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THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXV.—No. 36

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1905

PRICE TWOPENCE

Let every dawn of morning be to you as the beginning of life, and every setting sun be to you as its close—then let every one of these short lives leave its sure record of some kindly thing done for others—some goodly strength or knowledge gained for yourselves.—RUSKIN.

INFIDELITY AND IMMORALITY.

An Open Letter

TO

Mr. W. T. Stead.

DEAR MR. STEAD,

I am writing you this Open Letter in the friendliest spirit. It would pain me if I knew that I had given you any offence. You have played a very manly part in following up (in your own way, and before your own public) my protest against Dr. Torrey's policy of defamation. You have openly dissociated yourself from the idea that calumniating its opponents in a legitimate method of defending Christianity. You have compared it to the use of poisoned weapons and explosive bullets in military warfare. You have called for its condemnation and suppression by the leaders of the Christian cause. And in so doing you have earned the profound respect of Freethinkers—not as Freethinkers, but as *men* and *women*; for it is not this or that opinion which is at stake, but the honor of human nature itself. We are grateful for your generous intention; we are full of admiration for your courage; and the conspiracy of silence in the Christian press only gives a bolder relief to your gallantry. For these reasons, I should hesitate to pen a word that might wound your feelings. But I am sure you will not feel hurt if I speak plainly and firmly on a matter of the gravest importance. Perhaps truth, after all, is the highest politeness. I do you the the honor of believing that you desire the truth to prevail; and if at the end you do me the the honor of believing the same of me, we may dismiss everything else as of minor importance.

What I want to address you about is this. At the end of your splendid article in the July number of the *Review of Reviews*, denouncing Dr. Torrey's libels on Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll, you paused to say a few words on your own account as to a certain principle which that gentleman enunciated. Now I differ most seriously from your own view of the matter, and I shall proceed to tell you why. But in order that I may not misrepresent you in the slightest degree I will reproduce what you said *in extenso*. Thus my readers will have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. What you said was as follows:—

INFIDELITY AND IMMORALITY.

“As to the general thesis to which Dr. Torrey clings with such pathetic tenacity—the alleged connection between unbelief and immorality—it is only necessary to say this: we may believe most firmly that the loss

of the supernatural sanction for morality will, in time, tend to immorality. But that is a very different thing from suggesting, as is so often done, that all infidels are immoral men, and that if they abandoned their vices they would become orthodox Christians. As a matter of fact, men—and women also—who, as the result of much searching of heart, have regretfully come to believe that the old doctrine taught them at their mothers' knees is no longer tenable, are often found to be more punctiliously moral in their private lives than multitudes of Christians. They have lost all else, and they cling the more passionately to the ethical remnant of their early faith. It is, indeed, so marked, this lofty morality of many Freethinkers, that Mr. Kegan Paul, writing in the interests of the Church of Rome, did not deny it. He admitted it, and sought to explain it. The Freethinker of to-day, he said, is like a rosebud severed from its parent stem and taken indoors. It blossoms sooner, and is a beautiful rose in the vase while its fellow rosebuds left on the bush have not ventured to reveal their beauty to the outside air. But, said Mr. Kegan Paul, the rosebud that is severed from the parent bush bears no seed. The Freethinker may be morally faultless, but he is too often the mule of ethics that engenders nothing. He seldom has, and his children still more rarely have, the propagandist fervour, the zeal for souls, the instinct of conversion that enable the Christian Church to survive as a power for righteousness for century after century.”

Now the first remark I have to make is that the whole of your argument is obviously a prophecy. You admit in the most handsome terms that Freethinkers are at present as moral as Christians. But you fear that they will not be so in the long run, when their principles have time to produce their full effect; or, as you put it, when “the supernatural sanction for morality” is entirely lost.

It would, I conceive, be a sufficient reply to adopt Mr. John Morley's view that the best way to answer a prophet is to prophesy the opposite. But I wish to do something more than that; something more courteous as well as more effective.

Your view, if I understand it rightly, is this. Vice does not make men unbelievers, but unbelief may make men vicious. This is a different view from Dr. Torrey's, but I hold it to be just as erroneous.

Why should unbelief make men vicious? The only answer I can find in your argument is that the “supernatural sanction” is essential to morality. Let us look at this.

What do you *mean* by the “supernatural sanction”? Will any “supernatural sanction” do? Is a belief in Mumbo Jumbo sufficient? I presume you would reply in the negative. Let me ask you, then, whether you include the fear of God and the dread of hell. This is what most people mean by the “supernatural sanction.” Is this what *you* mean? I cannot believe that it is. I suspect that you mean something very different; not the *fear* of God, but the *love* of God; not the dread of his anger, but a coöperation in his benevolence. Such an ideal is not to be despised, although it is incompatible with my own intellectual

conclusions; but I deny that it has anything to do with *morality*. I hold that it is a part of *religion*. And I also hold that religion and morality are quite distinct from each other, both in their origin and in their contents. Religion has often been opposed to morality, and the opposition of morality to religion has been a vital element in every progressive movement of mankind.

Before I elaborate this view I had better try to make some impression upon you by appealing to a distinguished Christian, who was a man of genius, and one from whom I understand you have professed to derive a good deal of your own philosophy of life. I refer to John Ruskin. In his *Lectures on Art*, that great writer, who could not help being didactic, in the best sense of the word, pointed out the importance of always distinguishing the idea of religion from the idea of morality; the former signifying "the feelings of love, reverence, or dread with which the human mind is affected by its conceptions of spiritual being," while the latter is "the law of rightness in human conduct." Then he makes this emphatic declaration:—

"For there are many religions, but there is only one morality. There are moral and immoral religions, which differ as much in precept as in emotion; but there is only one morality, which has been, is, and must be for ever, an instinct in the hearts of all civilised men, as certain and unalterable as their outward bodily form, and which receives from religion neither law, nor peace; but only hope, and felicity."

In the next Lecture on "The Relation of Art to Morals" Ruskin takes the supposition of a man who accepted his physician's word that he had only seven days to live; and who was also assured that, as far as he himself was concerned, the end of the seven days would be an everlasting blank. The manner in which the man would spend those seven days would be an exact measure of the morality of his nature. That is to say, the morality of our nature is, in itself, quite independent of our belief as to the hereafter.

Ruskin devotes one of the most powerful and magnificent passages he ever penned to the same subject in his *Aratra Pentelici*. Perhaps, as a busy man, you will thank me for giving you the opportunity of reading this splendid piece again:

"Meanwhile, as I have just said, the leading minds in literature and science become continually more logical and investigative; and once that they are established in the habit of testing facts accurately, a very few years are enough to convince all the strongest thinkers that the old imaginative religion is untenable, and cannot any longer be honestly taught in its fixed traditional form, except by ignorant persons. And at this point the fate of the people absolutely depends on the degree of moral strength into which their hearts have been already trained. If it be a strong, industrious, chaste, and honest race, the taking its old gods, or at least the old forms of them, away from it, will indeed make it deeply sorrowful and amazed; but will in no whit shake its will, nor alter its practice. Exceptional persons, naturally disposed to become drunkards, harlots, and cheats, but who had been previously restrained from indulging these dispositions by their fear of God, will, of course, break out into open vice, when that fear is removed. But the heads of the families of the people, instructed in the pure habits and perfect delights of an honest life, and to whom the thought of a Father in heaven had been a comfort, not a restraint, will assuredly not seek relief from the discomfort of their orphanage by becoming uncharitable and vile. Also the high leaders of their thought gather their whole strength together in the gloom; and at the first entrance to this Valley of the Shadow of Death, look their new

enemy full in the eyeless face of him, and subdue him, and his terror, under their feet."

That is what has happened in Japan. The leaders of its thought, who are chiefly Agnostics (which is a euphemism for Atheists), have trodden the fear of death underfoot for them, and they pass over it in glad self-sacrifice for the honor and welfare of their nation. Indeed, if you will only think of it, the conduct of the Japanese, in contrast with that of the Russians, appears to be a most practical and convincing reply to the whole of your argument.

I will now ask you to consider a vital question raised in the last extract from Ruskin. If men can be moral without the fear of hell, why cannot they be moral without the hope of heaven? If the Devil is not necessary to morality, why is God? Why should a man ill-treat his own children because he has lost his belief in a celestial father? Why should he go home and cry "There is no God," and knock his wife down to prove that he believes it? Is there really any connection between such opinions and such actions? And why should a man be cold and callous because he has no belief in a future life? Will he not rather cling all the more tenderly to those he loves and may lose? Is it not the dark background of death that gives the subtlest beauty to the foreground of life? Is it not true, as Ingersoll said, that love is a flower which grows on the edge of the grave? And was it not the wisest of all men who said that "Conscience is born of love"? It is in our human relationships that morality is born, because love resides there. Take away sex, take away parentage, take away the prolonged helplessness of infants, take away sociality with all its material advantages and ideal inspirations, and what morality would remain for religion to boast of? We are necessarily human beings first, and religionists afterwards; and morality belongs to the first stage instead of the second.

But it is necessary for me to go farther than this. Your "supernatural sanction" of morality must surely be the Christian sanction. When the great Cardinal Newman was asked to sign the petition against Charles Bradlaugh's admission to the House of Commons, he replied that he could not do so; for he was not a Deist, but a Christian, and the Christian oath was abolished when Jews were admitted to parliament. You also are not a Deist, but a Christian; and it must be the Christian "sanction" that you are maintaining. What you mean, then, I take it, is that Christianity, at least as you understand it, is the only adequate guarantee of the world's morality.

Now it devolves upon you to explain how morality, even the very highest morality, existed in the world before Christianity appeared. It also devolves upon you to explain the existence of morality, and even the highest morality, in heathen countries where Christianity has no power. I do not believe for a moment that you think that the average Englishman a more moral being than the average Chinaman or the average Japanese.

Is it not strange that when a young man goes to college, with a view to becoming a Christian minister, they teach him what is called "the humanities" from the classic literature of Greece and Rome? The Bible is used to teach him religion, and Pagan masterpieces are employed to teach him humanity.

Yours sincerely,

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

An "Inimitable" Parson.

NOTHING is more striking to one who studies our modern clergy than the mental poverty of its leaders. There are plenty of them with energy—"hustlers" Americans would call them; some of them are, presumably, good speakers; but, when all allowances have been made, the outstanding feature is their poor mental calibre. Gleams of real scholarship or indications of subtlety of thought are very infrequently met with; there is little but a huge ocean of commonplaces, an over-emphasis of the obvious, a rehash of ancient arguments so devoid of strength as almost to defy criticism by their very inanity. Nor is this a phenomenon limited to any one of the denominations; it is common to all. The Establishment and the Nonconformists suffer alike from this religious dry-rot. New avenues of employment in art, science, literature, and politics, the decay of religious conviction, have all co-operated to withdraw from the Churches the service of the best intellects. The priesthood may be kept up in point of quantity for some considerable time, but the quality bids fair to sink lower and lower. And the clearest proof of this is the character of those who at present occupy leading positions.

Among the Dissenters a very high position is taken by the Rev. W. L. Watkinson. He has, according to the *Christian World*, an "inimitable style," and a brief examination of a recent sermon by this gentleman will serve as a good illustration of the truth of what has already been pointed out. The whole moral of Mr. Watkinson's sermon is that God has already given so much to man, in both promises and performances, that he may safely be trusted to give to the Christian all he hopes for. And, as is common in such sermons, the real point at issue, whether the good things in the world really come from God or not, is quietly taken for granted, and argued from as though this were admitted by both parties. Of course, Mr. Watkinson might reply that his sermon was addressed to Christians, and, as they already believe, it was unnecessary to prove this. But in that case the whole sermon was useless and uncalled for. It is obviously useless to prove to Christians that God will give them a future life. As Christians, they already believe it. The argument assumes unbelievers; and in that case it takes for granted the very thing that should be proven. Either that or it is a laborious attempt to prove what is not disputed.

Now for the sermon. "Life," says the preacher, "would be worth living if it were not for to-morrow. To-morrow poisons all the days of the calendar." Poisons all the days for whom? It can only be for the Christian, whose religion breeds such a wholesale distrust of human reason and effort. To those who have a sound and sane perception of the nature of human development, and who rightly gauge the strength of human nature, to-morrow, instead of poisoning all the days in the calendar, brings with it a promise of consolation and triumph. It may be said with far greater truth that if there were no to-morrow life would indeed be little worth the effort. It is human nature as it is to be, far more than human nature as it is, that inspires the real reformer.

Of course, in such a case, the moral is, Trust in God; for "Would God have shown us all the wonderful things of nature, and the wonderful things of our personal experience, if he had meant to starve us, to degrade, to forsake us, and leave us to nakedness and despair?" Well, but, as a matter of fact, God—if he is responsible for the machinery of nature—does starve, does degrade, does forsake. Not all of us, true, but a goodly number; and the charge against God is not made heavier by increasing or lighter in diminishing the number of cases. And if God has thus forsaken in the past, why not in the future? You can only argue, with reason, from experience; and the world has seen only too many cases of people starved and forsaken, dying deaths of despair, who have, by all reasonable rules, deserved

a better fate. To cry "Trust in God" is merely applying a religious anæsthetic. The question is, Have we any reason for trusting in God? And the answer to the negative is given by Mr. Watkinson admitting that the world—which is, in his opinion, God's world—contains no clear proof of his divine benevolence.

There is a delightful "you-pay-your-money-and-take-your-choice" kind of an air about Mr. Watkinson's arguments. First of all this world is a dreary affair. "There is no goodness in this life" and "life is a positive cruelty" without another world. Then, if this doesn't suit, the world suddenly becomes good. "I say it is a rose." And if it is retorted that there are thorns as well as roses, it is admitted. "But, mind you, it's a rose still; and I take my conclusion, not from the thorns, but from the rose itself." Whether Mr. Watkinson's style is "inimitable" or not, it is certain that his reasoning fairly deserves that description. Those who assert that the world is a good enough place as it goes are met with the retort that it is worthless. And those who say that the world is made up of good and bad, of thorns and roses, receive the reply that the world is to be judged by the rose alone! But why? "On what compulsion?" On the face of it the thorns are as evident as the roses, and it would seem that in any fair estimate one must consider both. Would anyone but a parson dream of saying in this deliberate manner that you are to reach a conclusion by refusing to acknowledge any but one view of the case? Truly religion must be in desperate straits when the above represents the mental output of one of its leading representatives.

By far the greater portion of Mr. Watkinson's sermon is concerned with a future life; and he tells us the same argument will serve here. "Think of what God has made known to us in these modern days.....how long this world was in being prepared as our place of habitation.....And after God has shown us all these things, is He going to kill us? Is the end of all this the churchyard?" Well, why not? While we are invited to think, let us think also of how God deals with events in general. Here is a man of value to his family and to the world. A continuation of his life would be the continuance of labors that would be of benefit to the generation now living and to all that are yet to live. And here is another whose life has been a burden to society and a centre of corruption to all around him. Yet along comes a plague, an epidemic—also God-created—and the former is swept out of existence while the latter lives on. Or here is another man who rushes out on a wild, wet night to do a good action to someone in distress. He contracts a cold, lays the foundation of consumption, probably infects others, and is himself soon no more. Had he been of a callous nature he would have lived longer. Being of a more sympathetic temperament, his superior disposition serves as the occasion for nature—or the God behind nature—to assassinate him. Surely the God who can act in this manner will be acting in line with the general scheme of things if he pays no more regard to man's longing for a future life than for other human desires?

But suddenly Mr. Watkinson becomes scientific. There is the law of parsimony, which he defines as "an arrangement to prevent any waste of material or of power or of time." But "I say to you what becomes of the law of parsimony if, after heaven has lavished upon us all the treasures and splendors of the world, we are to be annihilated?.....What becomes of the wisdom of God?.....I tell you there is no goodness in this life if there is no larger life than this. Life is a positive cruelty if it is nothing but a tantalising flash.....God satisfies the desire of every living thing, and after he has satisfied all other desires is He going to mock the instinct of immortality?"

This is really pitiable. Its mixture of bad reasoning and weak ethics is unapproachable—except by some other parson. To begin with, the law of parsimony has nothing to do with the subject, except to

warn us not to invent unnecessary theories to account for certain facts that can be explained well enough without them. The idea that science teaches that every desire must be satisfied or its basic principles crumble away is one that could only have entered the mind of a parson. Secondly, all of man's desires are not satisfied; and, again, no one but a parson would ever think of saying they were. And if God does not satisfy *all* desires, why should he satisfy this one? Besides, man does not desire immortality in the sense of a life beyond the grave. Man desires to live, and this desire has, if Mr. Watkinson only knew it, a biological and, ultimately, a physiological basis. And whether it would be wise or good of God not to grant immortality is quite beside the mark. The question is one of fact. Mr. Watkinson puts it on the grounds that we ought to believe in it in order to save God's character, give him an extra half-hour for repentance—a chance to repair in some other world the faults of this one. This may be kind, but it is not logical. If we are to judge God at all, it must be by the world we know. Mr. Watkinson asks us to judge God's doings in this world by another world of which we know nothing.

Mr. Watkinson's opinion that this life is "positive cruelty," and contains "no goodness" if there be no future existence, may be taken for what it is worth as a sample of the cramping effects of Christian teaching on the human mind. The statement carries with it its own condemnation. But as a finishing example of Mr. Watkinson the following, designed to show that man is exempt from the mortality of the animal world, will suffice:—

"They are always, nowadays, talking about the intelligence of animals, and trying to confound us with the brute, but there is something about us that is not in the brute. Go and read Plato to a parrot! Read the *Iliad* to that wonderful dog! Go into the Zoo with Shakespeare! Read Isaiah and John to the sheep of the field! There is no sympathy, no response, no intelligence, no recognition."

Could stupidity, even in the pulpit, go further than this? Science asserts that man has a fundamental kinship with the animal world; that he is no sport introduced from without, but part of an organic whole. Our inimitable parson does not agree with this, and disproves it by reading Plato to a parrot, and failing to get the creature to appreciate the philosophy of the old Greek—as would doubtless happen with a large number of his own congregation. The doctrine of evolution is not true because a sheep or a dog fail to appreciate the *Iliad*! Again I ask, Could arrant, incurable stupidity go further than this?

And this man is not a mere local preacher, an unknown person. He is one of the leading lights of the Nonconformist world, and has—so says the *Christian World*—an "inimitable" style! And if such are the leaders, of what kind is the rank and file? If these are the best, what on earth is the calibre of the worst? Really if anyone wished to do Mr. Watkinson a lasting injury they could set about their work in no better manner than printing a sermon like this and scattering it broadcast. Not that Mr. Watkinson is an exception to the general run of preachers. There are hosts of others no better and no worse. And it would perhaps be a good plan to select some of the sermons of our leading preachers and circulate them among intelligent people. Only the difficulty would be to get intelligent people to read them.

C. COHEN.

Theological Muddling.

To describe Theology, as one of the exact sciences, or as the the queen of all the sciences, is to be guilty of an inexcusable blunder. Science means knowledge, ascertained truth, accumulated and established knowledge, knowledge duly classified and rendered available in the search for further truth, or knowledge reduced to system; but in none of these senses

can theology be called a science. There can be no science of God and his works, because God himself is unknown and unknowable, and no one can tell what his works are. God is an object of faith, not of knowledge. Theology concerns itself with pure assumptions, hypotheses, speculations, not with ascertained truths or facts. Consequently, theologians are of necessity hopeless muddlers. Not being able to furnish demonstrations, they flood the world with dogmas. They know absolutely nothing about the subjects which they discuss. They treat unverified and unverifiable beliefs as if they were items of positive knowledge.

Let us consider a few examples. In his Correspondence Column in the *Christian Commonwealth* for August 24, Dr. Campbell Morgan tries his hand at answering the following question. "If God has really revealed himself why did He not make the revelation so clear that doubt would be impossible?" This is a perfectly legitimate question, and it deserves a straightforward answer. But this popular divine, instead of making a direct reply, sophisticates, and shuffles, and cavils, and, like our Government during the South African war, "muddles through somehow." First of all he makes a most damaging concession. To this inquirer or doubter he candidly admits that it is impossible to answer his question in a way that will enable him to "silence objectors." A truer remark was never made. The next sentence is entirely misleading, as well as contradictory to sound theology: "The revelation of God to men which convinces is never documentary nor argumentative." But what about the Bible? Is it now conceded that this document is not convincing, or that it is convincing only to people who *already* believe in God? What does the preacher mean? The following statement is *ex cathedra*: "In the nature of the case it is impossible for God to reveal himself to man save under certain conditions." The audacity that underlies that observation is unfathomable. What right has any theologian to limit the possible action of deity? Is it reasonable to suppose that the Father of the race can make his existence known to his offspring only under certain conditions? Such an idea is absurd beyond comment. Who ever heard of children to whom their father could not make himself known save under certain conditions? "The impossibility," we are told, "lies in man." If so, whose fault is it, God's or man's? Let us see:—

"Just as the true landscape can never be revealed in an imperfect or broken lens, so neither can God be perfectly known in a man whose intelligence is darkened as the result of sin. 'God is a Spirit,' and can only be known by the spiritual. Men who are living wholly in the realm of the material are by that very fact making it impossible for them to know God."

One is tempted to laugh such a passage to scorn. The reference to sin is an unavailing evasion, an illusive subterfuge, an unworthy quibble. According to orthodox theology every man is born with his intelligence darkened by sin, and the question naturally arises, in that case, how is it that some people get to know God to the saving of their souls, while others remain in total ignorance of him to the eternal loss of theirs? This is a perfectly fair question, and orthodoxy cannot answer it except at the cost of making God responsible for Atheism. If an intelligence darkened as the result of sin cannot receive the revelation of God, and if every man since the Fall is born with his intelligence thus darkened, it follows that God, if He exists, is a culpable respecter of persons. But, as a matter of fact, no one is born with any intelligence at all; and surely no one is born a sinner. Furthermore, among Atheists are to be found many of the noblest and most unselfish men and women on earth to-day, whose hearts are pure, whose lives are clean, and whose ideals are sublime. They have no sense of God at all. If the God of Christianity existed, He would surely make himself known to such people, yea, to all people without distinction.

In the same number of the *Christian Commonwealth*, Dr. Campbell Morgan undertakes to answer another

question, in which such an explanation of 1 Cor. ix. 27, is demanded as will reconcile it with the doctrine that if a man is once saved he cannot be lost. Dr. Morgan admits that he cannot give the explanation asked for. "The Calvinists," he says, "teach that once a man has received the gift of life it is impossible for him to lose it. The Armenians, on the other hand, aver that as the gift was received upon the fulfilment of certain conditions that those conditions are continually fulfilled." The two views are as far apart as the poles; and yet this teacher has the temerity to say that "we are nearer agreement to-day than ever we were, *there being very strong convictions held on both sides*" (the italics are mine). One wonders how we can be nearer agreement to-day if strong convictions are still held on both sides. Now, the fact to be borne in mind is that the one view is quite as Scriptural as the other. Jesus was at once a Calvinist and an Armenian. As a Calvinist He said: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand" (John x. 28). As an Armenian He said: "If a man abide not in me he is cast off as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John xv. 6). St. Paul also taught both views, though, on the whole, he was more Calvinistic than Armenian in his sympathies. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the possibility of falling from grace is distinctly upheld, and likewise the impossibility of being saved a second time. Now, because these two views are to be found side by side in the Bible, Dr. Campbell Morgan believes that they can be reconciled, being but the same truth seen from two different standpoints.

Is it not more reasonable, however, to maintain that salvation, in the Biblical and theological sense, is a purely superstitious doctrine, and that all speculations concerning it are practically worthless, and not only worthless but positively injurious? At any rate, life is not a thing that can be mechanically transferred from one person to another. Life is a state, or condition, or process, not an entity distinct from and independent of the organism. Eternal life for individuals is at best but a lovely dream. All we know is that when a man dies he apparently ceases to be. There is nothing whatever to show that death is only an episode in the history of life. So far as we can see death is the only thing that can be called eternal.

Theologians and philosophers argue that the Universe is full of antithetical truths. Apparently contradicting, they are yet necessary, to each other. The Sovereignty of God and the freedom of the human will, for example, are but two parts or sides of one great truth. But if man is a free agent he is his own sovereign, and cannot possibly be in a state of subjection to God. On the other hand, if God is absolutely supreme man is not free. I am of necessity the slave of him who is in the true sense of the word my Sovereign. And yet many preachers proclaim the absolute Sovereignty of the Divine Being and the perfect freedom of man. Speaking of the former they say to man: "You cannot oppose God. Do what you may his will is bound to prevail." Speaking of the latter they address man thus: "You are so great and strong that you can successfully resist and quench the Holy Ghost. You are the maker of your own character, the framer of your own destiny." Now if God longs to make man good and happy, to secure his love and confidence and the complete surrender of his will, and fails to do so, then God is less than Sovereign. But the two opposing views cannot possibly be true. Either God is supreme and man a machine, or else man is supreme and God must confess himself defeated.

Does not reason, therefore, necessitate our renouncing God in order to be just to him? Him we have never seen or known, while man is a present reality, a demonstrated fact we cannot ignore. And we cannot be just even to man as long as God

remains. It is to Nature, including himself, that man is indissolubly bound. He is Nature's latest and noblest product, or, in other words, he represents Nature at her highest and best. In him Nature has become gloriously intelligent and self-conscious, capable, to some extent, of guiding and modifying some at least of her innumerable processes.

Dr. Campbell Morgan's knowledge of Atheists is painfully limited and largely inaccurate. This is what he says about them:—

"Atheists have a very common habit of demanding exact definitions and simple demonstrations in the matter of religion. These demands cannot be met in any realm of life. It is utterly impossible perfectly to define any single thing. A definition which includes all that the thing is, and excludes all it is not, is unknown. Let a person endeavor to define a chair, and they may do it by saying that it is an article having four legs, a seat, and a back, on which a human being may sit. That definition applies with equal accuracy to a donkey!..... So also is it true that there are facts which every Atheist knows to be true that he cannot demonstrate to anyone. For instance, ask the next Atheist to demonstrate to you the fact that the woman he calls mother really bears that relation to him, and you will see how at once what he is asking you to do about God he is unable to do concerning his own mother."

I have given the above extract merely to show the shallow and silly reasoning to which a Doctor of Divinity can descend. Surely no honest thinker could have penned such a low-toned passage. But what he says about Atheists is utterly false. Atheists do not demand exact definitions; but they do ask for evidence, for proof, before believing what appeals to them as inherently unbelievable. They insist upon being presented with some evidence that God has revealed himself to some chosen people; and in reply to their request this is all that Dr. Campbell Morgan can say:—

"The revelation that God has made is absolutely conclusive to those who are obedient to the essential facts of their own personality by recognising the supremacy of spirit and the subservience of matter. It would be interesting to know what kind of revelation Atheists would consider to be conclusive. I have often asked such men the question, but have never found them able to give me an answer. They say sometimes that of course they do not know, but that God ought to have found a way, if there be a God. Our answer is, there is a God, and He has found a way, but if men will not obey the laws of the spiritual realm, they can no more expect to understand the spiritual revelation than a man can make himself acquainted with astronomy by staring at a muck-heap."

"Our answer is, there is a God, and He has found a way"; but, pray, how do you know all that? Those are the points in dispute. You may know infinitely more than we do, but we want you to prove to us that you do. Your saying that there is a God does not prove his existence, nor is your saying that He has found a way to make himself known to men any evidence that He has. Your dogmatism proves nothing. You and those who think with you *may* be mistaken, and we who differ from you *may* be right. Can you tell us what the "essential facts of personality" are, and how you discovered them? Can you give us some definite information concerning "the laws of the spiritual realm"? We have no knowledge of such a realm, and how can we know and obey its laws? I am quite sure that Dr. Campbell Morgan is a thoroughly sincere and conscientious believer in God and the spiritual world; but he has no right, it is fundamentally wrong, to identify belief with knowledge, for they are two wholly different things. We can *verify* all we *know*; but belief in unseen, spiritual beings is absolutely unverifiable. I know there is such a city as New York, for I have been there and seen it more than once. We do not know that there is a God, for no man has ever seen him or heard his voice. We do not know that there is another world which we shall enter through the gate of death, for no one has been there and returned and made a report. These things are objects of belief, not of knowledge; and in proportion as the area of

knowledge widens the area of faith narrows. There are myriads of people whose natural knowledge has compelled them to abandon their supernatural beliefs; and it is the height of impertinence and arrogance on Dr. Campbell Morgan's part to charge them with being disobedient to "the essential facts of their own personality," their conviction being that their unbelief is the direct outcome of loyalty to those facts.

J. T. LLOYD.

Acid Drops.

What a creature the pious Czar of Russia turns out to be! In spite of his annihilated fleets and beaten armies, in spite of the trouble and bloodshed within his own dominions, he calls upon the universe to witness that he can never lose an inch of territory nor pay a farthing of indemnity, and that sooner than consent to either he will let the blood of thousands of men be poured forth on fresh battlefields. And this is the good old friend of peace! This is the gentleman who lectured the world on the horrors of war. This is the gentleman who called the Peace Congress at the Hague. This is the gentleman who was going to inaugurate the millennium.

We never had the slightest belief in the Czar's peaceful protestations. We did then, and do still, regard them as being just as sincere as—well, as his recent manifestoes. Just as he tries to juggle with his own people now so he tried to juggle with the world in general then. The real truth was that Russia had bitten off more than she could chew in Asia. Manchuria was a very big meal, and wanted a lot of digesting. Ten or fifteen years' peace would give the Russian bear an opportunity of assimilating what he had swallowed, and then he could make another meal of Korea. Consequently the Czar got out his Peace toys and invited other nations to play with him. They did so—but the performance did not deceive us. We flatter ourselves that we understood it. Its object was to bamboozle the world and gain time.

Now the Czar's opportunity has come we are all able to judge of his sincerity. There never was such a wretched little swashbuckler as this anointed despot. "Fight! Fight!" the tempestuous pigmy cries aloud to his "subjects." But he takes good care not to go within thousands of miles of the fighting. Once upon a time despots led men to the slaughter. Now they send them. Which is adding cowardice to villainy.

Some people say that the Czar is not a Christian. The real Christian in Russia they say is Count Tolstoy. But this is not a point that we are called upon to decide. Moreover, if Tolstoy and his followers are the only Christians in Russia, one is obliged to wonder why Jesus Christ took the trouble to come from heaven to earth in order to produce such meagre results after the lapse of nearly two thousand years.

The Russian autocracy, of which the Czar is the figure-head, shrinks from no crime to prolong its power. One of its worst devices is stirring up the dregs of the population against the Jews. A society is being organised in Western Russia and Poland for this object. Its first movement is setting fire to Jewish property. Forty houses have been destroyed at one small town near Warsaw, and four hundred Jews are in consequence homeless. Terror reigns in the small towns and villages of the district.

Secular Thought (Toronto) prints a striking extract from an address by the Rev. Dr. A. C. Dixon before the Bible Conference, Atlanta, on March 25, 1905. We presume this is the Rev. Dr. A. C. Dixon who has been called to account by Mr. W. T. Stead, as well as by ourselves, for slandering the late Colonel Ingersoll. The extract we refer to was as follows:

"Unbelief is one of the greatest sins. I think the qualities of lying, theft, and murder are contained in unbelief. Murder is generally done in hot blood and anger, but unbelief has no such extenuating circumstances."

After reading this we wonder why Dr. Dixon took the trouble to slander Ingersoll. It would have been enough to call the Colonel an unbeliever. That was true—and according to Dr. Dixon, damning, being as bad as murder. Dixon's conduct reminds us of the man who screamed "Assassin!" at his opponent, and then added "Sabbath-Breaker!"

Although the American press teems with denunciations of the business methods of John D. Rockefeller, the Standard Oil King, and the richest man in the world, it is pointed out by the New York correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* that "no instance is recorded of any religious or educational body refusing Mr. Rockefeller's contribution when offered." Of course the educational bodies are all ultimately controlled by the religious bodies.

General Booth has talked some great nonsense during his Salvation motor trip. At Workington he harangued the mayor and council who had brought an address of welcome. "Your destiny," he told them, "is in your own hands. No government made me; no friendly hands made me. I made myself." So the General is a self-made man. But he should not boast of it too much. He should remember the American story of the self-made man who let all around him know it; but one day an auditor said to him, "Well now, I'm glad to hear you're a self-made man—for it saves the Almighty the authorship of a darned mean piece of work."

The chairman of the Carlisle meeting said that General Booth commanded the finest army in the world. This is enough to make the Kaiser mad.

Apropos of Messiah Piggott and his little "Glory"—Free-thinkers are often asked how they account for people believing in the divine birth of Jesus if it is not true. Well, here is an object lesson in what people can believe and how they believe; and this in an age of education and cheap newspapers. Make this type of mind commoner than it is, throw it back a couple of thousand years, or less, into an environment where belief in the miraculous and the supernatural is as common as leaves in autumn, there is a chance of any myth, no matter how wild, to develop. After all, Piggott's great mistake is being born too late. In the twentieth century his followers are limited to a handful of weak-minded women, and newspapers refer to the matter as a case of religious hysteria and imposture combined. In an earlier age he might have founded a religion, counted his followers by the thousand, and had men like the Bishop of London explaining that our national welfare depended upon believing the whole story. It is merely a matter of geography and chronology.

The *Star* has been working the "Abode of Love" affair for all it is worth—and something over. It is all very well to take up Messiah Piggott in the silly season, for obvious business reasons; but is not the *Star* putting on rather cheap airs of virtue in calling for a legal means of putting down "this hypocrite?" Are hypocrites so scarce that a campaign is necessary against this single one? In what way is Piggott a worse hypocrite than thousands of other gentlemen engaged in the Kingdom-come profession? His chief offence seems to be that he is remarkably successful. But there are other remarkably successful practitioners. We fail to see what hypocrisy can be worse than taking £15,000 a year, like the Archbishop of Canterbury, or £10,000, like the Bishop of London, to preach the gospel of "Blessed be ye poor." Surely it would be more courageous on the part of the *Star* to start a campaign against priestcraft in general instead of devoting all its energies to denouncing one who is out of the regular swim and has few friends to take up the cudgels on his behalf. The virtue which falls foul of un-friended sinners is not very much to our taste.

The *Star* rather backs up a nameless barrister who says that Piggott might be dealt with under the Vagrant Act for laying "a false claim to occult powers." But this policy would have to be carried a great deal further. Piggott's "occult powers" do not seem to go beyond those of the "priests" of the Church of England, who, according to the Prayer Book, following the New Testament, have power to remit men's sins and give them absolution; that is, to give them security against certain supernatural penalties. And how can his "occult powers" be greater than those of Catholic priests, who take money for praying souls out of purgatory, when nobody can prove that they are in it, or that such a place exists? If you go for Piggott, you must, in common fairness, go for all the pretenders to "occult powers." And what a busy time the law would have then!

Piggott, you say, has obtained money by false pretences. What of that? Every religion in the world obtains money by false pretences. Why bow and scrape to all the big "respectable" gangs of swindlers, and set up an awful howl at one irregular practitioner?

Some one suggested that Piggott should be dealt with under the Blasphemy Laws, but this, the *Star* says, is "most

undesirable for theoretical as well as practical reasons." This is a welcome gleam of sense. Pigott is not the only blasphemer in England. Besides, who can prove that he is not the Messiah? Who is able to demonstrate that he is not Jesus Christ? The thing is impossible unless Jesus Christ condescends to maintain his separate identity. Even then it would hardly be possible to decide between the rival claimants. Jesus Christ came once, and was crucified. He might come again, and do ten years' penal servitude. The *Star* should really be careful.

Who (by the way) is the Barrister whose letter was favored with big type in the *Morning Leader*? Whoever he is, and we should like to know, he is an old-fashioned person to be writing in a Radical paper. He says that the present law is "unduly lenient." He also says that the essence of the violation of the Blasphemy Laws is "denial of the Christian religion." His suggestion, therefore, comes to this, that Pigott should be prosecuted for blasphemy, because of his "outrageous claim to divinity." Now if this Barrister were a student of the Scriptures of the religion he is seeking to defend in this foolish manner, he would recollect that it was precisely this "outrageous claim to divinity" which made the Jewish priests regard Jesus Christ as a blasphemer worthy of death. "Ye have heard his blasphemy," they cried. Nearly two thousand years have rolled by, and a Christian lawyer cries "Ye have heard his blasphemy" against Pigott. What a thick-headed world we live in!

With so many shifty evasions concerning the nature of miracles put forward chiefly by men who are keen enough to see the strength of the sceptical case, while not quite honest enough to admit as much, a little plain speaking is quite a relief. The *Church Times* takes an apologist to task for asserting that the Christian miracles "may be found hereafter to be no miracles at all in the scientific sense," but merely a higher natural force "acting irregularly." The *Church Times* properly comments on this that the supernatural is of the essence of the miracles; "miracles of healing are something more than a mysterious power of magnetic influence, and we cannot think that a few leaves were multiplied by the evocation of some hitherto unknown law of physics." This protest may sound old-fashioned, but it has, at least, the merit of honesty. The plain truth, and the whole truth, is that miracles stand or fall by their supernatural character. Remove this element, and the whole of the Christian religion is avowedly based on ignorance and delusion.

Ireland has distinguished itself lately by an inauguration of Jew-baiting. The other day some boys were summoned in Limerick for throwing stones at a Jewish Rabbi and threatening to kill him. The magistrate took a lenient view of the case, which may have been justifiable, but his remarks read curiously. He said "stoning Jews looked very bad in print, and questions are asked in other places about it." This sounds very much as though stoning Jews doesn't matter so long as it is kept out of the papers, and no questions are asked. It is not the fact, but the publicity of the fact, that the magistrate seems to object to.

One of the Bishop of Manchester's remarkable stories is connected with prayer. In Birmingham, a woman whose husband was out of employment, was without food. Her little girl suggested "Let us pray for something." To humor her, the mother went through the Lord's Prayer until they came to "give us this day our daily bread." Then they waited, and when the husband came home, he threw down on the table a shilling, which his late employer had given him." Wonderful! And yet again wonderful! It is such an unprecedented event for anyone to give a shilling to a hungry man, that the proof of the action of Providence is clear. But only think of a dignitary of the church parading this kind of childish twaddle before a public audience! It is enough to make one despair of human reason.

Sophia Ethel Bourne, charged at Penge with maliciously administering poison to ten persons, and inflicting grievous bodily harm, is not an "infidel" anyway, and should therefore command the sympathy of men like Dr. Torrey and Dr. Dixon. We take the following from the newspaper report:

"The prisoner had been engaged by Miss Hole, 7 Avington-grove, Penge, and about June 23 this lady and her nieces, the Misses Jukes, were taken very ill from some irritant poison. A doctor called in could not discover the cause, and at length sent some tea and food to be analysed. The family were moved to the house of a friend, and here the symptoms of poisoning recurred, and the rest of the family in this house, including the nurses, were prostrated. The prisoner was

then discharged, and the day after she wrote to Miss Jukes and wished her "the joy that cometh of the Lord." She asked for an interview, and the following day she wrote confessing that she had put weed-killer in the stew and also the tea. A little later she saw Miss Jukes, and repeated this confession."

That "joy cometh of the Lord" is distinctly good.

"The mystery of Miss Phoebe Rebecca Penniall," the Greenwich nurse and Bible woman, is cleared up. She died at Maidstone after giving birth to a child, which was registered in the name of Stanley. "Mr. Stanley" is stated by the newspapers to be Mr. Edward Stanton, of Dartmouth-avenue, Blackheath, a wealthy textile merchant in the City, and a married man. "Mr. Stanley" is also said to be "a leader of the mission work in Deptford and Greenwich," in connexion with which he made the unfortunate young woman's acquaintance. This seems to be another case for Dr. Torrey's list of "horrors of infidelity."

Another "infidel" suicide! Dr. Torrey will please note. The dead body of the Rev. Samuel Price Smythe, rector of Welby, Suffolk, was found in a field. The coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Suicide by prussic acid poisoning" with the usual addendum about "unsound mind."

Rev. J. Buchanan, vicar of St. Luke's, Leeds, has been fined for driving his motor-cycle at a speed of twenty-four miles an hour. He said he didn't know he was going so fast. And who could expect a parson to be accurate in such matters? Those who study the Bible devoutly can hardly be exact in figures.

Old Dowie signifies his agreement with President Roosevelt. There are too few babies in America. He has therefore enforced "every couple married in Zion City to bring a baby to the baptismal font every year"—which is full steam ahead with a vengeance. Old Dowie himself is a bit behind in this population struggle. He has been married twenty years, and has only two children. Can he make up for lost time with the present Mrs. Dowie? We doubt it.

Storms in America, famine in Spain, and a new Messiah in England. What is "Providence" about?

"Providence" has sent a plague of locusts to destroy the crops in several districts of Persia, and famine is feared in many places. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

More "Providence." Jalint, one of the Marshall Islands, at the Antipodes, has been swept by a tidal wave and completely devastated. A hundred lives were lost. "He doeth all things well."

J. M. Davy treats the readers of the *Stratford Express* to his views as to the exclusion of the *Freethinker* from the tables of the reading-room in the local Free Library. The great J. M. D. purchased (or borrowed) our issues for August 6 and 13, and was horrified (as a Christian) to read in them articles to the effect that Christianity is untrue. This is very shocking of course (to a Christian), but if the great J. M. D. were a little less egotistical he would recognise that the Free Library was not established by Christians or for Christians, and that his feelings as a Christian have nothing to do with the matter. The Free Library was established by the ratepayers—including Christians, Jews, Secularists, Atheists, Agnostics, Rationalists, and Ethicists. If the Christians want to control a Free Library they should build and maintain it themselves.

The first time the great J. M. D. saw the *Freethinker* was twenty years ago. He bought it (fancy!) at a shop in Stonecutter-street, and was "literally horrified" at seeing in it a caricature of the Being that he "believes to be the God that rules the universe." We presume he means Jehovah. The great J. M. D. believes that this Jehovah is the ruler of the universe. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Christian ministers will tell him that he is mistaken. Our fault was telling the truth twenty years too soon for our profit and comfort. Plenty of people do it now, when it is safer to do so. We may remind the great J. M. D.—or inform him, if he hasn't heard of it before—that Tolstoy (a Christian) refers to the God of the Old Testament as "a wicked monster." Mr. Blatchford calls Jehovah "a bloodthirsty monster." But does the great J. M. D. advocate the suppression of the *Clarion*? No, he reserves all his bigotry for the *Freethinker*. And that, in its way, is a compliment.

Some wag took advantage of the innocence of the aged town-crier of Filey, who was sent through the place with the following proclamation:—

"Notice is hereby given, that only well-dressed children are welcome at the children's services on the sands. Fishermen's children will be removed. The Society for the Promotion of Christianity among Christians will shortly start a mission at Filey."

Having an inferior sense of humor, the angry mission workers sent the town-crier round again to proclaim that his previous notice was unauthorised and untrue.

"I will gladly bury them all." Thus saith the Rev. H. R. Cooper, vicar of Thornton, Leicestershire, of the critics who complain of his dealing with the village churchyard. The reverend gentleman put in grazing sheep, which led to "damage to the trees and globes on the graves." But he explains that he is absolute master of that plot of ground and means to do exactly what he likes. The Parish Council, however, condemn his action, and resolve to seek legal assistance in the matter. We fear the law will give them no redress. What is wanted is a human, instead of a priestly, spirit in the parish parson. Perhaps the Council should pray for the vicar. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of," Tennyson says; and a strong dose of it might produce an effect even upon the Rev. H. R. Cooper.

"The failure of Science" was the title of a recent article in the *Daily Mirror*. It was one of the most comical productions we ever read, although it was evidently intended to be serious. The writer started from the words of "the son of Charles Darwin" at the opening of the British Association in South Africa that "The mystery of life remains as impenetrable as ever." Our contemporary appears to think that this fact is very disquieting to the man in the street. Huxleys and Renans can get on without a complete scheme of the universe, but the mass of the people (does that include the *Mirror* staff?) must have a "chart provided for them," otherwise they are "at the mercy of every shifting wind." How romantic, to be sure! Who would have thought that the man in the street was such a confirmed metaphysician? For our part, we doubt the fact. We believe that the man in the street does not care a straw about the origin of life or the scheme of the universe. His solicitude about such things seems to us an invention of the mystery-men and their journalistic friends.

V. Tchertkoff, of the Free Age Press, who has issued so many of Tolstoy's propagandist writings in cheap form, sends us a circular in which he states that he is bringing out four new works by the great Russian author. One of these is described as "a critical essay on Shakespeare, explaining the conditions responsible for the misdirected worship of his writings." We have heard the rumor, and we give it for what it is worth, that Tolstoy has been reading Shakespeare in his old age, and has formed a poor conception of his genius. In this he seems to resemble our George Bernard Shaw, whom he resembles in very little else. Shakespeare is so great an artist that both Shaw and Tolstoy fall foul of him for not setting up a pulpit. Perhaps it never will occur to Tolstoy, but it may some day occur to Mr. Shaw, who is much younger, that Shakespeare's vast and varied genius rendered him unfit for preaching. Still he had ideas of his own, and these are not difficult to extract from his plays, if we only go the right way to work. No doubt Tolstoy dislikes Shakespeare because he was not a Christian. And really one cannot conceive Shakespeare writing a work like Tolstoy's on the Four Gospels, which certainly has flashes of genius, but for the rest is fantastic and valueless. Shakespeare would have smiled at such a project. And what a smile it would have been! So humorous yet so gracious, so kindly yet so pregnantly critical. A whole commentary on Tolstoy would have been summed up in that smile.

According to the *Daily News* the new vicar of St. Matthew, Brixton, is the Rev. A. J. Waldron. "Sunday by Sunday," our contemporary says, "you may hear Mr. Waldron speaking in the parks, and refuting the arguments of sceptics with the skill of long experience and study." Mr. Waldron's style is then likened to the style of "that veteran champion of the faith, the Rev. A. J. Harrison, who enjoyed nothing better than a fair and square debate with Charles Bradlaugh, or some other eminent controversialist." Many who respect Dr. Harrison will scarcely think this a compliment—except to Mr. Waldron. Dr. Harrison always spoke as a scholar, as well as with great ability; and he always spoke as a gentleman. He is the only Christian Evidence speaker we recollect who avoided personalities in his lectures and debates. The

majority of Christian Evidence speakers have little other stock in trade.

Men generally suspect other men of offences they have a tendency to themselves. Perhaps this is the reason why Christian champions are so fond of suggesting that Freethinkers have designs on other men's wives.

A few minutes after writing the previous paragraphs we received, through a provincial correspondent, a copy of the *Church Evangelist*, in which there is an article by A. J. Waldron on "Woman"—a subject on which he appears to be a great authority. He takes care not to quote the many singular compliments to woman which are to be found in the Bible. He flies off instead to Shakespeare and Goethe as the best creators of fine female characters—and Shakespeare and Goethe were both Freethinkers. But the gem of Mr. Waldron's article is the statement that John Stuart Mill "made no objection to take a wife, but it was one who belonged to somebody else." Mr. Waldron evidently aims at becoming an inferior Dr. Torrey. His statement about Mill is an absolute falsehood.

Mr. Waldron should let John Stuart Mill alone. Mill is as much above him as the moon is above the dog that bays it. Mr. Waldron should turn his attention to a fellow clergyman of his—Messiah Pigott. When he has straightened out Pigott and a few others he may devote his leisure, if he has any left, to the "infidels."

Voltaire.

Jesus wept! Voltaire smiled!—*Victor Hugo*.

Voltaire,

Who stood supreme, in that fair land
Of France. He saw thro' men and things,
And smiled disdain on thrones, and crowns, and kings

He smote, as with a chastening rod
That church, miscalled the church of God,
And walked alone, erect, and gave
Her blow for blow, and helped to dig her grave.

The lightnings of his pen did blast
Imposture, till it stood aghast!
He tracked the serpent to its lair,
And answered Hell, in one loud trumpet blare.

His wit was as the breath of morn,
And keen the arrows of his scorn;
Nor priest, nor pope, could there withstand,
The ringing blows of that unmailed hand.

Meanwhile, the cringing tyrants wept!
He looked upon them as they slept,
And stripped them bare to all men's eyes,
In that dark Europe, girded round with lies.

And holy monks, at vespers dim
Trembled with fear because of him;
"Curses, not loud but deep," were hurled
Against the man whose thunders shook the world!

For his the presence, his the name,
And voice that thrilled; kindling a flame
Which lighted up with radiant glow
The lofty Alps whose peaks are crowned with snow!

And ever widening as it went,
It swept o'er sea and continent,
And even *here* in Albion's Isle
Was felt the glow of that Voltaireian smile!

O mirthful eye, and smiling face,
O presence of that time and place!
Thou did'st inspire a struggling race
To greater freedom, greater good,
Ere France awoke in that red rain of blood.

WILLIAM EMSLEY.

A DAY DREAM.

Oh, how I wish I were a sloth,
Because to work I'm always loath;
And if I were a sloth, you see,
I'd just be hanging from a tree.

The tree of knowledge I would choose;
Then, if I wished to read the news.

I'd just gaze upward lazily,
While breezes turned their leaves for me.

—Puck.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

- September 17, Stanley Hall; 24, Stratford Town Hall.
- October 1, Queen's Hall; 8, Queen's Hall; 15, Glasgow; 22, Birmingham; 29, Newcastle-on-Tyne.
- November 5, Manchester; 12, Liverpool.
- December 31, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton, Essex.—September 10, m., Kingsland, a., Victoria Park; 17, Liverpool; 24, Stanley Hall, North London. October 1, Stratford Town Hall; 8, Glasgow; 15, Queen's Hall; 22, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£147 4s. 7d. Received this week:—J. G. Finlay 5s., James Weston 10s. 6d., T. Thelwall 5s.

PARIS CONGRESS FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£21 18s. 0d. Received this week:—Blackheath 1s., Samuel Taylor 1s., J. Pruett 2s. 6d., Two Devonport Friends 4s., L. Devereux 2s. 6d., James Weston 10s. 6d., David Watt 2s. 6d., Clifford Williams 2s. 6d., Oliver Allen 2s. 6d., C. J. Whitwell 2s. 6d., C. Heaton 2s., F. Rich 2s. 6d., T. Thelwall 5s. W. Densley 1s. *Per Miss Vance*: Camberwell Branch £1, R. E. D. 5s., C. M. Handley 5s., E. Dymont 3s., Stoke Newington 3s., Disciple 3s., W. C. Middleton 2s. 6d.,

RIDGEWAY FUND.—Previously acknowledged:—£5 17s. 0d. Received this week:—R. E. D. 5s.

J. SKINNER—There was a chapter on "Saint John's Nightmare" in earlier editions of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*. It was dropped out of the present edition as not being sufficiently a romance.—the incidents being all obviously imaginary, with more or less symbolical meanings. Perhaps you would find it interesting, and might obtain a copy by applying direct to the Pioneer Press. We do not know of any other pamphlet on the last book in the Bible.

J. E. B.—Our pamphlet on "Dr. Torrey's Converts" is out of print at present, though a few copies have been raked together to send you. We are uncertain whether this one will be reprinted. It all depends on circumstances. We are preparing a fresh pamphlet, containing the matter of our first one entitled "Dr. Torrey and the Infidels" together with later matter arising out of Mr. Stead's protest against Dr. Torrey's methods. We intend to have this ready by the time the Torrey-Alexander mission opens at Plymouth in October. Of course the main battle rages round Dr. Torrey's libels on Paine and Ingersoll.

W. H. POWELL.—Thanks for list enclosed. The verses are not without merit, but are hardly up to our mark for publication. You cannot expect to become proficient without much practice.

J. O'HAGAN.—Pleased to hear you have become a convert to Freethought through reading this "abominable" paper handed to you by a highly respected friend. The fact should encourage our readers to go on placing the *Freethinker* into as many fresh hands as possible. We shall probably put the substance of our Paine and Ingersoll articles into pamphlet form, as you and others suggest.

F. M.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

S. HOLMAN.—See paragraph. We can well understand that none of the South Wales Freethinkers have been caught in the whirl of the "revival."

W. P. BALL.—Accept our best thanks for your cuttings.

T. THELWALL.—We have read your long letter with much interest. It is gratifying to know that the *Freethinker* has helped you to mental serenity after so many years of struggle against the fetters of orthodoxy.

J. G. FINLAY (South Africa), writing to the N. S. S. secretary, says: "Heartiest congratulations to Mr. Foote on his brave and successful fight against blatant and cowardly bigotry. Torrey's fate will be a lesson to all such liars."

R. E. D. (Douglas).—Pleased to hear you feel grateful to all the writers in the *Freethinker* for the "treat" you receive weekly; also that you consider "the President has done a great practical work for Freethought by his defence of Paine and Ingersoll." As you say, it will not be easy to lie about those noble Freethinkers in future.

JAMES WESTON.—A few of each of the Torrey pamphlets sent as requested. Glad to hear from a veteran like yourself. We send our own best wishes in exchange for yours.

DAVID WATT.—Glad you have "got good value" for your "small subscription towards exposing Torrey."

W. B.—You misuse the word "irrational" in applying it to the "forces of nature." Properly speaking, it is only rational beings that can be irrational. Please understand that we cannot conduct arguments in this column.

OLIVER ALLEN.—Many "small" subscriptions make a big one, and the rank and file of the party should recollect it. Sorry we misspelt "Aston" as "Ashton" in the Birmingham "Acid Drop."

F. C. TUCKER.—We prefer to work the towns Dr. Torrey is going to visit rather than those he has visited. Working forward is preferable to working backward.

F. RICH.—It was duly received, and we thought acknowledged. Glad to have your thanks for our "fine exposure of Torrey."

L. G. K.—The *Glasgow Observer's* remarks on "the Rationalist Congress" do not concern us. It is the International Freethought Congress that the N. S. S. delegates are going to.

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 SECLAR 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.

The Paris Congress Fund.

PERHAPS the holiday season is responsible for it, but the fact remains that the Freethought party is not supporting the Fund as I hoped it would do, and as I believe it ought to do. It may be, too, that the Congress itself falls rather flat in a reaction after the intense excitement of the great "Torrey" struggle. But the sum asked for (£50) is not a great one, and I trust it will be made up yet. Subscriptions can still be sent in, and may be there will be no deficit when the account is finally made up. Anyhow, our N. S. S. delegates will have to go off to Paris to attend the Congress. There are six of them: Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Roger, Mr. Davies, Miss Vance, and myself. Their expenses will have to be managed in some fashion, for we stand committed to the Continental Freethinkers generally, and to our French comrades in particular, to put in our appearance as representatives of British Freethought.

Our party from London on Friday morning (Sept. 1) will include the six special delegates aforesaid, and some thirty others, amongst whom will be Mr. H. Percy Ward from Liverpool, representing the local N. S. S. Branch.

Next week's *Freethinker* will be brought out under novel conditions. The editor and all his "staff" will be away. But the paper will come out all right. And the following week it should be livelier than ever.

All I have to say now is that no subscriptions to the Congress Fund can be acknowledged until I return from Paris, as I do not mean to have my letters sent on. When I come back, and open my letters, I hope to find that they contain the balance of that £50.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Lecture Notices for next week's *Freethinker* should be sent direct to Mr. W. A. Vaughan, the manager of our publishing office, who will be "holding the fort" while the rest of us are at Paris. Secretaries, etc., will please *note* this.

Of the three courses of Sunday evening lectures during the autumn, organised by the Secular Society, Limited, the first will be at Stanley Hall, near the "Boston," North London, which is well-known and easily accessible by 'bus, tram, and train. Mr. John Lloyd will deliver the first lecture on September 10, Mr. Foote takes September 17 and Mr. Cohen

the last Sunday. Printed announcements of these meetings can be obtained of Miss E. M. Vance, at 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C. We hope the North London "saints" will do their best to circulate these announcements, and thus assist in advertising this important effort. We may add that Stanley Hall is a handsome room, and a pleasant place to which to bring ladies to hear a Freethought lecture.

The second course of Sunday evening lectures will be delivered at the splendid Stratford Town Hall. Very large audiences have assembled there on previous occasions, and bumper meetings are expected this time. The West Ham N. S. S. Branch is co-operating with the Secular Society, Limited, in this effort. Mr. Foote leads off on September 24, and will be followed by Mr. Cohen, who in turn will be followed by Mr. Lloyd. Printed announcements of these lectures are also obtainable from Miss Vance, and we hope the local "saints" will do their utmost to secure a first-class advertisement.

The third course of Sunday evening lectures will be delivered at the Queen's Hall during the whole of October. Mr. Foote leads off with the first two lectures, and will be followed by Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd. Bills and smaller announcements of these lectures (five in all) are being printed, and will be supplied by Miss Vance to applicants who can use them to advantage. A new feature of this course of Queen's Hall lectures will be some good instrumental music rendered by a band of first-rate professionals, who do not desire a more specific announcement, for reasons that may easily be understood.

The advertisement of our Torrey pamphlets is withdrawn from our back page for a week or two in order to make room for the advertisement of the Sunday evening lectures at Stanley Hall, Stratford Town Hall, and Queen's Hall, in September and October. A fresh advertisement of the Torrey pamphlets will appear as soon as possible after our return from the Paris Congress.

The South Shields N.S.S. Branch has published its annual report which "shows a most successful year's work." There has been a large distribution of literature, including "heavy consignments of the famous Torrey pamphlets from Mr. Foote's pen." We quote the following paragraph:

"Courses of special lectures have been delivered by Messrs. Foote, Cohen, and Lloyd at a heavy cost, towards which we have to gratefully acknowledge many donations from local subscribers, and also assistance from the funds of the Secular Society, Limited. The attendances have been very satisfactory—in particular Mr. Foote's audience in the large Assembly Hall recording the highest for several years in connection with the movement. An additional visit was arranged with Mr. Cohen in order to permit of a call at Hetton, where a new Branch has been formed for that district."

A lecture fund is being formed for the 1905-6 season and bids fair to be a success. Contributions should be sent to the secretary, Mr. R. Chapman, 30 Madras-street, Simonside, S. Shields.

Freethinkers in Porth and the district are invited to attend a meeting to be held in the committee room of the Town Hall this evening (Sept. 3) at 6.30. It is intended to form a Branch of the N. S. S. and to carry on some Freethought propaganda.

The Congress of the Peasants' Union at Moscow drew up a proclamation in favor of six demands. The fifth was: "The introduction of obligatory free elementary education without compulsory religious instruction coupled with the secularisation of the schools." Fancy such a demand in Russia! It is ahead of Dr. Clifford and the Nonconformist Conscience. Yes, the world *does* move.

Science, no less than common sense, dispels Christian superstition. Evolution destroys the idea of a general catastrophe. There was a time when life could not exist on the earth, and there will probably come a time when it will cease to exist. Long before then man will have disappeared. But the æon of our race may extend to millions of years. Is not this time practically infinite? And do not those who make it a cause for lamentation and despair resemble the man that Spinoza ridicules, who refuses to eat his dinner to-day because he is not sure of a dinner for ever and ever? Sit down, you fool, and eat.

A Study in Moral Bankruptcy.

De Profundis. By OSCAR WILDE. London: Methuen & Co.

In his day of fame, Oscar Wilde was certainly anything but a sympathetic character. There was nothing noble or deep or human about him. His life was artificial, his outlook was artificial, his writing was artificial. A child of phrase and pose at his best, he remained, as this book reveals, a child of phrase and pose to the last. He was always thinking of himself and of the figure he cut before other people, and this vanity was of course in the end his undoing. Yet the tragedy of that end was, surely, enough to evoke the sympathy of the most austere. All thought of his snobbery and conceit was swallowed up in pity for this unfortunate victim of his own diseased organism left to rot in a prison cell.

As a natural result the mind was centred upon itself, and we have indirectly a lurid proof of the supreme folly of the ordinary criminal method. To lock a man up with his own thoughts for years is not to reform him; it is to brutalise him. Oscar Wilde, it is true, may not have been further brutalised, but he was certainly not reformed, and all the mush of this artistic "repentance" shows it. Much of these musings would be repulsive in their raw egotism if we did not understand the circumstances in which they were written. "I" and "my" and "me" recur with such frequency as to be ultimately monotonous. Take this passage:—

"I want to get to the point when I shall be able to say quite simply, and without affectation, that the two great turning-points in my life were when my father sent me to Oxford and when society sent me to prison."

Or this:—

"I would sooner say, or hear it said of me, that I was so typical a child of my age that in my perversity, and for that perversity's sake, I turned the good things of my life to evil and the evil things of my life to good."

These are samples of whole pages. In addition to the vanity and self-importance of it all (natural in the abnormal conditions of its composition) we see also the springs of that art of word-mongering of which Oscar Wilde was a supreme exponent, and which, if we are to judge by some recent developments, is destined to be the last pillar of the Faith. When reason and sense and justice are gone the verbal acrobat will still remain. At the same time, Wilde was more sprightly and more clever than his imitators. For instance he is romancing about Christ. Here is one passage:—

"There is something so unique about Christ. Of course just as there are false dawns before the dawn itself, and winter days so full of sudden sunlight that they will cheat the wise crocus into squandering its gold before its time, and make some foolish bird call to its mate to build on barren boughs, so there were Christians before Christ. For that we should be grateful. The unfortunate thing is that there have been none since. I make one exception, St. Francis of Assisi."

In another passage he bursts out:—

"Indeed there is the charm about Christ when all is said: he is just like a work of art. He does not really teach one anything, but by being brought into his presence one becomes something."

Wilde, being an artist and very conscious of the fact and determined to let it be known, mixes up Christ and Art and poetry and what-not-else until one is not clear which is which. Not many of the *dicta* in this volume are likely to satisfy those good people who in these matters are in the confidence of Omniscience. At the same time much of the writing bears a family resemblance to some current journalism that is supposed to be the very height of cleverness. Yet to adapt the method, we have here only the emptiness of the fluent and the fluency of the vain. There are evidently minds that can pour out this sort of thing like an everflowing fountain. Its very ease is its snare. And most of this book consists of elegant epigrams, paradoxes, verbal graces, climax and anti-climax. It is all very exquisite and very precious, but it has as much relation to the

serious things of life as a juggler at a county fair. Nay, even the poor juggler, behind the scenes, has his hopes and fears, his sorrows and his joys, about which he might be sincere and serious. In this book, however, I confess I find no sincerity, only posing and posturing as of old. And for that reason I doubt if its publication was really a service to the memory of the man who wrote it. Some one, I think Mr. Holyoake, has pointed out that there is no word of regret, from beginning to end, for the fate of those whom the writer degraded or helped to degrade. All the pity and all the pose is purely personal. That of course is true and it spells much. But then such a criticism seems to imply that *De Profundis* is a true revelation of the author's inmost thoughts and emotions; it certainly treats the book too seriously. The man who penned these polished paragraphs was thinking, from first to last how this phrase would look, how that epigram would seem so clever, and how people would say "What a consummate word-artist!" In the thought, apart from the setting, there is not much. Cant about Art, cant about Christ, cant about Individualism. If we may discern a consistent point of view through the cant, it is that Wilde's ideal was "self-realisation," which really seems to be only another synonym for selfishness. In one paragraph he declares:—

"I don't regret for a single moment having lived for pleasure. I did it to the full, as one should do everything that one does. There was no pleasure I did not experience. I threw the pearl of my soul into a cup of wine. I went down the primrose path to the sound of flutes. I lived on honeycomb. But to have continued the same life would have been wrong because it would have been limiting. I had to pass on. The other half of the garden had its secrets for me also."

In which case, of course, there should be nothing to complain of, society not having done a man any injustice or wrong whom she has only shown a part of the garden he might otherwise have overlooked. If the gaining of "experience" be all-in-all, then the people who put us in prison do us a service, even as the pick-pocket who robs us, or the hangman who hangs us. These people may all be helping our "self-development" by introducing us to new and delightful emotions. And there is, indeed, some reason to think that the special risk of the artistic temperament is just this self-absorption, this egotistic revelling in emotion, this fallacy that the world is a subject for the individual to gather experiences, regardless of the effect of such "gathering" on anybody or anything else. A man who sets out merely to get "experiences," apparently with no other object, is likely to run amuck, and Oscar Wilde's career was not, to say the least, a brilliant recommendation for his method. If one sets the conventions at defiance it must be in the interests of a nobler ideal, and the only true way to "realise" oneself is by the service of humanity. Such truths may seem trite and commonplace, as in fact many truths are, and they may be sneered at as Philistine by the smart cynics who advertise the principle of selfishness as a new discovery. But by our refusal or our readiness to be laughed or bluffed out of such truths we are registering, as the case may be, our moral stamina or the lack of it.

As for Wilde himself, apart from his theory, one can of course, as I said before, only have intense compassion. Nothing could possibly be more wretched than the end of this *flaneur*, who in his time probably gave pleasure to others and with his plays and jokes passed an idle hour. In the prefatory letter to this book there is something about God sending to each the experiences necessary for his development, and such of course must be essentially the theistic position. Yet what an odious and disgusting mockery! Imagine the "development" that needed to be accomplished by such orgies and such sufferings as Wilde's! There is a report that before he died Oscar Wilde was received into the bosom of the Catholic Church. Perhaps it was a fitting end. Assuredly no humanist would begrudge to the bankrupt and broken mind any "consolation" which it might thus experience. FREDK. RYAN.

Can the Gospel History be Trusted?—III.

(Continued from p. 556.)

HAVING shown the fallacy of Dr. Adeney's antiquated arguments respecting Polycarp and the apostle John, it results therefrom that that apologist has, so far, only succeeded in tracing the Gospels back to the days of Irenæus (A.D. 185).

Continuing his self-imposed task, the reverend lecturer says:—

"We will now go back twenty years earlier, and travel as far as the Euphrates. There we meet an Assyrian, whose name is Tatian. This man takes the four Gospels, and combines them into a Harmony for the use of the church at Edessa.....But a very confident man, the author of a book called *Supernatural Religion*.....said that Tatian might have made a Harmony, but he could not have made it out of the four Gospels.....Dr. Lightfoot tried to argue against this assertion.....Since then, unfortunately for the author of *Supernatural Religion*, Tatian's Harmony has been 'recovered.' It has been found in an Armenian text, and also in an Arabic text; it has been translated into English, and I have the book here.....The bits of narrative are combined exactly as those old church writers had said, proving to us that Tatian did use our four Gospels about the year 160."

The first point to be noticed in connection with the foregoing statement is that we have no evidence that Tatian compiled a Harmony of the four canonical Gospels, or indeed any Harmony at all. The ascription of a "Diatessaron"—a Gospel made out of four—to this ancient heretic is due solely to a mistake of Eusebius (A.D. 325), which misled "those old church writers" of later times. No one before the time of Eusebius ever saw a Harmony which had been compiled by Tatian—not even Eusebius himself, who first names it. The author of *Supernatural Religion* has been in no way discredited; for the text underlying the commentaries and homilies recently "recovered" cannot be traced back to the second century Tatian. It is Principal Adeney himself who is the "very confident man," and it may be added an exceedingly gullible one too. As a matter of fact, the alleged recovery of a Harmony made by Tatian is simply a mare's nest, which nearly all Christian scholars and advocates profess to regard as genuine.

The next matter for comment upon Dr. Adeney's statement is that that gentleman has taken the liberty of pushing back the date assigned by scholars to Tatian at least ten years. This date can in some measure be fixed by the fact that Tatian was a disciple of Justin (who suffered martyrdom A.D. 166), and did not set up as a teacher until some time after Justin's death. This circumstance is admitted by all, hence the period when Tatian was active as a Christian leader is generally placed about the year 170. The Rev. W. Sanday, for instance, says of this reputed Harmony:—

"There is no longer any question that the Diatessaron was really a harmony of our four Gospels, and it carries back the evidence some ten years earlier than 180."

Dr. Sanday should have said that there was no longer any question that the recovered texts were arranged in the form of a harmony; for this is all that can be proved. To take another example: the following is a portion of an editorial from the *Rock*, when the grand "recovery" of Tatian's Harmony began to be known:—

"Up to within recent years it was at least regarded as open to debate what the Diatessaron really was. It has now been proved most clearly that it was a Harmony of our present four Gospels. Recent discoveries have placed this beyond a doubt. But if so, what becomes of the theory that our Gospels were first composed at the close of the second century? Even in miracles, it is less hard to believe that Tatian, who wrote about A.D. 170, drew up a Harmony of our four Gospels before they had come into existence" (Oct. 30, 1891).

Of course, no rationalistic critic has advanced a theory that the canonical Gospels "were first composed at the close of the second century," or even

after the year 170. These Gospels—or at least three of them—were, most probably, all written by about the middle of the second century, and would therefore be in circulation, and be becoming known to the scattered Christian churches, in A.D. 170. It is therefore unnecessary to trouble further about Tatian or his mythical Diatessaron.

The next stepping stone leading to the first century is Justin (A.D. 156), who, according to Dr. Adeney, quoted from the canonical Gospels. "I put it to you," argues the reverend gentleman, "Is it likely that Justin Martyr the master used some other Gospel though we know Tatian his disciple used these four?" We see now the use to which Christian apologists put the imaginary harmony of Tatian. Following Principal Adeney's reasoning, all four Gospels were in existence immediately after the death of Christ. This is obvious: Tatian used the four canonical Gospels, so did Tatian's teacher Justin, so did the teacher of Justin, so likewise did the teacher of Justin's teacher, and so on to the time of Christ (A.D. 30). But we know from the Pauline epistles (A.D. 50 or later) and from the book of Revelation (A.D. 70-80) that no Gospels were known or in use when these documents were written, nor during the first propagation of the Christian religion: we thus find this grand argument fallacious as well as ridiculous.

Dr. Adeney's contention that Justin quoted from the canonical Gospels is fully dealt with in *Supernatural Religion*, where it is shown to be a baseless assumption. Justin, it is true, has made reference to a large number of the so-called events and circumstances now contained in the first three Gospels, and has quoted from a compilation of sayings very similar to those in the Sermon on the Mount; but these were taken, he tells us, from the "Memoirs" or "Memorabilia of the Apostles." He never once mentions the Gospels ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, and he several times refers to events found only in some of the apocryphal Gospels.

Commenting upon the last-mentioned fact, Principal Adeney says: "True; but whenever he tells us anything that is not in our Gospels, he never says it is in 'The Memoirs of the Apostles'; on the other hand, whenever he mentions anything as in 'The Memoirs of the Apostles,' you may find it in one or other of our Gospels. Is not that a pretty plain proof that his 'Memoirs' were our Gospels?" The reply to the latter question should be, "Why, certainly; a most wonderful proof indeed."

But let us look at this "pretty plain proof" for a moment. Justin names as his authority the "Memoirs of the Apostles" ten times. Are we to take it that only ten of the circumstances he refers to were quoted from the canonical Gospels, and all the others from some other Gospels? Well, of those ten of Justin's citations I submit as examples the following two:—

(1) Dialogue. 106. "Accordingly when a star arose in heaven at the time of his birth, as is recorded in the *Memoirs of the Apostles*, the Magi from Arabia, recognising the sign by this, came and worshipped him."

(2) Dialogue. 105. "For when Christ was giving up his spirit on the cross, he said: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,' as I have learned also from the *Memoirs*."

Now the account of the Magi and the star is found in only one of the canonical Gospels (Matthew), and the cry on the cross in only one other (Luke). Justin is therefore credited with using the First and Third Gospels. But an account of both circumstances is given in some of the apocryphal writings. The story of the Magi and the star is found in the *Protevangelium*, and the cry on the cross in the *Acts of Pilate*—the authors of these veracious histories being said to be the apostle James and his companion Nicodemus. Which of these are we to say Justin quoted from?

Now, as a matter of fact, the only Gospel of any kind which Justin names is the *Acts of Pilate*, and this he cites twice as an unimpeachable historical record. Thus, speaking of the Roman soldiers

casting lots for Christ's garments at the Crucifixion, he says (1 Apol. 35):—

"And that these things did happen you can learn from the *Acts of Pontius Pilate*."

Again, after stating that Jesus worked miracles of healing, Justin says (1 Apol. 48):—

"And that he did those things you can learn from the *Acts of Pontius Pilate*."

It is scarcely necessary to say that the two matters referred to are found in the extant *Acts of Pilate*. It may also safely be said that had not Justin given the source whence he derived an account of these Gospel events, it would be confidently asserted by every Christian apologist that he had taken his information from our present Gospels—for the circumstances referred to are found in all four.

That some, if not all, of these compilations had been written, and were beginning to come into circulation, in the time of Justin may be set down as certain; but that that ancient apologist was acquainted with them and had quoted from them is a question we have no evidence to prove. Had Justin possessed a copy of our four present Gospels there could be no earthly reason why he should so carefully forbear from mentioning them. We can imagine him saying, for instance: "For in the Gospel given to us by Matthew it is recorded," or "which is recorded in the Gospel written by his apostle John," etc. Instead of this Justin says: "For in the Memoirs composed by his apostles and their followers it is recorded"—"which are also written in the Memoirs of the Apostles"—"as is made evident in the Memoirs of the Apostles"—"as I have learned from the Memoirs of the Apostles," etc. It is simply inconceivable that Justin could use and quote from the Gospels ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and never once name them—or the writers.

Justin had heard of a person named John, "one of the apostles of our Christ," who "from a revelation made to him" had written a book of prophecies; but he does not appear to have known that the author of the book of Revelation had also written a Gospel. The writings of Justin fully prove that the majority of the events and circumstances, and most of the sayings, now contained in the three Synoptical Gospels had, in his day, been committed to writing, and that copies of some primitive Gospels were known to the second century Christians: of this there can be no doubt whatever. But when we take into consideration the fact that those three Gospels are not independent "histories," but are merely revised editions of an earlier and more primitive Gospel, and that "many" such Gospels were in circulation when Luke sat down to compile another, it cannot even as a matter of probability be affirmed that the writings of Justin give evidence of his use and knowledge of the canonical Gospels.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be concluded.)

A certain author, having explained the nature of his occupation to an old Manx woman, was hardly prepared for the comment, "Well, well, what does it matter so long as a body makes his livin' honestly?" the words being evidently meant to put him on better terms with himself. But worse still fared an English clergyman, for some time vicar of a Manx parish, and from ignorance of the people and their ways not a very popular one. Having received preferment elsewhere, he started on a round of farewell visits, but without hearing a single regret. At last one old woman told him she was "mortal sorry." In his delight the vicar let curiosity outrun discretion, and he asked for her reason. "Well," said she, with touching candor, "we've had a lot o' pass'ns over here from England, and each one has been worse than the last, and after you're gone I'm afeared they'll be sen'in' us the devil himself." The vicar left hurriedly.—*Saturday Review*.

It's a fact every man would be glad to dispute
But there seems no good way to defeat it,
Adam hadn't the courage to gather the fruit,
But seemed perfectly willing to eat it.

Obituary.

WITH the decease of George Pierson Secularism loses one of its most sturdy supporters. Many Secularists who remember the active propaganda carried on in Maidstone along the eighties, with which he was closely associated, will deeply regret to hear of the departure of this old veteran. Honest, upright, and fearless to a degree, his career has been that of many a good Secularist who has done yeoman work in the "cause." Brought up a strict Baptist, at a time when parents considered it their duty to "hammer" into their progeny the sweet doctrines they believed in; these shackles, however, soon fell from the young man's mind on becoming acquainted with the more logical views of Secularism—founded on science and knowledge. A tailor by trade, he migrated to London in the early forties, joined the Chartist and Co-operative movements, becoming a most enthusiastic worker in all those combinations of men and ideas of the time which make for the amelioration of the working classes and society in general. From '73 to '78 he passed in America, working in New York, Virginia, and other places. On his return he again took up the active work for the furtherance of those ideals he loved. Fortunate, in early life, in securing a partner who predeceased him twelve years, his strenuous life's work was rendered happy and comparatively smooth by her sympathetic and loving acquiescence. He attained the remarkably good age of eighty-four, and needless to say never wavered from those ideals he so long strove for—the Secularism which lifts mankind to a higher and nobler life. He leaves two daughters and one son, with many personal friends, to cherish his memory. The funeral took place at Maidstone Cemetery, August 2, Mr. Holyoake's Service being impressively read by Mr. A. Hickmott, several friends attending.—R. W. H.

Revised Hymns.—No. 2

THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION.

The Church's one foundation,
Was laid in fiction's word,
She was no new creation
By water or by word,
From heaven none came, none sought her,
To be a holy bride,
And no one's blood e'er bought her,
Though martyrs through her died.

Intruding every nation,
Nor one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
A fancied "second birth."
Her Bible she caresses,
Which sceptics flout with mirth,
And to one end she presses,
To capture power on earth.

Though with no special wonder
Men see her sore oppress,
By schisms rent assunder,
By heresies distress;
The thoughtful watch are keeping
Their cry goes up, "Not long
Shall be our night of weeping,
For comes the morn of song."

Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She'll see no consumation
Of peace for evermore.
For with the vision glorious,
Our longing eyes are blest,
When Reason all victorious
Shall lay the Church to rest.

Nor she on earth hath union
With any "Three-in-One,"
Nor mystic, sweet communion
With those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy,
Earth's pioneers shall see
How all the meek and lowly
Her falsities shall flee.

GERALD GREY.

People walk along the streets the day after our deaths just as they did before, and the crowd is not diminished.—*Hazlitt.*

Divine Distemper; or, Heavenly Heredity.

A temper uncontrolled controls
The poor possessed possessor;
And violence alone consoles
The weak oppressed oppressor.

Old Jahveh and his *youngest son*—
In "Job," the word is *plural*—
Had tempers which would "take the bun"
For passion ultra-neural.

In some respects, the Son was worse;
In some respects, the Father,
Whose lips so often shrieked a curse,
They must have raised a lather.

He made the world, and said 'twas good
In workmanship and fashion,
Then noticed faults which changed his mood
And put him in a passion.

He cursed and swore, and dared to blame
The victims of his errors,
And tried to hide his sin and shame
By filling earth with terrors.

But still, with all his monstrous cheek,
His spite was not infernal,
Because he never seemed to seek
To make his curse eternal.

He had a little sense of shame,
And cursed the body merely;
But endless, ghostly, curses came
With Christ who "loves us dearly."

Although the Father's earthly curse
Was impudent and vicious,
His mis-begotten Son's was worse,
And hellishly malicious.

The temper of his bilious Son
Was anything but sunny;
Yet, though he lacked a sense of fun,
His rage was sometimes funny.

One day, when figs were out of date,
A figless tree he sighted,
And being in a peckish state,
He cursed it, and 'twas blighted.

If thoughtful folk were unimpressed
When Jahveh-*fil's* harangued them,
He raved, and fumed like one possessed,
And damned and cursed and slanged them.

He said he'd have their souls on toast,
Unless they mouthed his praises;
And swore that doubters' ghosts would roast
In everlasting blazes.

He preached the vicious "Golden Rule,"
And other old quotations;
Oft played the sage; and oft, the fool,
With spleenish variations.

Had Christ, the son of Joseph's wife,
Been taught and trained judiciously,
He might have led a useful life,
And acted less capriciously.

For temper, ignorance, conceit,
And wealth of malediction,
The "Savior" is the worst we meet
In all the range of *fiction*.

The "heathen" gods have passed away,
Now, Jesus and his Pa go;
And Hell's now little worse, they say,
Than Sheffield or Chicago.

The Christian scheme is quite absurd,
A laughable fiasco!
And as for Heaven—upon my word!
I'd rather live in Glasgow!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

A MEAN MAN.

A maiden named Josephine King
Dropped dead while attempting to sing;
Then a neighbor next door,
Whom her songs had made sore,
Bowed his head and said: "Death, where's
thy sting?" —*Kansas City Times.*

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.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, Opening Meeting. Addresses by various Speakers, with music.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Curse of the Cross"; Brockwell Park, 3.15, W. J. Ramsey, "The Gospel of Atheism"; 6, "Who is the King of Glory?"

FINSBURY BRANCH N. S. S.: Clerkenwell Green, 7, Guy A. Aldred, "Are Secularists Immoral?" Tuesday, September 5, Gernault-place, at 8.15, Guy A. Aldred, "Interpretations of Scripture."

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

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Literature distributing. Members meet outside Dudley Station, 11.30. September 7, Coffee House, Bull Ring, a Paper by one of the Members.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Arnold Sharpley, "The Church and Joan of Arc: A Study in Black and White."

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

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

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