obedience to her own inherent laws, we are not surprised to find that she is “red in tooth and claw”; but on the assumption that she is under the guidance of an absolutely Perfect Being—perfect in justice, good-

ness, and love, the existence of evil on so gigantic a scale is wholly inexplicable. It is certainly a new thing under the sun for a Christian apologist to advocate the necessity for "some attenuation of the perfections of God" in order that we may perceive and realise his infinite goodness. Mr. Campbell may believe that there is no meaningless suffering; but can he tell us what meaning underlies the suffering in what he calls the animal world? We know that most of it is the concomitant of the struggle for existence; but what meaning or purpose has it apart from that? Mr. Campbell says that "struggle and sympathy imply each other." But as a general statement that is obviously false. When a lion devours a man the struggle is in full evidence, but the sympathy is conspicuous by its absence. Suffering may engender sympathy with one another among its victims; but the infliction of suffering is, in the majority of instances, entirely selfish. If Nature is blind and unintelligent, the existing state of things is not at all surprising; but if she is the manifestation of infinite intelligence and love her colossal wastefulness and destructiveness are unutterably monstrous. What countless myriads of her children—God's children—perish by the way! The weak go the wall by the million; and almost without exception they are pushed there by the strong. And yet we are told that God is love! We are assured that there is no meaningless suffering, no heartless cruelty, in the Universe, and no lack of sympathy in the struggle for existence. I wonder if "the young Welsh collier," whom Mr. Campbell addressed, will be able to accept that teaching, in face of the innumerable disasters which are constantly occurring, and of the wanton disregard of life shown everywhere.

When a man has a creed to defend, it is amazing to what lengths of absurdity and inconsistency he will go. One of the attributes of the Divine Being, according to theology, is immutability. Change implies imperfection. If God were to alter any of his plans He would thereby prove himself to be less than Divine. Hence, theology represents him as in his nature unchangeable. But prayer is an appeal to a person who is believed to be capable of change. In his recent sermons on prayer, Mr. Campbell denied this, stoutly maintaining that God's purposes are eternally immutable, but admitting that his action, being contingent on man's, may be subject to various changes. That is surely a distinction without a difference. Now, a correspondent calls Mr. Campbell's attention to the case of Hezekiah as reported in Isaiah xxxviii. Of course, this case is fatal to Mr. Campbell's theory. God is here represented as changing his mind with reference to the duration of Hezekiah's life, and as doing so *in answer to prayer*. Mr. Campbell meets this difficulty by saying that "our views of God must always be more or less anthropomorphic," and that "in the Old Testament especially such views prevail." The reasoning here is pre-eminently jesuitical. When Hezekiah was informed by Isiah that he was about to die, Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord. When the prayer ended the Lord said to him, through Isaiah, "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years" (Isaiah xxxviii, 5). According to this record, God added fifteen years to Hezekiah's life *in direct answer to prayer*. More than that, God healed him of his mortal sickness, and by that act of healing made the continuation of his life possible. Mr. Campbell, however, asserts that God did not change, all the change being in Hezekiah himself. But that is sheer nonsense, if the record is true. Utterly disregarding the record, Mr. Campbell says: "We may see the same thing around us any day. If you can get a drunkard to sign the pledge, he may, like Hezekiah, add to his days fifteen years." True; but the two cases are not in the least parallel. Hezekiah's life was prolonged in answer to prayer, while the drunkard's life was prolonged because of his abstinence from the drink. On this point, Mr. Campbell's science is accurate; but his attempt to harmonise theology with it is a dismal failure. Stripping prayer of all its Scriptural

and theological signification, he identifies it with moral reformation on man's part.

Now, is it not clear, from what has been said about the ministry of angels by Mr. Tipple, and concerning the problem of suffering and evil and the efficacy of prayer by Mr. Campbell, that these gentlemen possess no knowledge whatever of any supernatural sphere? Mr. Tipple frankly confesses his ignorance, and puts all the responsibility of his utterances upon Jesus; but Mr. Campbell is more modern; and in his anxiety to be loyal to his scientific convictions, he explains the doctrines of grace away. We, on the contrary, are the disciples of science alone, and to us the religious explanation of the Universe is obsolete and valueless. The mystery of Nature may be insoluble; but Science conducts her inquiry on right lines, and may, some day, far hence, succeed in flooding the darkness with light. In any case, religion only adds new elements to the problem, and cannot possibly solve it.

J. T. LLOYD.

Is Religion of Importance?

NOTHING is more common than to find religious beliefs referred to as matters of supreme importance, deserving and receiving the greatest consideration. So far as religious writers are concerned this is only what may be expected, but it is another matter when people, as is often the case, preface an adverse criticism of religious beliefs with the same profession. In such a case it may be taken as a thoughtless repetition of a common phrase, but one that is to be regretted, inasmuch as it concedes far more than is either necessary or justifiable. It is true that an examination of religious beliefs is an important need, but this is not because the beliefs themselves are important, only that the position accorded them and the time consumed in their dissemination makes this necessary. The intrinsic value of religious beliefs is shown by the manner in which Christian people treat beliefs similar to their own when found in other cults and so removed from special associations that give them an air of value when found in connection with their own religion. Were they of any real or uniform value they would command the same attention wherever found. That they are revered gravely in one connection, and treated with ridicule in another, is ample evidence that their importance is of an altogether fictitious character. And one may safely assert that if the story of Mother Hubbard or Jack and the Beanstalk had been met in connection with Christian doctrines, they would have been treated with the same gravity, and held to be of the same importance as the legends that go to form the sum of Christian teachings.

The importance of an examination of Christian beliefs, or religious beliefs in general, is not due to their intrinsic worth, but to quite other considerations. Any beliefs that are held by a large number of people to be true, and not only true, but of paramount importance, and which moreover command the expenditure of public time and money, and which have also come to rank as powerful vested interests and to serve as the support of still other interests of the same character, demand consideration, quite apart from other considerations. And it is from this point of view that the Freethinker deems it of importance to settle, if possible, the validity of religious beliefs. Fully recognising that the intrinsic value of such beliefs as the resurrection, the virgin birth, etc., is not a bit greater than that of a volume of fairy tales, that they are of value only as far as they cast light on the history of mental evolution, it is yet seen that the course of development has raised religious beliefs to a position of unwarranted importance, and our criticism is directed against this. From any other point of view criticism would be more or less waste of time.

What justification is there for the opinion so often expressed, that it is of profound importance that

one should hold sound views concerning God and a future life? There is positively none at all. How can a belief, for the presence of which no one is a penny the better, and for the absence of which no one is a penny the worse, be rightly called of first-rate importance? The student, the scientist, the commercial man, the "man of the world," never find, other things equal, their avocations made easier or harder by the presence or absence of such beliefs. The belief in a God has never helped to make a wise man of a fool; it has often helped to make a fool of a wise man. It has never made the honest man of a rogue; but it has often made the road from honesty to roguery easier than it would otherwise have been. No one, where there is anything at stake—say a house to be let, business credit to be given, or an assistant to be employed—ever takes religious belief as an adequate testimonial to character. In such matters it is purely non-religious considerations that count. And it is surely absurd to call beliefs of importance that can be, and are, so easily ignored in the affairs of daily life.

There is not to-day even the theoretical importance that once attached to religious beliefs. While natural forces were believed to be either themselves supernatural in character or directly under the control of supernatural intelligences, there was a theoretical importance in holding right beliefs concerning these assumed powers. The gods then punished or rewarded men as their beliefs were sound or unsound. But this view is no longer held by the mass of even educated believers. These admit that "God" no longer interferes with natural forces. He works through them, and their effects on believer and unbeliever alike are identical. And if this be so, there is surely ample grounds for asserting that, even though it were theoretically true that a God exists of whose will natural law is the expression, the belief is of no immediate and no practical importance. The theory minus the knowledge of natural forces is of no value. The knowledge minus the theory is none the worse. Nations and individuals flourish or decay in accordance with their knowledge of natural processes, and are in no sense dependent upon a theory concerning their origin of these processes, or of what lies beyond them.

And a further truth is that religious beliefs never trouble those whose minds have not been specially prepared for their reception. Left alone, the educated modern mind would never experience difficulties concerning them. Such questions might occur, as people speculate whether Mars is inhabited, or whether there is an atmosphere in the moon. But they would never be permitted to interfere with the serious business of life. This only occurs as a result of the reiteration of thousands of preachers, and because the narcotising influence of their teaching produces in the average mind a tacit acquiescence. Becoming in this manner the tools of the priesthood, parents impress the importance of religion upon their children; social influences, and the habitual gravity with which religious subjects are treated, the solemn ceremonial connected therewith, and the place given to it in State functions, all accentuate this impression. In this manner there is gained a general assent to the proposition that religious beliefs are of profound importance to the community; and there is produced that divorce between theory and practice which makes so much of our life a hideous, although a largely unconscious, hypocrisy. And as effects become in their turn causes, hypocrisy in one direction leads to hypocrisy in another; and in both social and political life one may trace, as a part resultant, the same insincerity and mental crookedness.

Long ago Emerson wrote of religious questions:—

"Our young people are diseased with the theological problems of original sin, origin of evil, predestination, and the like. These never presented a practical difficulty to any man—never darkened any man's road who did not go out of his way to seek them. These are the soul's mumps, and measles, and whooping cough..... A simple mind will not know these enemies."

But a simple mind we are not allowed to possess. Our education, our social environment, is so arranged that we are induced, in hosts of cases to place first that which should come last, and take last that which should come first. Apart from the satisfying of artificially fostered feelings, the whole of theology never does anyone a single pennysworth of service, and often does him serious harm. The whole body of Christian doctrines cannot yield a single solid lesson in social or political economy, or on any of the really important questions of life. We show this when we so plainly ignore religion on critical occasions. We could not continue in this line if religion were really valuable. You cannot tamper with nature in this way. You cannot live over bad drains and remain free from disease. You cannot eat impure food or drink impure water without paying the price. Natural facts, real facts, cannot be ignored. Sooner or later we are pulled up and compelled to recognise their existence. And if religious beliefs were of any great importance there would be a much clearer connection between them and national prosperity than is actually the case.

But religious beliefs are not of importance. There are a thousand things in life of vastly greater consequence. The question of the land, the question of housing, of sanitation, of education, are all more important than our belief in a God, in a future life, or any of the subsidiary questions of theology. Yet we put on one side "consequences of great pith and moment," while we discuss questions of lights, vestments, baptism, and similar matter that go to make up a perfect phantasmagoria of absurdity. We starve our scientific workers, while we squander millions annually on a religion and a priesthood that has left its evil impress on every page of European history. We cry out for reform and refuse to recognise the fact that the most urgent reform of all is to learn to take things in the order of their importance, to deal with this life while we have it, and with any other in the order of its emergence.

C. COHEN.

A Defence of Thomas Paine.—IV.

BEFORE entering upon an examination of the fourth Charge against Thomas Paine I wish briefly to supplement what I wrote last week in refutation of the third Charge, which covered his relations with his wife and with the Bonnevilles.

I have just learnt that Dr. Conway has made many biographical discoveries since writing his classic *Life of Paine*. One of these discoveries is quite recent and is of the very highest importance. I understand that Dr. Conway has discovered at Paris a letter which Paine wrote to Madison, earnestly requesting that the United States government would use its influence at Paris to facilitate Nicolas Bonneville's emigration to America, where his wife and children required his presence. The letter was put away by Madison, who perhaps forgot it; eventually it was brought to Bonneville's notice, but this was after Paine's death, and Bonneville wrote upon it that this cry from the heart of Thomas Paine had, alas, arrived too late. Dr. Conway has seen the original document in one of the Paris libraries, and will doubtless publish it in a new edition of his *Life of Paine*. When it is published I believe it will prove conclusively that, so far from wishing to see Madame Bonneville separated from her husband, Paine tried to use the machinery of the United States government to hasten their reunion.

Another point is this. I have been looking through *Cobbett's Register* for 1820, and in the number dated February 19 I have found something which I recollect reading some thirty years ago. It is the "Curious History of a Calumny on Paine." Cobbett had fled to America two years previously, in order to preserve his liberty, and perhaps his life, from the monstrous tyranny which then prevailed in England; and during his residence on Long Island

he collected all the information he could about Thomas Paine, whom he had learnt to admire as a profound political thinker, without having any sympathy with his views on the subject of religion. Amongst other fables he had investigated the one concerning Paine's "recantation," which he proved to be an absolute concoction. The whole story is extremely interesting, but it is not my object to deal with it here. One part of the story introduced Madame Bonneville without mentioning her by name. This is how it appeared in the *Norwich Mercury*. An illiterate servant girl, of all people in the world, claimed to have got access to Paine's bedroom when he was dying, and to have received from him the most vehement denunciation of his own *Age of Reason*, and a description of himself as the Devil's chief agent on earth. Here is the conclusion of this delectable narrative:—

"At another time, when she was in his chamber, and the master of her family was sitting by her bedside, one of Paine's former companions came in; but seeing them, hastily went out, drawing the door after him with violence, and saying, 'Mr. Paine, you have lived like a man—I hope you will die like one.' Upon which Paine, turning to his principal visitor said, 'you see what miserable comforters I have.' An *unhappy female*, who had accompanied him from France, lamented her sad case, observing, 'for this man I have given up my family and friends—my property and my religion; judge then of my distress, when he tells me that the principles he has taught me will not bear me out!'"

My readers will perceive the clumsiness of this fiction. Madame Bonneville did not accompany Paine from France; she did not give up her property, for she had none; she did not give up her family, for her three children were with her in America; neither did she give up her religion, for she and her husband were Freethinkers when Paine made their acquaintance in Paris. Clumsy as the lie was, however, it was good enough to impose upon the crowd of simple "believers," and it does duty still in the most foolish of orthodox publications. Cobbett's exposure of it has all the racy vigor of that incomparable master (since Swift) of simple, accurate, and idiomatic English. He hunted up the servant girl, whose name was Mary Hinsdale, and told how she shuffled and prevaricated when he interviewed her. The following passage is pertinent to our present enquiry:—

"I pushed her closely upon the subject of the '*unhappy French female*.' Asked her whether she should know her again.—'Oh, no! friend: I tell thee that I have no recollection of any person or anything that I saw at Thomas Paine's house.' The truth is, that the cunning little thing knew that the French lady was at hand; and that detection was easy, if she had said that she should know her upon sight."

"The whole," Cobbett said, "as far as relates to recantation, and to the '*unhappy French female*,' is a lie, from the beginning to the end." And he adds that "in this tissue of falsehoods, is included a most foul and venomous slander on a woman of virtue and of spotless honor." That was Cobbett's judgment of Madame Bonneville. And he formed it on the spot, within nine years of Paine's death, after a minute investigation of all the facts, with the intention, which it is a great pity he never fulfilled, of "writing an account of the life, labors, and death of Paine."

Cobbett was himself a Christian. And what he said at the end of that article, written eighty-five years ago, is worthy of the attention of Christians to-day. "This," he said, "is not at all a question of religion. It is a question of moral truth."

A Surprise.

And now I have a surprise for my readers. I have received a very interesting and valuable letter from Mr. E. G. Bayford, of Barnsley, who tenders me his "heartiest thanks" for my "splendid articles," as he flatteringly calls them, which he has "read and re-read with intense gratification." This gentleman points out an important fact which I had entirely overlooked.

I try to overlook as little as possible, but I have only one head and one pair of eyes, and I make no sort of pretence to infallibility; so that if any of my readers will be good enough to follow this gentleman's example, and give me a bit of useful information, I shall be very much obliged to them.

It will be remembered that Dr. Torrey, in his third Charge against Paine, which he treated as absolutely proven, reached the climax by declaring that Paine "at his death did not leave his property to his wife, who was still living, but did leave it to this woman [Madame Bonneville] and her children." In my reply I showed that Paine's will was gravely misrepresented by Dr. Torrey. I also argued that Paine, having been legally separated from his wife for thirty-five years, was under no moral obligation whatever to leave her his property. Of that argument I do not wish to unsay a single word. Nevertheless there is a certain fact which renders it unnecessary, and it is this fact which Mr. Bayford supplies.

The truth is that I was not suspicious enough of Dr. Torrey. I ought to have treated him in the spirit of Dryden's couplet on one of those dull enemies whom he skewered up on the shaft of his satire:—

Others to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

I ought to have known that Dr. Torrey would never deviate into truth. Even when he is not deliberately lying we have to reckon with his unconscious instinct for mendacity.

As a matter of fact Paine's wife was not "still living" at the time of "his death." She was not living when he made his will. Some may fancy that this is too good to be true, but I assure them they are mistaken. Mrs. Paine died on July 27, 1808. Paine made his will on January 18, 1809.

Neither the fact nor the date of Mrs. Paine's decease is given in Dr. Conway's biography. He gave it amongst the biographical matter subsequently scattered over his four-volume edition of Paine's collected writings. That is how I came to overlook it. I must have seen it when I went through those four volumes nearly ten years ago, but it had escaped my memory.

Dr. Conway found the announcement of Mrs. Paine's death in the *Monthly Repository* (London) of September, 1808. The whole of it is well worth reproduction, as showing that a sane and charitable view of Paine's character was possible even then, although it seems impossible in orthodox circles now, after the lapse of nearly a hundred years:—

"MRS. PAINE. On Sunday, July 27, at her brother's house, at Cranbrook in Kent, in the 68th year of her age, Mrs. Paine wife of the celebrated Thomas Paine, author of the '*Rights of Man*,' '*Age of Reason*,' etc., etc. She was the daughter of Mr. Ollive, a respectable tradesman in Lewes, Essex, in whose house Mr. Paine lived before his marriage as well as some time after. The marriage took place at Lewes in the year 1771; but brought the parties little satisfaction or comfort. After living together three years Mr. and Mrs. Paine, convinced it would seem that they were unsuited to each other, agreed mutually to separate, and accordingly a legal deed of separation was executed. Mrs. Paine's family were Dissenters of the Calvinistic persuasion. It may be considered unfortunate that Mr. Paine knew little of Christians in England but as Calvinists, or in France but as Papists. His attack on Christianity was indeed directed against the gross corruptions of it, as exhibited by those two great Christian parties. Few or none of his sneers affect the religion of the New Testament. Mrs. Paine lived amongst her friends, maintaining a respectable and Christian character. Some of her time was passed in London, where she communicated with the Calvinistic church under Dr. Rippon, meeting in Carter-lane, Tooley-street, Southwark; the rest of it at Cranbrook, where she attended on the ministry of Mr. Stonehouse, of the same denomination.—The death of Mrs. Paine has given occasion for much abuse of her husband. This was needless, ungenerous, and we believe in a great measure unjustifiable. Husbands and wives may live uncom-
fortably together where there is no deism or republicanism to favor dissension."

Thus every fragment of Dr. Torrey's third Charge against Paine is blown to the winds for ever. And this is the very charge upon which he most relied to damn Paine's character. What an unhappy controversialist he is!

And now let me ask my readers to note a singular fact. Mrs. Paine's death, while her husband was still living, gave "occasion for much abuse of her husband." Ninety-seven years afterwards *his* death before *hers* is made the ground of still worse abuse. Whichever way the facts are regarded, in the right order, or upside down, Paine is sure to lose. Why? Because he has to be damned anyhow. The verdict is determined, and the sentence pronounced, before the trial commences. The evidence is of no importance whatever.

CHARGE IV.—"IMMORAL AND LICENTIOUS."

The fourth Charge against Paine is set forth by Dr. Torrey for the pleasure of stating it. He afterwards says that he is not quite justified in regarding it as true, but he leaves you with the impression that if you take the opposite view you will not be very far wrong. This fourth Charge runs as follows:—

"That his relations with this woman who followed him from Paris were positively immoral and licentious, and that, furthermore, his relations with her were immoral while they still lived in France, and that one of her children, 'Thomas,' had the features, countenance, and temper of Paine—the implication, of course, being that he was Paine's son."

"Charge IV," Dr. Torrey says, "I don't regard as proven." Later on he speaks rather more decisively:—

"It may be said that this charge against Paine has not been disproven; but no man is under obligations to disprove charges against them. It is the obligation of those who make the charges to prove them, and to my mind this particular charge against Paine has not been proven, and we are bound to believe him innocent of this particular charge until it is proven."

Dr. Torrey's grammar is not all it should be, but this passage is substantially the only reasonable one in the whole of his letter. Yet he does not see what it involves. Paine's relations with Madame Bonneville were either immoral or not immoral. There is no middle course. Some things do not admit of it. They must be altogether or not at all. A woman, for instance, cannot be partially chaste. She is either chaste or unchaste. And the same alternative applies to Paine's relations with Madame Bonneville. Now it is admitted by Dr. Torrey that we are bound to believe that Paine's relations with Madame Bonneville were *not* "immoral and licentious." They were therefore innocent and honorable. And in this case the whole of the third Charge falls to the ground; for its force depends entirely upon the suggestion, which runs between the lines and around the words, that there was sexual impropriety between Thomas Paine and "this woman." Disown that suggestion, and the third Charge loses all significance.

Perhaps I had better put the matter in a way that will make it perfectly clear even to Dr. Torrey's coarse intelligence. If there was no sexual intercourse between Thomas Paine and Madame Bonneville, there was nothing for Dr. Torrey or any other Christian busybody to talk about; and Paine's kindness to her, both while he was living and at his death, could only at the worst have been an error of judgment, and could not possibly affect his character.

Evidently, then, Dr. Torrey's "hedging" has sawed through the bough on which he was sitting, and brought him down ignominiously.

I call it "hedging" because throughout his comments on the fourth Charge he keeps suggesting what he knows he cannot assert. Take the following as a sample:—

"Cheetham, who made the charge that Thomas had the features, countenance, and temper of Paine, was sued for libel by the woman in the case, and she

obtained a verdict against him. Of course, this does not prove that the charge was not true, for it is oftentimes impossible to prove to the satisfaction of a jury charges that may be true."

Could anything be more contemptible? It is a disgrace to human nature. Only a mind sodden with the most hateful bigotry could be capable of writing in this fashion.

A man dies. His enemy says that he lived immorally with another man's wife, and plainly hints that he is the father of one of her children. The woman brings an action for libel. Not one witness supports the libeller's case. The one witness on whom he relies breaks down under cross-examination, throws up the sponge, and admits that the whole story of the dead man's intercourse with this woman is a lie. Twelve jurymen promptly find the defendant guilty, and the judge passes sentence upon him accordingly. These are the facts.

A hundred years afterwards the libel is revived. The man who revives it says that the unanimous verdict of the jury (of his own countrymen) does not disprove it. He produces no fresh evidence. But he claims that the libel was simply "not proven."

The original libeller was called Cheetham. The new libeller is called Torrey. Which is the worse of the two?

Undoubtedly the new libeller is worse than the original one. Cheetham had *some* excuse. He had quarreled with Paine. He was working off his personal hatred. His conduct was wicked, but intelligible. Dr. Torrey has *no* excuse. He is a cold, vicious, malignant liar.

But I have not quite done with this fourth Charge. I want to give my readers the precise facts. Cheetham's libel was as follows:—

"Paine brought with him from Paris, and from her husband, in whose house he had lived, Margaret Brazier Bonneville, and her three sons, Lewis, Benjamin, and Thomas. *Thomas* has the features, countenance, and the temper of Paine."

My readers know that Paine did not bring Madame Bonneville with him from Paris. Cheetham knew it too. But he wanted to make the lie look plausible.

This libel was incorporated in Cheetham's *Life of Thomas Paine*, the Preface to which is dated "New York, October, 1809." This Preface is a violent political harangue, and I should imagine that the writer expected profit from his Dedication to Vice-President George Clinton, as well as his pompous diatribes against Jefferson.

An English edition of Cheetham's book was published eight years later. It opened with a Preface by the "London Editor." This gentleman posed as a friend of Christianity and of the British Constitution—both of which Paine had attacked; and he expressed himself in the following elegant manner:—

"The character which it portrays attained a degree of celebrity which few are permitted to enjoy; but it is a celebrity which will convey to posterity all that is odious, blasphemous, and profane. His revolutionary writings have produced effects the most remarkable and violent;—like a volcano they burst forth, breaking up the foundations upon which the civilised world is established."

The London Editor forgot that one of the foundations of human society is veracity. In reprinting Cheetham's libel on Paine and Madame Bonneville, he omitted to inform English readers that it had been branded as a lie in an American court of justice.

Cheetham's two important witnesses were Mrs. Ryder and William Carver. Mrs. Ryder was the lady with whom Paine had boarded—for it is not true, in any sense of the words, that he "lived with" Madame Bonneville. This witness testified: "Mrs. Bonneville often came to visit him. She never saw but decency with Mrs. Bonneville. She never staid there but one night, when Paine was very sick." She vehemently repudiated the slander. William Carver did his best for Cheetham. But when he saw the case was lost he deserted it, and declared that "he

had never seen the slightest indication of any meretricious or illicit commerce between Paine and Mrs. Bonneville, that they were never alone together, and that all the three children were alike the objects of Paine's care.'

Dr. Conway, who has consulted the pamphlet report of the trial, says that "Madame Bonneville had in court eminent witnesses to her character,—Thomas Addis Emmet, Fulton, Jarvis, and ladies whose children she had taught French." Cheetham had absolutely no case, and the jury only took a few minutes in returning their verdict.

Personally I have no doubt that Carver, who was a blackmailer, and Cheetham, who was a political adventurer, were animated by the malice of pecuniary disappointment. They were after Paine's estate, and were maddened at the thought that they were to get nothing. This indeed was openly argued by Madame Bonneville's counsel. "That," said Counsellor Sampson, "is the key to this mysterious league of apostolic slanderers, mortified expectants, and disappointed speculators." Paine's will was at the bottom of the business.

One fact in conclusion. The *Thomas Bonneville* who so much resembled Paine was born, Dr. Conway says, before Paine ever met Madame Bonneville. But what does that matter? Malice does not need evidence. When this *Thomas*, having become General Bonneville of the United States Army, resided long years afterwards in St. Louis, it was whispered about that he was a natural son of Thomas Paine. Nor is that all. The Paine and Bonneville legend assumed many different forms in the course of generations. In McClintock and Strong's religious encyclopedia Madame Bonneville figures as "One of the women he supported in France." One of them! Paine became a Solomon at last.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

Acid Drops.

"My only hope for the homes of our people is a revival of religion." So says Mrs. Bramwell Booth. Who expects her to say anything else? She is in the revival business. Perhaps she doesn't know that there were ideal homes in the world before the religion she preaches was ever heard of. She could easily learn, by reading quite accessible books, that there are ideal homes in the world now beyond the scope and influence of Christianity.

Millions a year are spent in this country on the "Saviour-soul-alive-O" business, but money enough cannot be found to keep precious early editions of Shakespeare's works in the land of his birth. One after another they go off to America. Christianity has succeeded in stupefying and brutifying this nation. It almost looks as though the case were beyond recovery. The religious revival, which began with Wesley and Whitefield, and now ends in its dotage with Dr. Torrey and Evan Roberts, has run side by side with the money-making of modern industrialism; so that six days a week we are animated by vulgar greed, and one day a week by imbecile sentimentality. Our case is so bad that even Mr. R. G. Knowles has shaken the dust of his feet off against the Music Halls, where he says the audiences are little better than cannibals. When a popular entertainer talks in this way the general condition must be fairly desperate. One has only to look at some of the crowds at seaside resorts to perceive that cannibals are better behaved than our hooligan population. And the hooligan population is of both sexes; nay, the females are often worse than the males.

The very thieves in some countries are idealists in comparison with many of our most "respectable" business men. Hundreds of years ago when Ariosto was captured by brigands in Italy, he was liberated with apologies when they discovered that he was the great poet. Sir W. B. Richmond, the English artist, has just been telling an interviewer that he was once captured by brigands in Greece, and was set free with apologies as soon as he told them he was an artist and proved it to their satisfaction.

"General" Booth is going to have another motor run round Great Britain; then he is going to fool round the world again; and this old showman's antics are hailed as signs of progress. England never sank so low before. Our so-called statesmen should be shipped off to Canada, Australia, or wherever else the "General" would take them. We might then begin a rational government of this country. By attending to social problems, such as the cultivation of the land and the housing of the people, we should cut off the supply of that social wreckage and refuse which "General" Booth and all the other religious quacks of our age make fortunes and reputations in "salving."

Christian England hasn't as much moral cohesion as Heathen China. Heathen Japan may be left right out of the comparison. English firms have been making money by supplying Russia with coal and other things during the present war, although Japan is our ally, and nobody seems to think this in any way immoral, or anything at all but "good business." Just look, on the other hand, at what the Chinese have been doing. As a protest against American treatment of the Chinese, the word went forth amongst the Chinese merchants that American trade was to be boycotted. All ideas of profit were at once thrown aside. The boycott has become universal, and the agents of a big Francisco firm at Shanghai have telegraphed: "Cancel all orders. The boycott of American trade is effective among Chinese merchants. Business is entirely suspended." The American traders are howling for Government interference, but you cannot fight a boycott in that way. What is evident meanwhile is that the Chinese merchants stand on a higher moral level than the American traders.

We have always viewed with suspicion the stories circulated concerning wonderful improvement in the morals of the Welsh people as the result of Evan Roberts's preaching. Revival preachers are not notorious for the accuracy of their reports, and their exaggerations are more often than not improved upon by those who "write up" such subjects. Now we learn from Mr. Justice Phillimore's charge to the Grand Jury at Swansea, that some of the worst cases in the Calendar come from Glamorganshire where the revival had been very strong and very effective. This is only what anyone who understands the psychology of the situation would expect. A permanent improvement in character never has been, and cannot be, effected by the methods of revivalism. It is easy to extort a profession of repentance and a promise of improvement under the stress of excitement. But the improvement is as evanescent as the occasion that calls it forth. And the final state is apt to be worse than the first. More than one observer, too, has called attention to the fact that alternate excesses of vice and virtue are characteristic of the purely religious temperament.

The Rev. C. Morris, a colored gentleman, preaching at Balham, declared that the Gospel of Jesus is the only means to be employed in establishing universal brotherhood among the nations of the world. As a proof of this he cites the powerlessness of the Hague tribunal, the sittings of which do not prevent nations spending millions of dollars annually on warships, and increasing their armies and navies. Well, we invite Mr. Morris to take another view of the situation. The Hague Tribunal has been in existence for but a few years. Christianity has been in existence for many centuries. It has not prevented these huge armies and navies coming into existence, nor does it stand in the way of Christian nations holding supreme place in the art of slaughter. Yet Mr. Morris argues that the inability of the Hague Tribunal to prevent war should send us back to the "Gospel of Christ," while the failure of Christianity to stop war, with more centuries of existence than the Tribunal has had years, ought to lead us to fall back upon this same precious gospel! There was really no need for a preacher to travel all the way from America to talk in this strain. We have any number of parsons at home who can talk quite as stupidly.

One cannot resist asking further, what Christianity has ever done towards inducing a feeling of brotherhood between whites and blacks in the United States? No people fought more strenuously in favor of slavery in America than did the believers in the Gospel of Jesus; and none have since done more to create and maintain distinctions between the two races. Mr. Morris must know, as well as we do, that some of the most earnest in seeing that the negro keeps to his own part of the sidewalk, his own bar in a public house, his own car on a train, or to his own church, are those who would recoil in horror from anything approaching Freethought teachings. It might take

Mr. Morris too far into history to remind him also that negro slavery as a whole is of Christian origin, and that North America was unacquainted with slavery until Christians introduced it.

The final calamity has fallen upon the Jezreelites. Their huge steel and brick structure outside Chatham has been seized for rent, and is apparently to be turned into warehouses. Its designer, the founder of the Jezreelite sect, was an ex-soldier named White. He gave out that he would never die—but he died many years ago; that he was commissioned to gather together the 144,000 elect who were to sail up into the heavens and meet Jesus Christ at the approaching Second Advent; and that a huge temple to accommodate them all was to be built on a hill outside Chatham, where they were to await the Lord's coming. A good deal of the structure was erected. Its proportions were immense, and its construction was of the greatest solidity. Fanatic as he was, White must have been no ordinary man. As far as size and durability went, he was bent on rearing an edifice that would rival some of the colossal architecture of antiquity.

A Liverpool man of God has been heavily fined for indecent exposure at his own windows. We do not care to enter into the details of such a case, as this journal is not like the Bible, written by men for men, but is read by ladies and young people of both sexes. What we wish to emphasise is the fact that the religious press maintains a strict professional silence on matters of this kind. Had the culprit been a Secular lecturer, his offence would have been the theme of innumerable articles and sermons, all pointing to the irredeemable wickedness of "infidelity."

Rev. William Weir Miskimmin, minister of the Gospel Temperance Congregational Church at Falkirk, went courting a "summer girl" during his holiday in Ireland in 1902. He made her presents and asked her to marry him; she consented, and the compact was sealed with "love's first kiss." They actually walked out and attended Kents meetings together, so that he "moved in a new world, the richer for her affection." Subsequently he cooled off and went and married another lady. Whereupon the jilted fair one dragged the poor man of God into court, where he was mulcted in £100 damages for breach of promise of marriage.

Amongst the gifts of the amorous, if fickle, Miskimmin to the fair Miss Mildred Lee was a pendant of a golden crown. "What the angels wear," said Lord McLaren, amidst "laughter in court." This was in Edinburgh, where John Knox lived—and bullied Queen Mary. Lord McLaren's jocularly would have cost him his life three hundred years ago.

Before this breach of promise action was concluded the young lady's counsel pointed to a lady in court and asked the reverend gentleman if he knew her and had been engaged to her. He admitted knowing her, but denied the engagement; he had settled the matter with her out of regard for his wife; and there was no ground for her action. Lord McLaren remarked: "It is just like this one, which is also perfectly groundless (laughter)." Pastor Miskimmin seems to have a wide and varied experience.

"Painful Sensation in Leeds." This newspaper headline refers to the case of Mr. A. Benton, organist and choir-master of the Parish Church, who has gone off with the daughter of one of his dearest friends. Mr. Benton is a married man as well as a Christian. Another case for Dr. Torrey.

Dr. Horton is again lamenting the decline of Sabbatarianism. He is horrified that on a Sunday 400 men and boys assembled on the beach at Grimsby for the purpose of gambling, and that at Walton-on-the-Naze, also on a Sunday, a man should be killed during a dispute over a game of golf. We are with Dr. Horton in condemning both the killing and the gambling. But what has Sunday to do with it. Gambling and killing are no worse on Sunday than on Monday or Tuesday, yet we fancy that neither would have brought so strong a protest from Dr. Horton had they occurred on any other day in the week. One has a suspicion that it is the non-attendance at Church that is the chief offence, the other incidents are merely cited by way of a moral. Yet we would rather take the chances of an occasional mishap at normally healthy

Sunday golf, than the certain character destroying influences of the puritanical "sabbath."

Mr. G. K. Chesterton talks sense sometimes. In his recent *Daily News* article "On Good Taste" he said:—

"It is a quite astounding example of the condition into which our ethics and politics must have drifted when a man can answer an attack made on his good name with an attack on another man's good taste."

This is applied to Mr. Balfour's answer to his personal critics in the House of Commons. But it may be as well applied to Dr. Torrey's attitude towards Mr. Foote's "attack on his good name." First he pretended that Mr. Foote's pamphlets were anonymous. Then he stood on his dignity (heaven save the mark!) and declined to notice the "insults" of a man who had used such dreadful words as "lies" and "lying." A prisoner in the dock might as well refuse to plead Guilty or Not Guilty to the charges set forth so insultingly in his indictment. "Lies" and "lying" were precisely the crimes that Mr. Foote alleged, and proved, against Dr. Torrey.

Miss Annie R. Taylor, who is doing missionary work in Tibet, has great hopes of the people of that country. The encouraging thing is that they have an "open mind," and "many Tibetans are turning from Buddhism to Mohammedanism each year." She does not look upon this as "a step towards Christianity." But if the people are convertible Christianity ought to stand a chance.

Rev. S. Chadwick, at the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, said that "between midnight and four a.m. at great railway centres he had seen girls behind the bars and crowds of young fellows standing talking and drinking," while "people who wanted ordinary refreshments were usually neglected, and had to go without." The reverend gentleman has our sympathy. It is hard to sit up so late for a drink and then to miss it in that way. The barmaids and fellows should give the thirsty midnight men of God a chance.

The churchwardens of St. Hilary, Wallasey, near Birkenhead, are lecturing the congregation on account of the niggardly collections. They point out that well-dressed people ought not to slip a penny slyly into the plate while singing:—

We give Thee but Thine own,
Whate'er that gift may be;
All that we have is Thine alone,
A trust, O Lord, from Thee!

This is nearly as bad as the case of the worshiper who sang:—

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all!

And all the time he was singing he was feeling the edge of a small coin, to make sure it wasn't fourpence.

The cat is out of the bag at last, Baron Uixkiull, a Russian Baptist and delegate to the Baptist Congress, informs a newspaper interviewer that Russia's present condition is a judgment from God, due to the government having "sinned too much against the children of God" that is, the Baptists. Now this is news. People have attributed the downfall of Russia to Japanese superiority and bad home government. It is startling to learn that it is all due to the Baptists not being treated properly. What an important people the Baptists must be in God's estimation—to say nothing of their own.

The Rev. C. Copeland Smith has been discovering things. As the result of a year's experience among the "poor" he has come to the conclusion that people are very little afraid of death. He explains that it was one of his "pet theories that those outside of Christ were afraid of death." He now finds out that his "pet" unbeliever does not exist. He is as imaginary as the converted infidels of Dr. Torrey. We of course welcome the fact that Mr. Smith has found out how mistaken he was; but that he should have gone on believing, and probably preaching, such rubbish for years is a reminder of how little attention the average parson pays to facts before propounding his theories. The slightest reflection would have shown that all such stories are manufactured for pulpit use, and have no basis in fact. In the vast majority of cases, when death does come, it finds people so worn with pain and disease, that it loses its character of

King of Terrors, and takes rather that of a gentle nurse, bringing a welcome relief. And if Mr. Smith cares to carry his investigation further he will find that the believer is far more apt to play the coward in the face of death than is the unbeliever. Nor is there anything elevating in the picture of a Christian's death-bed (also largely fanciful, for Christians die much as others do), where the dying person's whole attention is the destination of his own soul. It is religious egotism and selfishness carried out to the end.

The Bishop of Bristol paid a visit to the Wesleyan Conference and delivered an address. In the course of his remarks he said that when Wesley read Butler's *Analogy* he said, "It was too difficult for the Freethinker, for Freethinkers are not usually deep thinkers." Wesley was in some directions a man of large intelligence, but this did not prevent him holding foolish views or saying things that were not exactly wise. And it is curious, but true, that whenever a parson quotes a great man he is apt to pick out the foolish sayings and leave the wise ones unnoticed. The Bishop asked the Conference to ponder Wesley's words, as though they contained some wonderful and unsuspected truth. It is, of course, true that the average Freethinker is not a deep thinker, any more than the average parson is a deep thinker. But it is also true that the average Freethinker is a much deeper thinker than the average parson, and certainly much superior to the average believer. While conditions remain as they are the mere fact of a man calling himself a Freethinker is an indication that he has given some thought to religious topics, and there can be no such guarantee in church membership, which involves no fresh intellectual effort, and often acts as a damper on effort already made.

The Presidential address at the Wesleyan Conference at Bristol contained the usual reference to the Education question, embodying, of course, the usual hypocrisies. The President said the Conference was of the "firm and unshaken opinion that God's Holy Word should have its place in the schools, and should be thoroughly taught in a manner as free from bias as the Bible itself." The stupidity of thus refusing to recognise that the Bible is before all the book of a sect, is only equalled by the cant of freedom and equality by men who show so supreme a disregard for the most elementary principles of social justice. One can at least respect the bigot who is not ashamed of his bigotry, and who does not attempt to be anything else than a bigot. It is the man who demands equal liberty for all while reserving special rights for himself and saddling others with special disabilities, who adds hypocrisy to his bigotry, and leaves a bad taste in one's mouth.

Meanwhile an object lesson comes to us from Tunbridge Wells. A Miss Gardner was appointed headmistress of a school owned by Churchmen and Nonconformists. Miss Gardner is a Unitarian, and both Nonconformist and Church parents have combined in protesting against her appointment, and in demanding her dismissal. There is not the slightest objection to her on the score of qualification; only that her religious views are not "sound," and on this occasion both Churchmen and Nonconformists are in happy agreement. In the Derby case, where a publican's child was turned out of a Sunday school because her parent's trade made her unfit to associate with the children of those parents who drank the beer instead of selling it, there was a difference of opinion among Christians as to the justice of the action. In the present instance there is a happy agreement existing. The *Christian World* thinks that Churchmen, Nonconformists, and Unitarians alike should be regarded as qualified to give simple, unsectarian, and undogmatic teaching of the Bible. Of course one can hardly expect the *Christian World* to extend this to those teachers who are Freethinkers, and have the courage to say so. Still less can one expect that paper to see that so long as religion is taught in schools those in whose hands the appointments rest will generally appoint those with whose religious opinions they are in agreement. The only way to avoid this is to keep all sectarian opinions outside the schools and so prevent the intrusion of sinister interests into the appointment of teachers. But, if the *Christian World* has the wit to see this, it certainly lacks the courage to express it.

One resolution carried at the Wesleyan Conference was the following:

"That the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, recognising the grave evils, both spiritual and moral, arising from the social condition of the masses in many of our large cities, and from the periodic lack of employment, hails with satisfaction the attempt now being made to deal with the question

of unemployment by the present Government, and extends its sympathy to all legislative effort, by whatever party, which has for its object the amelioration of these conditions and the uprising of the people."

The mover of this resolution, Mr. G. W. M'Arthur, of the Leysian Mission, London, gave a remarkable reason for it. He implored the Church to "come forward to lead this movement" otherwise there would be legislative effort "forced through by the Socialist and by the Freethinker," which would have the effect of "further widening the gap between the church and the masses." This is an excellent trade reason, and we congratulate the gentleman on his business instinct.

"Should clergymen criticise the Bible?" still drags its silly length in the *Daily Mail*. "Should clergymen play the fool?" ought to supersede it.

One writer in this ridiculous correspondence, the Rev. J. Gilbert Dixon, of Crockenhall vicarage, Kent, says that clergymen who do not believe the Bible should clear out of the Church. Yes, but what is believing the Bible? Ay, there's the rub. Does vicar Dixon believe it *all*? Does he believe that the first woman was made out of a spare rib? Does he believe that the whale swallowed Jonah? Does he believe that Balaam's ass carried on a conversation in good Moabitish? If the reverend gentleman really does believe in these things he is quite a *rara avis*. But if he does not believe in them, it is clear that he does not regard believing the Bible as equivalent to believing all that is in it. What right, then, has he to call for the expulsion of clergymen who reject a little more of the Bible than he does? Would it not cap the joke if the "unbelieving" clergy called for the expulsion of the "fools"?

Katherine Tynan, in the *National Review*, gives some questions asked by children from four to five years of age. Here are two:—

"Well, if God made the world, who made God?"

"If the Devil is so naughty why did God make him?"

These questions require answering. Is there any clergyman who has the courage to tackle them? Defoe put a similar question to the second in the mouth of Man Friday—and nobody has answered it yet.

A contemporary gives the following as an extract from an essay on the Japanese written in the recent grammar school examination by a lower school boy:—"Until recently the Japanese used to fight with bows and arrows, but now they are equipped with the complete arms of a Christian."

Holywell Board of Guardians sent a number of children from the workhouse to the Fron Home, and they are all marched to the Established Church on Sundays, even when their parents are Nonconformists. An "explanation" is demanded by the Guardians. It is not stated whether the parents themselves care a straw. But religion was always a good ground for quarreling; and all is fish that comes to the Church's net.

A gipsy encampment has been broken up at Black Patch, Handsworth, Birmingham. It took 1 chief constable, 1 high sheriff, 50 assistants, and 50 constables to do the job. Of course there were a good many casualties, and several "ringleaders" were taken off in Black Maria. The ground is wanted for a church. And the Battle of Black Patch may be regarded as a happy inauguration of this new branch of the "peace on earth" business.

The genuine essence of Truth never dies. That it be genuine, a voice from the great Deep of Nature, there is the point at Nature's judgment-seat. What we call pure or impure, is not with her the final question. Not how much chaff is in you; but whether you have any wheat. Pure? I might say to many a man: Yes, you are pure; pure enough; but you are chaff,—insincere hypothesis, hearsay, formality; you never were in contact with the great heart of the Universe at all; you are properly neither pure nor impure; you are nothing, Nature has no business with you.—*Carlyle*.

Hell is a city much like London—

A populous and a smoky city;
There are all sorts of people undone,
And there is little or no fun done;

Small justice shown and still less pity.

—*Shelley*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(Suspended during the Summer.)

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road-Leyton, Essex.—August 13, m., Camberwell, a., Brockwell Park; 20, Victoria Park; 27, Victoria Park.

OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£144 15s. 1d. Received this week:—Honest Labor 1s., M. Beaton 1s.

THE RIDGWAY FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£3 7s. 6d. Received this week:—F. Bonte, £1.

E. G. BAYFORD.—Accept our warmest thanks for your long, careful, and very useful communication. Our copy of Rickman's *Life of Paine* went astray in shifting, much to our regret. With regard to Paine's command of French, we reproduced what Mr. Sedgwick wrote, without endorsing it. We agree with you that Paine could hardly have lived for years in Paris without mastering enough French for a common conversation. We have sometimes thought of trying to get good reproductions of all the notable portraits of Paine. What fine eyes he had! How different from Dr. Torrey's pig-terrier optics!

H. B. PRICE.—The best way to "make the bigots smart" at West Ham is to go on actively with our propaganda. Some of the "Nonconformist Conscience" men, who vote against the Freethought journals being allowed the same rights as Christian journals, are doing their best to prove our contention that the Passive Resistance movement is nothing but humbug. What these men really want is privilege for themselves, at the expense of their fellow citizens.

H. HOZE.—Cuttings always welcome.

W. F. MOSS.—Glad you have such a high opinion of the *Freethinker* after reading it for twelve months, and look forward to it every Friday. Thanks for your letter generally.

O. C. JAMES.—Nothing of the sort; always pleased to hear from you. We shall get at the Hugh Price Hughes matter presently. We want to do it justice. Thanks for the S.A. document.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

NEMO.—We cannot tell you where Thomas Paine said that "man was evolved from an oyster," nor do we believe that anyone else can do so. Someone who may have descended from an oyster, and hasn't come far, has probably been trying to mislead you.

G. JACOB asks: "Why should not the clergy tell lies, if it pays them to do so? Do they not know their own business best?" Perhaps the clergy ought to deal with these questions themselves.

J. WALKER.—Glad to hear you have found Paine's *Age of Reason* so helpful. You will find Freethought meetings at the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow, on Sundays during the winter.

A. AFSLEY.—See paragraph.

H. EAGERS draws our attention to the fact that Mr. W. T. Stead, in his cheap "Masterpiece Library," gives Robert Burns's best poems and songs as they stand, adding: "Bowdlerisation has never been one of my besetting sins." Our correspondent commends the last sentence to "the attention of some editors of *Ingersoll*."

J. C. GOODFELLOW.—Pleased to receive your interesting letter. We will bear your suggestions in mind. Your views seem to us full of good sense. Mr. Columbine's article was a good one, well written, and not ungenial; but the complaint of "injustice" might easily, as you say, be turned right round.

J. LEISCHMAN.—Why didn't you give your full address? You are such a nice person. You send a malicious postcard about us to Mr. Stead—which he passed over like a gentleman. Then you send us a postcard, pretending to write "as a friend" and ending with "Yours ever." Evidently you did not think that both postcards would reach us. We keep them by us. Writing very like yours has appeared on scurrilous postcards addressed to us before. This may enable us to get on your track. Meanwhile you remind us of Coleridge's definition of a rogue: "A fool with a circumdendibus."

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.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Last week's *Freethinker* ran out of print, and a few orders had to be refused. There are always some returns of the paper, and those who failed to get last week's issue can obtain it by ordering again.

Only one subscription has reached us on behalf of the Paris Congress Fund. Mr. F. Bonte sends us £2 16s.—which is a handsome share of the £50 or so that will be requisite. This is the holiday season, and it is difficult just now to get at the pockets of subscribers; but the sum is an extremely small one for the readers of this journal to make up, and it ought to be forthcoming without a great deal of delay, and without a lot of appealing. We can hardly believe that the members and friends of the N. S. S. will be content to see it unrepresented at an International Congress of this character. Of course we quite recognise that we go to press with this number only two or three days after the last number was in the readers' hands. Next week there should be a good list of subscriptions.

On Sunday, July 16, a sort of rehearsal of the great Congress to be held at Paris early in September took place in that city. There was afterwards a dinner, at which about 150 persons sat down, including several ladies and one Englishman. Amongst those who were present were Marcelin Berthelot, perhaps the greatest living French scientist, Ferdinand Buisson, Victor Charbonnel, Sebastien Faure, and M. Aulard, deputy and professor of history, who is recognised as the first authority on the Revolutionary period. Buisson read a letter from M. Combes, ex-Premier, whose name was enthusiastically cheered. M. Berthelot, who is ninety years of age, stated in a clear voice that statues of Voltaire and Rousseau had been ordered for the Pantheon, and that the artist selected was one who had suffered for his Freethought and Republicanism. One of the 150 diners, who reads his *Freethinker*, explained to many others what Mr. Foote was doing to vindicate the memory of Thomas Paine, and a hope was expressed that a brief *Life of Paine* might be published for French readers.

The *Freethinker* at West Ham again! The Public Libraries Committee reported to the Council that "they have had under consideration a letter from Mr. R. H. Rosetti, hon. secretary of the West Ham Branch of the National Secular Society, asking that the *Freethinker* may be placed on the tables of the public libraries, and are unable to recommend the Council to depart from the resolution already arrived at, not to place this publication on the tables, but to keep it in reserve to hand to readers on application." A sillier resolution was never heard of. No wonder that Councillor Leggatt held it up to contempt. His speech was frequently interrupted, but he got home some unpalatable truths, and wound up by moving that the *Freethinker* should lie on the tables like other papers. This was seconded by Councillor Jones, who protested against some papers being pushed forward and others held back, and declared that the people were quite capable of judging for themselves. On a division 11 voted for Mr. Leggatt's motion, and 29 against it. That is how representative government works out at West Ham. The majority crush justice by mere force of numbers.

It is high time for Mr. Foote and his colleagues to pay West Ham another visit. This they will do at the end of September and the beginning of October. The Secular Society, Limited, has arranged (in co-operation with the N. S. S. Branch) for another course of three Sunday evening lectures in the great Stratford Town Hall. Messrs. Foote, Cohen, and Lloyd will be the lecturers. Crowded audiences will be the best answer to the bigots on the Town Council.

Another course of Sunday evening lectures, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited, has been arranged for September 10, 17, and 24, at Stanley Hall, near the "Boston" in North London. This is a handsome hall in

an excellent situation, and first-rate meetings are expected after last season's successful experiment.

A further course of Sunday evening lectures has been arranged by the Secular Society, Limited, at Queen's Hall in October. These meetings will be well advertised. A new feature will be some instrumental music by first-class professionals. London Freethinkers should make a note of this, and see that the hall is crowded every time.

The annual conference of the National Secular Society was held this year in Liverpool (England). The London *Freethinker* reports a good attendance. At the public meeting in the evening the hall was packed with a magnificent and sympathetic crowd, and at least five hundred people had to be turned away from the doors. Addresses were made by G. W. Foote, who is Charles Bradlaugh's successor as president of the society, and who made his annual report as such; by Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. H. Percy Ward, Mr. F. A. Davies, and Mr. J. T. Lloyd. The results of the business conference are not given in the *Freethinker's* first report. No doubt Mr. Foote remains president. Otherwise the conference would not have been the gratifying success which we are assured it was.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances* has the honor of being under the ban of the London County Council. Amongst the many functions of that important and powerful body is that of a censor of literature. It decides what publications shall be sold, and what publications shall not be sold, at the meetings held in the parks and open spaces under its control. In Victoria Park the Bethnal Green N. S. S. Branch is allowed to sell the *Freethinker*, but is forbidden to sell *Bible Romances*. There must be some secret reason for this remarkable distinction. Perhaps the Council feels that, as it has ordered Bible lessons to be given in its elementary schools, it ought to do its best to keep the "Blessed Book" from falling into disbelief and contempt; and perhaps it also feels that *Bible Romances* is the book most calculated to bring about that awful catastrophe. This should be noticed by Freethinkers. They ought to do their utmost to promote the circulation of a volume which is marked out in this way as peculiarly mischievous to Bibliolatry—which is the religion of Protestants.

Mr. J. Arnold Sharpley got an excellent letter in the *Liverpool Post and Mercury* with reference to Dr. Aked's question as to whether congregations need elementary instruction in regard to the Bible and Christianity. "I contend," he says, "that the average auditor knows nothing of Biblical criticism. Not one churchwarden out of a dozen has read through the Book of Common Prayer; not one Free Church deacon out of a dozen has read the Higher Critics; not one churchgoer out of a thousand is at all well acquainted with the Bible. I will go further, and suggest that it is not until lately that the clergy have been acquainted with these commonplaces of criticism." The sting of this is in the tail.

Mr. James Douglas, in his weekly book-article in *Saturday's Star* (July 29), wrote the following welcome paragraph:—

"It is curious that these Christian warriors never realise that there are lookers-on. I suppose they think that outsiders do not count. For instance, the *Spectator* lately refused to insert a letter from Mr. Henry S. Salt, in which he brought forward evidence against Mrs. Mackintosh's story of the deathbed conversion of Richard Jefferies. Dr. Torrey has been severely castigated by Mr. Stead for refusing to withdraw baseless allegations against Ingersoll and Paine. Mr. Clodd contributed to the "Do We Believe?" correspondence in the *Daily Telegraph* a temperately-worded letter from the scientific agnostic point of view. Mr. Clodd's letter was not included in the selection of letters which was published in book form. Here, then, are three cases which produce a disquieting impression upon the dispassionate observer. As the *Athenaeum* remarked the other day, 'No creed worth believing needs to be protected by the suppression of attack against it.' Possibly there is an adequate explanation of all these suppressions. If so, it is strange that it is not forthcoming."

Some day or other it may dawn upon Mr. James Douglas and other publicists that the press boycott of Mr. G. W. Foote is "strange" too. Perhaps it will only seem "strange" when he is dead and buried. We beg pardon—cremated.

"The Nemesis of Torrey" was the title of an outspoken article by the Rev. Dr. J. Warschauer in last week's *New*

Age. Dr. Warschauer honorably mentions Mr. Foote's pamphlet entitled "Dr. Torrey and the Infidels," which is so generally ignored, although it was the necessary basis of everything else. He points out how it gave "the lie direct to the American's unscrupulous aspersions," and how Mr. Stead read it and "was amazed." After doing full justice to the "contemptible trickeries resorted to by Dr. Torrey in the correspondence that ensued," Dr. Warschauer observes that at the finish he "does not express a word of regret for having sought to sully the memories of men the lachet of whose shoes he is not worthy to unloose." Praise is given to "Mr. Stead's unshrinking performance of a public duty"—and it is richly deserved; and joy is expressed at "this scathing and unanswerable exposure of a trafficker in calumny." Dr. Warschauer concludes as follows:—

"As for Torrey himself, he may go on conducting his 'missions'—he may even continue to draw crowds of the less thoughtful and less informed, especially so long as his partnership with Mr. Alexander lasts. But so far as the decent religious life of this country is concerned, his rôle is played out; those who choose to identify themselves with him in the future, will do so knowing him for the convicted and unrepentant bearer of false witness that he is. In the full daylight of public opinion he stands judged and branded, his name a hissing, his head enshrouded with an aureole of shame. At an unexpected hour, and acting through an unforeseen instrument, Nemesis—the Justice of God—has overtaken him."

This is earnest and powerful writing, and it is another vindication of Mr. Foote's bold and defiant attitude towards Dr. Torrey. For our part, we confess that we are not able to see "the Justice of God" in Torrey's exposure just as he "seemed to be nearing his apotheosis." It was an Atheist who stepped out to do the pioneer work and take all the risks. Mr. Foote alone had adequate command of the facts and the determination to use them—at the proper moment. He waited for nearly eighteen months, until Torrey came to London, and challenged him there—the only place where the challenge could be really effective. And it was the distribution of his challenge outside Albert Hall by Mr. Foote's gallant little band of helpers that gave the necessary dramatic touch to the agitation. The reprint in the *Clarion* and then Mr. Stead's grand article in the *Review of Reviews* followed. Mr. Stead carried the exposure of Torrey into circles that Mr. Foote could not reach. All honor to him. No one has praised him more warmly and handsomely than we have. But the Freethought party knows that the President of the National Secular Society and Editor of the *Freethinker* was at the bottom of the whole business, and that if Mr. Foote had not moved nobody would have moved at all.

Glasgow's *Saint Andrew* notices Mr. Stead's "Torrey" article in the *Review of Reviews* and refers to Mr. Foote's pamphlets quite fairly. It says that Dr. Torrey will now have to recant or justify his aspersions on Paine and Ingersoll. But will he? Our northern contemporary refers to Paine's "immense intellectual force" and to Ingersoll as a "noble-minded and generous gentleman."

This week's instalment of Mr. Foote's elaborate "Defence of Thomas Paine" is of the greatest interest. A discovery has been made of a very important fact, namely that Paine's wife was not "still living" at the time of his death, as Dr. Torrey alleged. She died eleven months before him. His will was actually made six months after her decease. Another instalment of Mr. Foote's article will complete it. He will dispose of all the other "charges" against Paine, including that of "drunkenness"—and leave Dr. Torrey wondering what has become of his ill-drawn indictment.

"Poor" Shelley! That is what the great Atheist poet was condescendingly called by the better sort of Christians—the other sort calling him a fiend. Well, at Sotheby's the other day, Mr. Quaritch gave £155 for a few of Shelley's letters. There's lots of money in "Poor" Shelley now.

Tyneside Freethinkers, please note that the Excursion Party for Shotley Bridge will leave Newcastle Central Station to-day (Aug. 6) by 2.20 p.m. train, returning from Shotley at 8.34. Special tickets at 1s. 6d. per head can be purchased from the secretary at the train. It is hoped that large numbers will turn up; and they should not be deterred by bad weather, as special arrangements have been made in that eventuality.

Liverpool "saints" will bear in mind the N. S. S. Branch picnic to-day (Aug. 6). Brakes leave Islington-square at 10.30 for Rainford. Dinner will be served at 1 p.m. and tea

at 5 at the Wheatsheaf Hotel. Tickets 4s. each. Cyclists 2s. 6d. All intending to go should communicate promptly with Mr. W. P. Pearson, 27 Ivor-road, Egremont, Cheshire.

Mr. Lloyd's second visit to Mountain Ash was a complete and delightful contrast to the first. On the former occasion, the opposition was fierce and relentless, as well as unintelligent; but this time there was no opposition whatever, although the attitude of the lecturer was profoundly anti-Christian throughout. The attention was perfect, and the applause at the close most enthusiastic.

The Mountain Ash Branch of the N. S. S. is doing splendid propagandist work under peculiarly difficult and discouraging conditions. Mr. T. Bennett, president, is a host in himself. He is an able and acceptable lecturer, a worker that needeth not to be ashamed, whose whole heart is in the cause. Mr. Rees, vice-president, Mr. G. Garrett, secretary, and Mr. W. T. Bowen, treasurer, are most devoted and indefatigable workers, who willingly give time and money to carry on the uphill fight against prejudice and superstition. South Wales is rapidly becoming ripe for a magnificent Freethought harvest.

Mr. Gallagher, of the Camberwell Branch, who has been doing good work in South London, lectures in Victoria Park this afternoon (Aug. 6) for the Bethnal Green Branch. We hope there will be a good rally of the local "saints."

The Kingsland Branch had a very successful meeting at Ridley-road on Sunday, addressed by Mr. W. H. Thresh, who gave great satisfaction. A word of thanks is due to Mr. Marshall, of Stratford, who spoke eloquently for a few minutes afterwards.

South London Freethinkers have been interested in the wedding of the beautiful grand-daughter of the veteran Mr. R. H. Side—Alice Elizabeth Side, who was married to Mr. W. G. Knight on Saturday, July 29. The ceremony took place at the Registrar's Office in Blackfriars-road, and was attended by a very large party of relatives and friends. We hear that our veteran old friend was in "great form" on this auspicious occasion. The "saints" in South London wish the young couple all happiness and prosperity.

Mr. J. Partridge, 183 Vauxhall-road, Birmingham, sends us the following "Ridgway Fund" list:—

Previously acknowledged, £16 9s. Received since: J. C. Bridges 1s., Manchester 2s. 6d., L. R. 6d., Admirer 1s., J. A. T. 5s., T. Ollerenshaw 2s. 6d.—Total, £17 1s. 6d.

Subscriptions sent to us direct for this fund are acknowledged elsewhere.

A Freethought contemporary publishes an "interview" with Mrs. Annie Besant, in which she refers to her being "driven out of the National Secular Society." Now there must be a mistake somewhere. We cannot believe that Mrs. Besant really said this. For it is not the truth. Mrs. Besant became a Theosophist while still a vice-president of the National Secular Society, and held herself free to expound Theosophy from Secular platforms. Mr. Foote held himself equally free to oppose Theosophy, but nothing he said was inconsistent with personal respect for Mrs. Besant. Bradlaugh's resignation of the N. S. S. presidency, early in 1890, and Mr. Foote's election as his successor, led to Mrs. Besant's resignation. It was a sensible and honest action on her part, for she was out of intellectual sympathy with her old colleagues, and was advocating what most of them regarded as a negation of Secularism. But she was so far from being driven out that a deputation from the Executive waited upon her and asked her to reconsider her resignation. Mr. Foote himself thought this an amiable weakness, but he did not say so publicly. The deputation reported that Mrs. Besant's resignation was absolute. Those are the facts.

Valor is still *valuc*. The first duty for a man is still that of subduing *Fear*. We must get rid of Fear; we cannot act at all till then. A man's acts are slavish, not true but specious; his very thoughts are false, he thinks too as a slave and a coward, till he have got Fear under his feet.—*Carlyle*.

What oration of the Bishop of London or of the Archbishop of Canterbury is worth the cry of a woman before Desdemona, of a mother before Arthur, of a soul before Hamlet?—*Victor Hugo*.

Bible Promises.—II.

(Concluded from p. 487.)

HERE is the promise of God to Abraham: "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xxii. 17-18). This is a very definite promise, and it is repeated over and over again in various parts of the Bible. Has it been fulfilled? Have the Jews become as the stars in heaven and the sand on the seashore in number? Nothing of the sort. According to Whitaker their number throughout the world is computed to be between eight and nine millions. And the population of the British Empire and dependencies are between four and five hundred millions. Has God blessed them as he said he would? Has he given to them all the countries he promised to give them? Has he subdued all their enemies as he promised to do? Not one of them. He has left them without a country to this day. He has not subdued one of their foes. He has allowed, and does allow them to be despised and persecuted almost everywhere. A more unfortunate nation never existed, and they claim to be the chosen people of God. The only rational inference from the history of the Jews is that they are, and were ambitious to be a great nation, not only for themselves but for all other nations also. And this desire was a credit to their intelligence, for no people ever became great without some laudable ambition. But the vanity which prompted them to claim that they were the peculiar chosen people of God, above all other nations, especially in the light of their unfortunate and disastrous history, is a grave national fault in their character, tending as it does, to make them ridiculous in the sight of all who can see things as they are.

The only conclusions that can be drawn from the facts in this case are, firstly, that God never made the promises attributed to him; or, secondly, if he made the promises he never intended to fulfil them, or had no power to do so, and either of these alternatives deprives him of goodness or of allmightiness, or both; or, thirdly, that the promises were made by the Jews themselves to themselves, and attributed to God, and this last seems to be the literal truth.

On the supposition that God made the Jews his chosen people and gave them the promises attributed to him, and in the face of their non-fulfilment, we are driven to infer that he is not a just and impartial God, that he is not a faithful God, that he is not a wise and discriminating God, that he is not an immutable God, or that he is not an almighty God, and therefore could not fulfil the promises he made and intended to accomplish. If these suppositions are rejected, we are forced to think that the God depicted is only a personified idea formed by man himself, a mere anthropomorphic fiction of the brain, and this, in all probability is the fact.

In the New Testament the most remarkable promise is a part of a prophecy by Jesus of the end of the world. Every prophecy, in a sense, is also a promise of something to come. This is specially clear in the prophecy of Christ about his second coming at the end of the world. Here is the paragraph containing the prophecy and promise: "But in those days after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light. And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of heaven.....Verily I say unto you that this

generation shall not pass till these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away" (Mark xiii. 24-31); "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 27-28).

These passages are evidently not only a prophecy, but also a promise of a definite character by the Son of Man to his disciples and all the elect. The Son of Man in the paragraphs was Jesus, who was not only the Son of God, but God himself, born as a man. That is the doctrine of the Churches. From the Swedenborgians and Free Churches, through the Church of England to that of Rome, Jesus the God and Son of God is preached and worshiped. The Son of Man is nowhere in the Churches. His name is seldom heard from the altar and pulpit. It is Jesus the God, born a man, that is elevated before the people by the priests of all the sects.

But Jesus did not parade himself as the Son of God, except by calling God his Father. The name he applied to himself was the Son of Man. And does this fact not throw a doubt on the doctrine that Jesus was God born as a man? If Jesus was God, he knew it; and if he knew he was God, is it not likely that he would have told his disciples that he was God, or at least would have called himself the Son of God, and not the Son of Man?

That Jesus was not conscious of being a God, and that he did not claim to be one, is clearly shown in some verses connected with the prophecy of his second coming at the end of the world. His disciples asked him, when would the end come? And he answered them: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, nor the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). Mark only gives the answer, and omits the questions. But Matthew inserts the inquiry and the reply. "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olive, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. xxiv. 3, 36). Had Jesus been God he would have known all that his Father knew; but he did not know the hour or day when the end would come. Therefore he was not omniscient, and not a God.

But my subject is the promises; and in the prophecy of his second coming at the end of the world there are several very definite ones. He promised his disciples that he would come again in the clouds, with great power and glory; that he would send his angels to gather together all his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of earth to the uttermost part of heaven; that he would raise up the dead, for without they could not be gathered to meet him in the sky; that he would reward all the elect according to their works; and that he would fulfil these promises during the generation then living. The language is explicit and definite that the end of the world and the second advent of Christ were to occur during the lifetime of some then living. These are the words of Jesus according to the Gospel: "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28). It is not possible even to a priest to twist the words to mean anything else. And all Christians at the time, and long after, understood the words in their literal meaning. For generations the Church kept expecting the end of the world and the reappearance of Jesus in the clouds; and even to-day there are Christians so steeped in religious superstitions as to believe in and expect the coming of Jesus a second time, as he promised to do.

Not one of the promises has been fulfilled. Nearly two thousand years have elapsed since they were uttered, and not a sign of them happening has been seen. The Son of Man has not reappeared, the

angels have not been sent, the dead have not been raised, the elect have not been gathered together and rewarded, and the world has not come to an end, nor does it show any sign of ending soon. And yet in the face of this unique example of stupendous ignorance, delusion, and failure, there are learned men, some of them great scientists, who assert that Jesus was, and is, the greatest and grandest man that ever lived. A more striking example of the baneful effect of religious superstition on the mind of man cannot be found.

And this example does not stand by itself. The life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels is full of unfulfilled promises. He said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Being God, one would think he could be with one in his name, as well as with two or three; or, for that matter, two or three hundreds or thousands. Besides, it is not easy to understand how he could be in the midst of thousands of meetings at the same time, for I suppose that all Christians, including the Greek Church, Catholic Church, and all the endless sects of Protestants are all gathered together in his name. If he can be at home with all of them he must be a great cosmopolitan. But if he visits only those who think as he thinks one would like to know where and in what church they are to be found, for they cannot all be right, unless everything is right and nothing is wrong. But I fear we must consider this an unfulfilled promise.

In connection with the last mentioned promise, Jesus made others of tremendous significance: "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 18-19). Why two should be necessary it is difficult to explain. Why not one as well as two? One would be quite as likely to be right as two. Another question arises, why should it be necessary for two to agree and ask in order to get God to do anything that ought to be done? As he knows everything and has power to do everything he desires, why should he wait to be asked before he acts?

Jesus made promises more astounding still, if that be possible. Here are his words: "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark xi. 22, 23, 24). This large order it would be difficult, if not impossible, to beat. But there are plenty more of the same class. For instance: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them: they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover" (Mark xvi. 17-18). Do any Christians believe and receive these promises? Are there any Christians that would venture to act on the faith of them? The Peculiar People accept and act on a part of them, that of laying hands on the sick, but there is not one of them that would drink poison believing it would not hurt them.

Do the missionaries believe the promise that they shall speak with new tongues without learning them? Not they. They have more sense than the one who made the promise, and for that reason they establish colleges where the students have to learn any new tongue just the same as any unbeliever. In the Free Churches and a section of the Church of England the Devil has ceased to exist, and it is a puzzle to know how believers can cast out devils when there are none to cast out.

There is another promise specially made to the priests: "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Mark xiii. 11). Do the clerical profession accept this instruction? Not they. However stupid they are as a class, they are not stupid enough to enter a pulpit or a presidential chair without preparing what to speak. Hence the theological colleges to train ministers, and the frequent and urgent appeals to students to be thoroughly well prepared for the work they have to do.

The cap for all the promises is the following: "This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die..... This is that bread that came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John vi. 50-58). Christians may say that the words "bread," "die," "live," and so on, are not to be taken in a literal sense, but with a spiritual meaning. But that will scarcely stand examination. The manna which the fathers ate was a natural manna, and their death was a natural death; and without taking the words "die" and "live" in the same sense, there is neither logic nor argument in the verses. The argument in the words is plain enough: Your fathers ate manna and died; but if you eat the bread that came down from heaven you will not die, but shall live for ever.

Promises are proverbially uncertain, but Bible promises beat all. None of them have been fulfilled, or can be fulfilled. Only superstitious ignorance could give them utterance, and only ignorant, weak-minded, and superstitious people could believe them and attempt to act upon them. And the book containing such poisonous delusions and errors is being forced into schools to the lifelong detriment of the scholars.

R. J. DERFEL.

National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive Meeting held on Thursday, July 28, 1905. The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. J. Barry, C. Cohen, H. Cowell, W. Leat, J. Neate, Victor Roger, F. Davies, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, H. Silverstein, T. J. Thurlow, and F. Wood.

This being the first meeting of the new Executive, the first business was the election of committees, etc., for the year. Messrs. W. Leat and S. Samuels were elected as monthly auditors, and Messrs. Victor Roger, F. Wood, W. Leat, and S. Samuels as a Benevolent Fund Committee. Miss E. M. Vance was re-elected as General Secretary.

Applications for permission to form new branches of the Society at Merthyr Vale, West Stanley (Durham) and Warrington, were read, the Secretary reported that all necessary conditions had been fulfilled and the requests were granted. New members were also admitted for the Cardiff, West London, and Wigan Branches; the total number being fifty-two.

The delegate from Bethnal Green Branch reported that the London County Council had prohibited the sale of Mr. G. W. Foote's work, *Bible Romances*, in Victoria Park. The Paris International Freethought Congress was discussed, and Messrs. G. W. Foote, C. Cohen, J. Lloyd, V. Roger, F. A. Davies, and E. M. Vance were elected to represent the Society.

The Meeting then adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

SHAKESPEARE.

Inordinate force, exquisite charm, epic ferocity, pity, creative faculty, gaiety (that lofty gaiety unintelligible to narrow understandings), sarcasm (the cutting lash for the wicked), sidereal grandeur, microscopic tenuity, a universe of poetry, with its zenith and its nadir, the vast whole, the profound detail,—nothing is wanting in this mind. One feels, on approaching the work of this man, a vast wind blowing off the shores of a world. The irradiation of genius on every side.—such is Shakespeare.—*Victor Hugo.*

Correspondence.

THE FIRST "LIFE" OF PAINE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I be permitted to make a few remarks respecting Oldys's *Life of Paine*? Instead of *three* lies on the title page of that work, Dr. Conway rightly says that it bears *five* falsehoods, and adds "there is a marked increase of virulence with the successive editions." It was not the first edition only that claimed to be a "defence" of Paine's writings. Dr. Conway says that the third edition appeared "with a review of his writings" on the title page. A copy of the third edition is now lying open at the title page before me, which has no mention of *review* at all, but says as do the first and second editions "with a defence of his writings." This edition bore the date 1791. It would be interesting to know what edition the title page was altered, how many editions were issued, when it ceased to be printed, how many copies there were of each edition, and how they were disposed of. The edition with a portrait of Paine, holding up the "Rights of Man" and surrounded by apes was the eighth, and dated 1793. The title page stated it to be "The Abridged Life of Thomas Paine the Author of the Seditious Writings entitled Rights of Man." This was a shilling pamphlet (or two guineas per hundred), and contained but twenty-six pages. Since writing the preceding I have looked up a copy of the fifth edition which has "with a review of his writings" on the title page.

A. G. BARKER.

A NEW CENSORSHIP.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—For some years, the Bethnal Green Branch of the N. S. S. has sold in Victoria Park, at its Sunday meetings, without any restriction, Freethought literature of every description. At the beginning of the present season, the Parks Committee of the London County Council requested the Branch Secretary to submit for their approval a list of books, pamphlets, and papers to be sold at the forthcoming meetings. This request was complied with, and after some delay permission was granted for the sale of everything with the exception of your *Bible Romances*. Now, having read this work both in its early detached form and the present Popular Edition, I must confess that this was the very last book I would have deemed it likely for the Parks Committee to take exception to. Surely they could not have done more than merely glance at the cover of the book! Otherwise it would have been apparent to them that the work was a scholarly one of no mean order, sparkling with wit and humor, never vulgar, and enlivening what would otherwise have been dull reading.

But I have nothing to do with the literary tastes of the L.C.C., nor has that body anything to do with the literary tastes of those people who choose to purchase the book. I have yet to learn that one of the functions of a municipal body is to decide what should or should not be read by the public. Of course, I am only referring here to polemical literature.

It may be said that the L.C.C. cannot allow the Parks to be used for the purpose of selling *any* literature, and this I could understand, though I might not agree with it. But when it *selects* certain kinds, and that selection is obviously based upon theological, and therefore speculative considerations, one can only say that such methods are quite unbecoming to a great municipal body in the largest city of the world.

If the sale of this particular book affected the sanitation of Victoria Park, or, say, caused an obstruction to other meetings, I could then understand the restriction. But otherwise, it is a piece of petty tyranny, more in keeping with a rural than a London County Council, and quite indefensible in a country that boasts a free press.

HY. SILVERSTEIN.

It is startling to think of the heavy, rough, actual wood of the Cross, and to observe that now the Cross has become only a symbol, and is decked with silken tassels and little velvet flags, and is guaranteed easy for carrying. Moreover, its victory was assured when it was accepted among the world's trinkets and worn as jewellery.—*W. R. Paterson* ("Benjamin Swift").

For the actual fact, strange as it may seem, is that no persons are so little likely to submit to a passage of Scripture not to their fancy, as those who are most positive on the subject of its general inspiration.—*Ruskin.*

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, a Lecture.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, Mr. Gallagher, "Free Will and Immortality."

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., "Eating God."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, E. Edwin; Brockwell Park, 3.15, E. B. Rose; 6.30, E. B. Rose.

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Coffee House Bull Ring, Thursday, 10, at 8. Paper by one of the members.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): No Lecture. Annual Picnic: Rainford. Brakes leave Islington-square 10.30 a.m. prompt. Tickets 4s., cyclists 2s. 6d., children 1s. 3d.; dinner and tea will be served at the Wheat Sheaf Hotel. Monday, 8, Saint Domingo Pit, H. Percy Ward; Wednesday, 8, Edgehill Church, H. Percy Ward.

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

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S.: Market-square, Tuesday, Aug. 8, at 7.45, H. Percy Ward, "The Cant of Christian Charity."

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