

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXV.—No. 40

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1905

PRICE TWOPENCE

*Terror and superstition are the invariable enemies of culture and progress. They are used as rods and bogies to frighten the ignorant and the base, but they depress all mankind to the same level of abject slavery.*—J. HENRY SHORTHOUSE, *John Inglesant.*

## Dr. Clifford on the Four Gospels.

THE Christian Pulpit is steadily undermining itself and sounding the death-knell of the very religion that brought it into existence. Its destruction is that it has rebelled against itself, and is shedding its own blood. Let us suppose that a Japanese gentleman pays London a visit for the purpose of ascertaining what its Pulpit has to say about the Bible, the great Christian Text-Book. If our guest confines himself to the Established Church, he will forthwith hear two contradictory doctrines. The Rev. Preb. Webb-Peploe will assure him, in the most dogmatic manner possible, that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of the living God, and that when it first came from the hands of its Divine Author it was absolutely perfect in every respect. But Dean Robinson and Canon Henson will inform him that literary criticism has rendered Mr. Webb-Peploe's views utterly untenable. The Established Church Pulpit cannot give our friend any authoritative deliverance concerning the Bible, because it is only the medium of individual opinions which flagrantly contradict one another. But let us suppose that our visitor next consults the Nonconformist Pulpit. He starts with Westminster Chapel, where Dr. Campbell Morgan tells him that the Bible is a perfect revelation of the mind and character of God, and presents a flawless rule of conduct for all mankind. Dr. Campbell Morgan agrees with Mr. Webb-Peploe and with all the other members of the Bible League. He goes next to the City Temple, whose oracle is the Rev. R. J. Campbell. Mr. Campbell is himself a Higher Critic, and agrees in the main with Dean Robinson and Canon Henson. By him our friend is instructed to believe that Christianity is independent of the Bible, and would stand even if the Book were to fall. Unable to understand such teaching, our friend repairs to Westbourne Park Baptist Church, where the fort is held by the renowned Dr. Clifford. Dr. Clifford has the reputation of being exceedingly broad in his theological views. Our visitor, however, cannot make him out at all, for he seems to occupy a position somewhere between Dr. Campbell Morgan and Mr. Campbell, but in reality stands on the same platform as the former. Dr. Clifford regards Christianity as a religion founded on historical facts, and this is a view that cannot consistently be held except by those who believe in the historical accuracy of the Bible.

We can imagine the state of mind in which our Japanese friend would be at the close of his pilgrimage through the churches of London. He would be a more pronounced Agnostic than ever he was before.

Indeed, the Pulpit was never in such a hopeless condition as it is to-day. The distance between Dr. Campbell Morgan and Mr. R. J. Campbell is immeasurable, and it can never be annihilated. But

their standpoints, though so far apart, are thoroughly intelligible. Dr. Campbell Morgan is a Realist of the old stamp, while Mr. Campbell is a mystic Idealist. The position occupied by Dr. Clifford, however, is utterly illogical. Dr. Campbell Morgan is an orthodox Realist, and one can thoroughly respect him. Mr. Campbell is an equally orthodox Idealist, and one can appreciate his work as such. But Dr. Clifford is a thoroughgoing heresiarch. Consequently he is "a trimmer on principle," as Macaulay describes Halifax. Christianity being to him a historical religion, he pronounces the four Gospels historically true. On Sunday evening, September 17, his subject was, "How the Gospels came to us." Many years ago he published a volume on the Inspiration of the Bible, in which he avowed himself a Higher Critic of an advanced type. The book created quite a sensation in the orthodox camp, and the writer was denounced from many a pulpit and in many an article as a dangerous man. But in his lecture on the Gospels Dr. Clifford spoke as if he had never heard of the Higher Criticism and its destructive work on these very documents, as if he had never read the productions of present-day scholars whose arguments against their historicity seem so unanswerable. He ignored all arguments and dealt merely in flowing rhetoric.

The conclusion to which he came, without argument, was that the four Gospels were in existence at the close of the first century. For some fifteen or twenty years the story of Jesus was orally told from man to man. People loved to hear it, and they could never hear enough of it. At last believers began to tell it in letters to their distant relations and friends. Matthew wrote a short history in Hebrew, which he or someone else translated into Greek. Then Mark composed his account, and many others did the same. By-and-by Luke compiled a narrative, and last of all John, the divine, added his "spiritual Gospel." That is how the Gospels came to us, according to Dr. Clifford. Matthew and John were disciples of the Lord, Mark was instructed by Peter, and Luke by Paul, and so the four Gospels have the authority of men who had seen the Master. How beautifully simple, after all, the whole question is! The fact is, however, that Dr. Clifford treated his hearers as if they were little children, and culpably trifled with his subject. He cannot but know that there is not a scrap of evidence that one of our four Gospels existed in the first century. The majority of the people before him possessed no critical knowledge of the subject whatever, and they were woefully misled by his dogmatism, while the few who did know something about it were simply disgusted.

Dr. Clifford did not tell his congregation that not one first century writer refers to written Gospels, that even the apostle Paul was apparently totally ignorant of the life and teaching of Jesus, and that even in the second century there was only a tradition cherished as to the origin and authorship of the documents in question. Neither Clement of Rome, nor Barnabas, nor Polycarp, nor the Shepherd of Hermas mentions any written narrative or narratives of the life of Jesus; and when we come to Papias, and Justin Martyr, and Tatian all is vague and uncertain. Papias only quoted a tradition, and is apologetic. Both Papias and the Muratorian Frag-

ment "imply that Peter was dead when Mark wrote, so that the latter could not have the apostle's supervision." Irenæus was of the same opinion, but "Clement says that Peter lived to know what had been done by Mark, yet so far retains the apologetic as to add that Peter neither hindered nor incited the composition." "Another tradition says that Peter was informed by the Spirit of the accomplishment of the book, and authorised it for public use." There is nothing to rely upon but tradition, and, as everybody knows, it is "the tendency of tradition, even among honest and able men, to exaggerate or to minimise, in the supposed interests of a good cause." All these vaguenesses, and uncertainties, and contradictions Dr. Clifford completely ignored, and assured his hearers that the existence and extensive use of our four Gospels at the end of the first century are historical facts which no sane person can dispute.

But even if such a conclusion could be satisfactorily established on the most unquestionable evidence, what would be the gain to the Christian Religion? Dr. Clifford did not tell us. He did not even claim Divine Inspiration and infallibility for the writers of the Gospels. He frankly admitted that they merely committed the oral tradition to the best written form they were able to devise, and that each writer was guided in his selection of materials by the character and peculiar conditions of the people for whom he wrote. Probably much of the current tradition was allowed to perish, being thought unworthy of preservation; and written Gospels not a few were not permitted to survive. That is to say, there was much in the oral tradition which the more intelligent Christians did not believe to be true. There were also some written Gospels which the best judgment of the Church condemned. Now, the question is, What proof is there that our four Gospels are reliable records of facts which actually happened? Surely, the fact that many Christian scholars maintain that they were in existence at the end of the first century is no manner of proof that they are trustworthy historical documents. Their historicity is in no sense dependent upon the problematic question of dates of composition. It is the nature of their contents alone which must decide the point whether they are true or not. Now, it is the conviction of many Christian scholars that the evidences for the unhistoricity of the four Gospels are both numerous and irresistible. To such men as Professor Schmiedel their unreliability is their most prominent feature. The supreme difficulty is to break the shell of myth and get at the kernel of fact. Professor Schmiedel admits that it is often almost a hopeless task to distinguish the one from the other. Well, if a *Christian* critic makes such a concession, is it any wonder that *Secularist* critics do not hesitate to assert that the Gospel stories are not one whit more credible than their parallels in Pagan mythologies? Dr. Clifford's one ambition was to convince his people that the Gospels existed at the close of the first century; but we maintain that if that early date could be critically established, it would not affect in the least degree the character of their contents. The Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and Ascension, and all the intervening miracles, would still be absolutely unbelievable.

Is not Dr. Clifford aware that the attempt to place the origin of our four Gospels in the second century was first made, not by hateful infidels, but by Christian theologians? The much-abused Tubingen School has always been a school of devout believers, whose object was not to discredit Christianity but simply to explain its rise and early history. Ferdinand Christian Baur and his successors called themselves Christians to the last. Some of their theories may have been abandoned; but their only aim throughout was to advance the cause of historical truth. Most of their conclusions, however, have been confirmed by later research, and the present tendency, especially in Germany, is to accept their findings as critically trustworthy. But Dr. Clifford is mistaken if he imagines that the downfall

of the Modern Tubingen School of Theology would weaken the arguments against the historicity of the Gospels. Whenever and however these documents sprang into being their contents are purely fictitious. Their Jesus is no more real than the similar Savior-Gods of Egypt, Greece, or Rome. Does Dr. Clifford think differently. If he does, on what ground?

Dr. Clifford is not one of those who believe that faith in the historical Christ is essential to acceptance with God. He declares that all who live good lives are the Lord's people, whether they are Buddhists, Mohammedans, or Christians, or even if they have no religion at all. But if Dr. Clifford is right then the bulk of the New Testament is wrong. And if the bulk of the New Testament is not true, why does Dr. Clifford use it as his Text-Book, and never give a hint that he does not believe it? Why is he so anxious to persuade his people that the Gospels are historical documents? If Jesus is not the only Savior, why preach him as if He were? And if it be possible to live good lives without any form of religion, why cling so desperately to supernaturalism? Why denounce Secularism as if it were a crime? If all that is required is character, morality, goodness, righteousness, as Dr. Clifford admits, why not seek to develop it along purely natural lines and by purely natural means? Then there would be no need to trouble about the credibility of the Gospels, the existence of God, or the immortality of the soul. Then great men would be known as social reformers and ethical instructors, and not as champions of a supernaturalism which is only real to those who believe in it.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Christianity and Paganism.

MR. W. H. MALLOCK is one of the standing puzzles of the modern religious world. Set him to the task of criticising a presentation of religious belief with which he disagrees, and no one is quicker at detecting the weak spots, in dwelling upon the logical implications of modern scientific thought, and in wielding the arguments of the non-religious world. And these arguments are not used as a mere parrot-like repetition, but with an apparently lively appreciation of their worth. Yet once the enemy is disposed of, and Mr. Mallock sets about presenting his own conception of religious belief, there ensues a striking and bewildering transformation. In one form or another nearly every one of the fallacies and false analogies he has been exposing reappears with the writer's sanction and blessing. Why one should go to such trouble to knock down a superstition only to take the further trouble of setting it up again is a puzzle. Whether Mr. Mallock is or is not writing, part of the time, with his tongue in his cheek is also a question to which one is unable to give a final and satisfactory answer; but all the same his performances remind one very strongly of the old trick of popularising heresy by means of refutations that are wholly and obviously inadequate.

Mr. Mallock's curious method is strikingly exemplified in an article in the current *Nineteenth Century* on "Christianity as a Natural Religion." The occasion of the article is a notice of Professor Dill's important work, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, a companion volume to the same author's *Roman Society in the Last Days of the Western Empire*. The object of Professor Dill's two books is exactly what the titles indicate. It is to give as faithful a picture as is possible of Roman life in all its phases over a lengthy period during which Christianity appears, first as a mere sect among the sects of the tolerant Roman world, and later as the established religion of the Empire. Written without any apparent bias, Professor Dill, by the mere marshalling of facts, makes two things plain. First, that to the last the representatives of the better form of culture and the saner morality were to be found among the representatives of the higher Paganism. And,

second, that the presence with Christians of certain religious and moral teachings, for which present-day believers are in the habit of claiming credit, was really part and parcel of a general movement of the Pagan world. Those who are well acquainted with the history of the period will find nothing new here, although this does not detract from Professor Dill's masterly and attractive method of marshalling the facts. But those who are not so well acquainted with Roman life, or whose knowledge has been gained through those Christian writers whose chief object has been to whiten Christianity by blackening Paganism, will be astonished to discover that so-called Christian teachings were taught in a far saner manner by non-Christian teachers. This is most marked in such teachings as are connected with morality, the belief in a God, in a soul, and in a future life; but it holds true also of such phases of religious life as the missionary activity of the Pagan world contrasted with that of the early Christians, as well as of specific doctrines. Mr. Mallock properly remarks of those Christians, Catholic and Protestant alike, who contend that their religion is unique: "There is not a moral doctrine preached by the Christian Church which was not being preached by Pagan moralists also; and, what is still more striking, every one of those salient features in the sphere of dogmatic theology, such as the doctrine of the Divine mediation and the sacraments, finds its counterpart in the competing system of Paganism."

To the non-believer this phenomenon admits of a very simple, but natural, conclusion. But the obvious inference from such facts as those above noted will not agree with Mr. Mallock's desire to make out a case for the Christian religion, even while differing from the views set forward by other Christian writers. The facts must be admitted, but a theory that will harmonise their recognition with the fundamentally supernatural character of Christianity must be found. This Mr. Mallock believes he finds in the position that even a supernatural creed must have a natural aspect—must, that is, contain elements that appeal to human nature as human nature, just as food would cease to be attractive were man destitute of a digestive apparatus. The chief points in the Christian revelation, he argues, are the love of God and the nature of sin, with a desire for its remedy. But unless man possessed wants which the love of God satisfied, and experienced distress at the presence of sin, no preaching, supernatural or natural, could, on these topics, secure any sympathy whatever. And this applies also to the dogmas of the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection, which possess "inherent and antecedent probability"—that is because they harmonise with the deeper natural needs of mankind—and are accepted because "the alleged supernatural evidence is corroborated and repeated by man's natural judgment."

The mingling of the true and the false in such statements is well calculated to satisfy confirmed believers, but they will not stand examination by others. It is unquestionable that unless teachings are adapted, more or less, to the human nature it is intended for they can never gain acceptance; but what does this prove in favor of Christianity? Positively nothing at all. In the first place, man's dissatisfaction with sin or evil is not a theological problem at all. It is a moral, a social, and, deeper still, a biological problem. It only becomes a theological question because certain accidental circumstances combine in giving a theological shape to man's moral and social aspirations. But it is no more a religious question than the fact of a treatise on political economy being written in English makes political economy an English subject. And more and more it is becoming evident that the talk of the love of God is nothing more than a religious exploitation of human nature. The best God only represents idealised human nature; and all that Mr. Mallock is really saying is that unless the morality taught in the name of religion agrees with human conceptions of what morality should be it cannot get accepted. A sufficiently harmless statement,

although it is put forward with the air of a great discovery.

Mr. Mallock's remark about the dogmas of Christianity proves to be equally empty on a little examination. That the supernatural in Christianity is corroborated by man's natural judgment only means this: in an atmosphere where the supernatural is an every day occurrence, new stories and new beliefs on the subject gain ground rapidly. There does not exist with the average person, any antidote against it. There is no question of inherent improbability, it is at most a question of not knowing the narrator to be a liar, and not always that. No one has pointed out more frequently than Freethinkers that this is the vital condition for the growth of supernaturalism, and it is difficult to see what consolation any Christian is going to derive from the fact. Its real significance is a discredit of all supernaturalism, past and present.

I have already pointed out that one result of Professor Dill's work is to show that all the ideas associated with Christianity, moral and doctrinal, were to be found in the competing pagan creeds. To an unbiassed mind this quite divests Christianity of any special supernatural value. At most it is a synthesis of various beliefs held by one or other of the non-Christian sects, and in many cases the same, or nearly the same, synthesis is to be found among these bodies. And as it is inevitable where a number of competing systems exist, that sooner or later a synthesis is effected, and that this takes rank as the conquering system, the triumph of Christianity represents the consummation of such a process, while the condition of the consummation is to be sought for in the prevailing economic and social conditions. There is really nothing more wonderful, given equal knowledge of the conditions, in the rise and triumph of Christianity, than there is in the rise and development of the English factory system, or of Free Trade. It is only made a matter of mystery by the clergy for business reasons, and believed to be so by others, because they will not take the trouble to look at the problem fairly.

The surprising thing is that Mr. Mallock does not see this; and that he should write that it may "reasonably be maintained" that Christianity is founded "on a genuine supernatural revelation which inoculated man with certain spiritual perceptions." And for this he cites the following reasons.

"The higher paganism perished, the Christian religion has survived. The higher paganisms all sprang from the matrix of earlier doctrines, but Christianity enjoyed two signal advantages. It inherited from the Jews a monotheistic system which was not encumbered by a deification of the separate forces of nature. The higher paganisms could never entirely disentangle themselves from fantastic cosmogonies which were fast becoming incredible, and which, even when treated as symbols, tended to create a smile. Christianity, moreover, had for its Divine mediator an actual historical character, whereas the earthly career of Mithra belonged to an unimaginable past."

Now, from one point of view, this is really a wonderful passage. Not only does every sentence in it contain an assertion that will not stand even a casual examination, but Mr. Mallock's own article shows it to be utterly and irredeemably wrong.

To begin with, if *all* the elements of Christianity, moral and doctrinal, existed in the Pagan creeds, then these latter have not perished but persist in a Christian form. If again, the Christian beliefs existed, as Mr. Mallock says, "amongst men as men before or without connection with their existence amongst men as Christians," then Christianity too sprang from a "matrix of earlier doctrines." That the Jewish religion was destitute of any deification of separate forces of nature, is also a statement open to question; but at any rate Christianity with its numerous subordinate deities in the shape of saints, could not have gained much from this connection. Or is there anyone who will seriously assert that the cosmogonies of the civilised Pagan world were more fantastic than those current among Christians for a thousand years of its history? Mr. Mallock must

have surely forgotten that our Copernican system is really, in substance, the old Pythagorean system, and that it was for contravening the "fantastic" Christian cosmogony that Galileo was imprisoned, Bruno burned, and the writings of Copernicus prohibited. From what we know of the best thought of the Pagan world, it is safe to say that "fantastic" cosmogonies would not have been nearly so long lived had not Christianity sanctified the most stupid of their kind. And finally, is Mr. Mallock quite sure that Christ—the Christ of the New Testament—is an "actual historical character"? If so, he is more certain than is any other sane student of the New Testament. A historical character there may have been around whom the Christian legends gathered, but that is quite another question. And there may well have been a similar nucleus of fact in the case of many of the Pagan deities. There is certainly one thing "fantastic," of which Christianity has never divested itself. And this is the use of reasoning so fantastic that if used on behalf of anything but religion, it would be greeted with a laugh, or passed by silent pity.

C. COHEN.

### The Paris Congress.—III.

MY colleagues are of opinion, as I am, that the time has arrived for a little plain-speaking, once for all, on this subject of the representation of Great Britain at International Freethought Congresses. It seems really necessary that the facts should be known and the case understood.

At the Geneva Congress, which Mr. William Heaford attended, he was appointed Organising Secretary for this country, and apparently for the English-speaking world. Such an Organising Secretary should have been appointed by Great Britain itself, and not by a number of foreign Freethinkers assembled in Switzerland. No doubt Mr. Heaford's motives were admirable; he is active and enthusiastic, and he jumped at the work. Early in 1903, when M. Furnémont visited London, Mr. Heaford brought him to my office, where he found me in the midst of my *Freethinker* work, too tired, and indeed too ill, to face an interview. I thus lost the pleasure of a good chat with the Secretary of the International Freethought Federation; but I promised, by way of atonement for what might easily look like discourtesy, that I would join the English Committee which M. Furnémont wished to see formed. Mr. Cohen and Mr. Roger also joined, and the N. S. S. Executive subsequently elected two additional representatives. We understood, however, that a Committee formed in this undemocratic way, by mere invitation from Mr. Heaford, would only be temporary, and that it would ultimately consist of properly elected delegates from the various Freethought societies. But no meetings of this make-shift Committee were held, although the N. S. S. Executive officially desired, more than once, to know why nothing was done. Towards the end of the year Mr. Heaford did call a meeting. He called it at an office which he ought to have known that the N. S. S. delegates could not enter. Common self-respect rendered it absolutely impossible. A communication to this effect was made to Mr. Heaford. Yet the rest of the temporary Committee met in the absence of the N. S. S. representatives, practically voted themselves a permanent body, and appointed (amongst themselves) a special committee to raise funds and send "delegates for England" to the Rome Congress. This was such a grotesque proceeding that the N. S. S. representatives were withdrawn from the Committee, and a separate N. S. S. delegation to Rome was immediately arranged for.

Had the first meeting of the temporary Committee been convened where all its members could have attended, had steps been taken to have a permanent representative Committee appointed, there would have been no hitch whatever. Certainly the N. S. S. Executive would not have raised a note of discord.

But as the case stood the Executive had no alternative but to go on its own way, trusting that others would not push matters so far as to necessitate a public explanation; for what is called the "washing of dirty linen in public" has never been to our taste.

Perhaps it was an accident, but the circular appealing for funds, issued by the Committee I had left, still bore my name, and I know one person who was seriously misled by it. This was subsequently rectified, but the fact that it occurred at all shows how the thing was "rushed" at the very last.

One of the gentlemen elected by this "English Committee"—minus the National Secular Society, and the *Freethinker*, and its staff—had recently been engaged in lecturing on "How I Found God" and "Why I Pray." And really, after that, it hardly seems necessary to say much more.

For my part, while I would not have raised an objection just then, if only for the sake of peace and harmony, I should certainly not have continued to concur in doing what was, after all, quite gratuitous. Other countries were not represented by general committees and carefully "strained" delegations. The various Freethought societies, in France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Germany, etc., sent their own delegates to the Rome Congress. The "English Committee" was entirely exceptional. There was absolutely no need for it, even if it were ideally managed.

But the so-called "English Committee" sent delegates to Rome under false pretences. Not a member of the Committee had been elected by anybody, but they affected to represent the Freethought movement in Great Britain. Mr. Heaford was called the "Secretary of the English Committee," and, as he was using the Rationalists and Ethicists for his own purposes, they returned the compliment by using him for theirs.

The result, of course, was a further insult to the N. S. S.—as was obviously intended. But the Rome Congress was so important and so striking that we decided to keep quiet, except for letting those concerned see that we did not mean to keep quiet for ever. A pretty broad hint was thrown out, but it was not taken; and one inevitable result was the N. S. S. protest at the Paris Congress.

My readers will now understand what we meant by telling Mr. Joseph McCabe that his friends, the Rationalists and Ethicists, had created the very "scandal" which they wanted to help us in terminating. They will also understand why we declined such assistance. Mr. Heaford served their turn at Rome. He had also helped to secure them a false position at Paris. But, seeing that the game could not be played again, they had no further use for Mr. Heaford. He made the mistake of his life in having anything to do with them. They never wanted him for himself. He understands now why they wanted him at all. He was simply an instrument by which the kid-glove Freethinkers (as some of them rather facetiously call themselves now and then—at International Congress time) could annoy the fighting Freethinkers of Great Britain. These people are only too apt to give themselves the same airs that were played of by a superior person on Harry Hotspur at the close of a certain battle.

Some of us know where the loudest of these superior persons were in old days of danger. Some of us know where they would be if the trumpet rang in grim earnest to battle again. When they sneer at the N. S. S. for wanting "money" they show what is the centre of their own affections. The N. S. S. never had much "money." It had little in Bradlaugh's time; it has had as much since. But it has always had something better than "money." It has had courage, ardor, and determination. It has been full of missionary spirit. By general consent it has had the pick of Freethought orators in its ranks; and where can you beat the fundamental brain-work it has put into its journalism? Never has the N. S. S. lacked true soldiers of Freethought, who did not ask whether the enterprise was profitable before embarking their lives in it. And they still, without "money," carry the propaganda of Free-

thought throughout this country. Take away the N. S. S., its brave workers, its writers and speakers, and the vital Freethought movement in Great Britain would collapse. This is the simple truth, and I say it for the sake of the gallant men and women whom I am proud to be associated with; men and women who have given something dearer than "money" to the cause; men and women who have borne the first brunt of the great battle against superstition; men and women whose courage and endurance have made it easy for milder spirits to bask in the sunshine of fine weather.

#### VII.

An International Freethought Congress every year would be a great mistake. It would probably soon wear the movement out. Such gatherings, if they are to be effectual, something more than intellectual picnics, require a great deal of wise and careful preparation. I submit that they ought not to be devoted to a sham discussion of Freethought commonplaces. Surely the delegates to an International Freethought Congress do not need to be converted to Freethought.

Take, for instance, the question of the separation of Church and State. Freethinkers are all agreed about this in principle. But in every State the question assumes a special form and character. Abstract resolutions, therefore, are of very little use. It is the question of ways and means that requires discussion. And the first step in that direction is an exchange of information amongst the Congressists. Indeed, this was apparent at the recent Congress; for when a delegate spoke about his own country, its necessities and its difficulties, he was listened to with rapt attention.

Personally, I hope that the next live Congress—say in another two or three years—will be conducted on more practical lines. Two or three selected questions could be properly discussed, and rationally voted upon. A host of questions means chaos and a waste of time.

What is wanted, first of all, I believe, is a General Committee of Management, consisting of delegates of each nation, elected by each nation; secondly, the abolition of "sections," and an open Congress all the time, with a fixed Agenda, such as all business assemblies are accustomed to.

#### VIII.

Naturally the Paris Congress served a good purpose in bringing Freethinkers of various nationalities together. This enables them not merely to hear, but to see, that Freethought is as international as Christianity; that it is not a sporadic thing, but a general movement of the human mind. From this point of view it is inspiring.

But the chief feature of the Paris Congress, I imagine, was the reception of the Congressists at the Hotel de Ville. It should be remembered that this was an *official* reception. The Paris Municipal Council, through its President, welcomed the Freethought Congress to the capital of France. Is not this a wonderful thing? Does it not show what an immense change has taken place during the past century? How long will it be before such a thing is possible in London?

Next in importance, I think, is the fact that the Congress accepted a declaration of "Morality Without God." Eloquent words were uttered on this subject by M. Buisson and others, which I have not space to report. The great point, however, is not their eloquence, but the official proclamation by the Freethinkers of the civilised world that "God" is an intruder in the domains of Ethics. Here, indeed, lies in a nutshell the whole case in dispute between reason and faith.

I incline to think that the third important thing was the communications from Haeckel and Berthelot. After all, the world judges movements by its leaders; and, from one point of view, rightly enough. Leadership is a natural fact. Some people talk about destroying it. They might as well talk about destroying gravitation or chemical affinity. The

ascendency of superior intellect and character is inevitable.

Haeckel is seventy-two. Berthelot is much older. Both are profound Freethinkers; their letters to the Congress attest it. Both also are great scientists. And it is science, after all, that is the great revolutionist. Zola made one of his characters, drawn from Berthelot himself, say this in *Paris*. The history of human progress is mainly the history of discoveries and inventions. When the globe was first circumnavigated the ultimate unification of the human race was assured. When the printing press was set working the problem of universal education became practical. Yes, science is verily the sure revolutionist; and we may rejoice, therefore, that Haeckel and Berthelot rose up from their chairs to salute the International Freethought Congress in the name of freedom and truth.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### Creation in a New Light.

IN spite of the wide-spread acceptance of the doctrine of evolution at the present day, there still persists a belief that the conception of a creator who "designed" the Cosmos, is a rational and adequate solution of sufficient power to penetrate the fog of "mystery," which, for the supernaturalist, seems to envelope the Universe.

In view of this fact, it may be well to examine this popular hypothesis from a new point of view, in order to see whether criticism cannot go beyond its usual judgment upon it,—that theistic arguments are inconclusive—and so take up a more aggressive attitude toward them.

This new aspect of the problem consists in the question as to whether it is logically possible to predicate "design" as the cause of the Cosmos, without involving ones-self inextricably in contradiction and confusion; and, in short it means to ask:—"Is the Creator idea rationally possible?"

Upon enquiry into the meaning of the word design, we find that it implies the mental process known as imagination; or that, independently of considerations as to "contrivance," etc., and the nature of the thing designed, the imagination is the indispensable factor. Going further, we see undeniably that in designing anything the imagination simply recombines and modifies elements of the objective world, which it has previously copied from thence, and of which it was not itself the cause. The most intricate and complex machine, for example, is nothing but a recombined and modified imitation of Nature's principles. The intelligence adapts, utilises and co-ordinates, but does not *cause* them. The finest palace or cathedral again, is but a re-arrangement of forms and ideas drawn from Nature; and in many Gothic churches the interiors are very similar to the primitive sacred tree-groves. There is no piece of decoration, indeed, to which the principle of its design as a recombination of what was copied, does not apply; and the finest composition of a Michael Angelo, is equally and inevitably subject to it.

Now, knowing this, we may say that design never occurs,—in fact is impossible—except where the mind has a source of inspiration to copy, a mass of pre-existing material to work upon. Imitation must precede origination, and copying, design; and it follows necessarily that the word design must always imply this. The Theist is bound to admit, consequently, that—if the universe is a work of design, ultimately it is also nothing but a recombined modification of a copy. This conclusion, it will be seen, throws more light on our problem. When we hear the Theists' fairy tale that a "creator" designed Nature, may we not remind him of the implication of his words, that his use of the idea of design carries with it an irremovable suggestion of copying and imitation—which are *not* creation? Shall we not force him to retain the only possible meaning of his terms and suggest that we are anxious to know whether his creator had any source to copy from;

and if so, where?—and that, if he did not, whatever does the word “design” mean if applied to him?

It will be useless for our Theistic friend to cry “Mystery” and tell us that we cannot know the processes of a “creative mind” and that such things are “beyond” us; for we shall also remind him that avowedly and strenuously he argued for and by analogy; and that he therefore has no right to conveniently forget this when his argument leads to irreducible disparity. For, if “mind” means anything at all, it means one similar to our own—or nothing; and only in this sense can he sanely use the word. Which fact entitles us to maintain that we are able to judge and criticise the idea which it represents. It is not “beyond” us.

However, if he persists in taking refuge in the mists of mystery, he cannot, even then, escape logical suicide. For we may then very accommodatingly state the case *thus* to him. With a reminder that a thing must either be A or not-A, we may proceed to argue that his deity in “creating” the cosmos either did so by the aid of copy, or without it. That if the former is true, then creation is nullified (as the element of copy irrevocably destroys it); that if the latter, then to our friend the following dilemma presents its horns. If the Deity had no idea as to what he was going to create, before he did so, he could not have produced anything! but if he did have such an idea, the thing produced is but a copy of it, and not a creation at all! The existence of the *idea* itself is not accounted for; for if it is assumed that this also was created, the first horn of the dilemma returns upon him. Now here is the crux of the whole argument, and its insurmountable difficulty; that whenever analysed it always yields a residual “idea” unaccounted for; and ignores the objective source of inspiration,—as a postulate necessary to make “design” possible,—and that this residue must always remain such. It cannot be accounted for by a process of which it is the very pre-supposition. No! We cannot submit to an inversion of all reasoning,—even to oblige a Theist.

In spite of these absurdities we are told that there is in the “design” argument, nothing opposed to the laws of Nature. Yet the “creative mind” which that argument offers to our inspection is contradictory of all that we know of mind, and in every important point. Contrary to human intelligence this “creative intelligence” receives nothing yet “creates” all; whilst *perceiving* nothing has *conceived* everything; and ultimately becoming impossible by working in ways that can never exist, finally collapses, self-destroyed, into a chaotic and incoherent heap of rubbishy “mystery.” All this, too, be it noted, by way of *analogy*!

Verily, verily is the Bible saying true—“My ways are not your ways”; and we, having analysed the matter, can easily believe it, although we really cannot do ought but smile at the psychological nightmare which Theism discloses to those enquirers who stand at its door and knock.

CHAS. D. THOMSON.

### Acid Drops

Mr. Will Steadman, who has just been elected Secretary to the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, addressed “a gathering of men” (why exclude women?) at the Browning Hall, Walworth, last Sunday, on “Labor and Christianity.” He honestly confessed that “during his thirty years’ experience in the Labor movement, he had found a great gulf existing between the Churches and the Trade Union movement.” But he went on weakly to say two not very wise things. The first was that trade unionists were “carrying out the precept of practical Christianity.” Well, we wish Mr. Steadman would tell us where the “precept” is found? Until he does so we shall be obliged to think that he is talking nonsense. The second unwise thing was as follows:—

“Advances had lately been made by leaders, both of the Established Church and Nonconformity, and he believed that if they could work together the time was not far distant when a great improvement would take place in the status of the working classes.”

Mr. Steadman must be a very sanguine man if he really believes that the “status of the working classes” will ever owe anything to Christian Churches. History lends no sort of support to his expectation. Christian Churches have always played their own game. They play it still. They will play it to the end of the chapter.

It is just possible that Mr. Steadman is unacquainted with the poems of Mr. Swinburne. If he knows the verse we are going to quote, there is no harm done; if he does not know it, he may have the grace to thank us for introducing him to a good thing. In the splendid poem “Before a Crucifix,” after a passionate indictment of Churches and priests, Mr. Swinburne warns the people against putting any trust in their historic enemies:—

“Thou, in the day that breaks thy prison,  
People, though these men take thy name,  
And hail and hymn thee rearisen,  
Who made songs erewhile of thy shame,  
Give thou not ear; for these are they  
Whose good day was thine evil day.

Let not thy tree of freedom be  
Regrafted from that rotting tree.”

Mr. Steadman does not appear to agree with Mr. Swinburne. But this is very far from proving that Mr. Swinburne is wrong.

The Bishop of Carlisle denies that the Universities only send their intellectual refuse into the ministry of the Church. The allegation is a conspicuous falsehood, he says, but a falsehood of the most dangerous kind because it contains a particle of truth. “Particle” forsooth! This is a very friendly way of putting it. Just look at the average clergyman and then judge how much intellect the Universities send into the Lord’s vineyard.

Some awful things were said by a common clergyman at the Carlisle Diocesan Conference. Rev. J. Whiteside, vicar of Helsington, Kendal, declared that the village anthem was an abomination; instead of pithy, homely, new sermons, there were too many faded manuscripts with swivel texts; and the clergy would be more likely to impress the laity with their sincerity if they more frequently migrated to smaller stipends. It is a wonder that the roof of the building did not fall upon that scandalous speaker.

Rev. J. E. B. Kirtlan, of West Ham, told a Liberal gathering at Sandridge, St. Albans, that “It did not require many brains to make a Bishop.” Well, it takes just as many as it takes to make a man of God in any other denomination.

The rector of Alstonefield makes the following announcement through his *Parish Magazine*:—

“The Rector is prepared to read all the wills in the parish to see if they are made in accordance with the will of God. Those who have no children or are unmarried, are in duty bound to give one tenth of all they possess to God. That is to say—religious work or philanthropic institution. Read your wills over in this limelight, and observe if your conscience begins to sneeze. N.B.—The Rector will keep quite secret the contents of all wills.”

This worthy rector has a very professional view of “the will of God”—which has always coincided with the interests of the Church. Giving ten per cent of all your possessions to the Church is an excellent policy—for the Church. In two hundred years, at this rate, the Church would own half the real wealth of the country. And we dare say the rector of Alstonefield thinks it would be none too much.

A religious contemporary prints the following account of some pious antics in America:—

“At Ocean Grove, a coast resort near New York, run by the Methodists, on a recent Sunday evening there was an apparent attempt to mix up music-hall effects with religious sentiment. A crowd of 14,000 people. All the lights except those on the platform turned off. Reading and music relating to the birth of Christ, the crucifixion and the resurrection. In the centre of the stage a heart-shaped design ten feet high, studded with electric lights. At a given signal the heart parts and reveals in the rear an electric cross of great beauty. Another electric cross slowly descends from the roof, and a massive white cross, fastened to the organ, flashes out in the darkness. Sixty white-robed young women are arranged in classic order on the stage, and when the climax is reached the choir and congregation sing ‘All hail the power of Jesus’ name,’ and the service is over.”

Fancy “saving the world” with this sort of music-hall business!

Torrey is just a revivalist, whose stock in trade consists of declamation, religious rhodomontade, and claptrap argu-

ments to catch the ignorant. He has read Cheetham's Life of Paine and talked with Dixon, and in discussing Infidelity and Infidels has become a fool for Christ's sake. The glory of God more abounds through his lie, he thinks, and, like St. Paul, he cannot imagine why he should be adjudged a sinner. Mr. Foote, of the London *Freethinker*, has pilloried him, and Mr. Stead has turned the limelight full in his face. He dare not attempt to exculpate himself and he has sought refuge in silence. He is just a retailer of other men's lies, working for the glory of God and his religion. Let him be forgotten along with the other clerical slanderers of men the latches of whose shoes they are unworthy to unloose.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Dr. Barnado, we are told, had "an unbounded faith in the efficacy of prayer." The newspaper that says so gives a few illustrations. One day the philanthropist is troubled because he has not enough blankets for the children's beds; the next morning he receives a cheque for £100 and goes and buys some. This is treated as the hand of God. It is simply "the long arm of coincidence." Every public man has similar experiences. The editor of the *Freethinker* could tell many such stories—and all true. Only vanity could induce a man to think that the whole universe is co-operating for his special benefit, just because things happen very luckily now and then. He is lucky just then. Yes, and at the same moment others are unlucky. Why does not the universe put itself out of the way for them?

Rev. F. B. Meyer says that Dr. Barnado was "one of the noblest men that God ever made." Will the reverend gentleman kindly tell us who made the ignoble men? We would give something for a straight answer.

Dr. Horton said some good Christian, but very unphilosophical, things to the Free Church Convention at Cheltenham. Here is a sample:—

"There was no victorious power in man. They were a defeated world, and individually they passed from victory to defeat; from success to failure; from life to death. There was no victory in man, but Christ was all-victorious, and he led in triumph the souls that were wedded to him."

Dr. Horton belongs to that Christ-led victorious procession. Garibaldi stood outside it, and was victorious "on his own." Which is the greater glory?

Dr. Horton said some more pretty things to the Free Church Convention. The Free Churchmen took a trip to Gloucester and went through the Cathedral—which, of course, was built by Roman Catholics. Dr. Horton was bound to deliver an address, for he belongs to a talkative profession; and, speaking in the shadow of the monument of "martyred Bishop Hooper"—who helped to martyr other people before he had to swallow his own gruel—the Nonconformist orator took the opportunity to observe that many a Catholic had died for the name of Jesus, but no Catholic had died for the Word of God. Well, according to the opening of the fourth Gospel, Jesus *is* the Word; so it's all the same, isn't it? After uttering a number of commonplaces about the Catholic Church, Dr. Horton went on to say that he did not think it would ever have power again in this country, but if it ever did he was quite certain that it would proceed exactly as before, and if it were predominant in this country it would persecute. Of course it would. And so would any other Church that was predominant enough. The Church of England would persecute. The Free Churches would persecute. The proof is that all of them *have* persecuted when they have had the chance. Less than a hundred years ago—there is no need to go back very far—Church and Nonconformity combined to send men to prison by the dozen for selling Paine's *Age of Reason*. Ay, and women too; for bigotry makes no distinction of sex. Richard Carlile spent nine years in Christian gaols for "blasphemy"—which simply meant publishing what the Christians did not approve. Mrs. Carlile went to prison likewise. And Nonconformity and Anglicanism together held the key of her cell door.

Mr. Swinburne, the poet, who is also a Republican and a Freethinker, has just lost his parliamentary vote, the revising barrister having struck his name off the list in consequence of a technical objection. This political disfranchisement of one of the foremost writers in the world is a singular commentary on the law governing such matters in England. In many respects the force of idiocy could no farther go. Only "practical" England could stand the present arrangement for five minutes. We dearly love a muddle in this country. Look at our religion, with its crowd of sects, all contradicting each other, and all true Christians. There is nothing like it in the world, except in America.

Dr. Agar Beet's *Last Things* is a dull stupid book, a hundred years behind the average thought of the age. Yet it caused a frightful commotion in Wesleyan circles, and its publication was forbidden by the Conference. Dr. Beet gave in, and the book was withdrawn. But having recently resigned his professor-ship of theology at Richmond College, he has published the book again, in spite of the prohibition. In a *Daily News* review it is called "painfully interesting, rigidly exact, profoundly scholarly," etc., etc. All that Dr. Beet does is to deny for his own part, and on behalf of thousands of other Christians, the doctrine of everlasting torment. The average man has long ceased to believe that doctrine. But when a doubt is expressed in one of the Churches it is looked upon as a mighty effort of spiritual liberation. So hopelessly are the Churches (as usual) behind the general public in these matters!

Mrs. Jones's "lights" have become a stale wonder. We hear nothing about them now. But a fresh marvel has turned up to keep the Welsh Revival going. Annie Griffiths, aged twenty-four, residing at Penydarven, Merthyr, has been cured of hip disease by faith. She had been in bed five weeks, and Dr. Murison said it would be necessary to have her removed to the Merthyr General Hospital for treatment. In this extremity she was visited by her pastor, the Rev. O. Owen and another man of God, the Rev. M. Francis, of Aberduar, who prayed earnestly for her recovery. Shortly afterwards she got up, dressed herself, and went downstairs. It is now reported that the young woman will "take up missionary work as a thanksgiving."

There may be truth in this story, without its being miraculous. Miss Griffiths may have been suffering primarily from hysteria, and the "hip disease," whatever it was, may have simply been one of the symptoms. In that case, a powerful counter-emotion may have set her on her legs again. What is really wanted is an impartial medical report, and a scientific watching of the faith-healed patient for some time to come. The chatter of irresponsible reporters and hustling men of God is utterly worthless—except as a business policy.

Henry Wilson escaped from prison at Plymouth and was chased by a dozen constables, whom he led a fine dance through streets and houses and over roofs. When they came upon him at last, in a basement, they found him "in the attitude of prayer." Perhaps he was asking the Lord for fresh strength. Anyhow, he soon turned upon the police, and gave them a frightful lot of trouble before they could lead him away handcuffed.

Dean Lefroy, of Norwich, thinks that conscription is bound to come. He even thinks that "a few years' Spartan severity would go a long way to stemming the tide of enervating softness, selfishness, and luxury which threatens millions of men and women in England." The East Anglian man of God may be quite right as far as the social circles he is acquainted with are concerned. But the masses of the people, who have to earn their daily bread by doing the hard work of the world, are in no danger of being overwhelmed by the tide of "softness" and "luxury"—whatever may be said of "selfishness." Let the Dean of Norwich do a week's work as a navvy, an engine-driver, or a cotton-spinner, and see where the "softness" and "luxury" come in.

Perhaps the conscription would be a good thing for the clergy. From that point of view there may be a good deal in Dean Lefroy's contention. Many a "round, fat, oily man of God" looks as though the "Spartan severity" treatment might turn him into a decent citizen.

Rev. Eli Brearly, a Fulham Passive Resister, said an excellent thing in front of the magistrates. "I think," he said, "every man should pay for his own religion." Hear, hear! But the Nonconformists do not act upon this principle. They have their own religion taught in "provided" schools at the expense of Jews and Freethinkers. They also use the money of Churchmen whenever they have the chance. And they use the money of Roman Catholics all the time.

Get out your pocket-handkerchiefs and weep over the martyrs of freedom. Down at Devonport the Rev. John Chinn, Methodist, and the Rev. Fred Sparrow, Bible Christian, were each sentenced to one day's imprisonment as "Passive Resisters." Their sufferings must be left to imagination. We dare not enter into details. We suggest a monument to these two heroes in Devonport Park.

Two Anarchists have been sentenced to nine and ten months' imprisonment in London for rejoicing over certain

continental "assassinations." Had they rejoiced over the Czar's assassination of his own subjects they would have gone scot free. When you rejoice over assassinations you should see that you pick out the right ones.

Missionary enterprise is becoming cosmopolitan. A Buddhist temple is being built at Los Angeles, California. It is to be a magnificent structure. Unfortunately the leader of the movement is an Englishman. He ought to be an Asiatic.

There is much politeness to women in France, but justice to women is often as far off there as it is in England. In a recent case at Clerkenwell Sessions it transpired that a young Frenchman, whose mother would not consent to his marriage, eloped with his sweetheart to England, taking with him some of his mother's money. On arriving in England they were arrested for the robbery and taken back to France. But the young man, being a minor, could not, under the French law, be charged with stealing from his mother; so they brought the charge against the *girl*, and gave *her* six months' imprisonment. *Somebody* was in prison; so *that* was all right; but it was another case of "the woman pays."

The late Mr. Arthington's estate is of the net value of £1,026,746. All of it is to go to Missionary Societies. After minor bequests of a pious character, five-ninths of the residue goes to the Baptist Missionary Society, and four-ninths to the London Missionary Society. Funds like this will artificially prolong the life of Christianity. Freethinkers should bear this fact in mind when making their own wills. A bequest to the Secular Society, Limited, for instance, helps to counteract the vast expenditure on propping up the falling faith; falling, that is, from an intellectual and moral point of view.

Rev. R. J. Campbell, Dr. Parker's successor at the City Temple, has had enough of editing—at least of editing the *Young Man*. He has found one year sufficient. At the end of 1905 he quits the editorial chair.

"What would have happened," the *Russ*, of St. Petersburg, asks, "had Russia now, after her defeats, a European Power, such as Germany, to deal with? God has not punished us; he has given us a lesson and a reprieve." What is this but a tribute to the amazing magnanimity of Japan? It is good for us, the *Russ* says in effect, that we have not fallen into the hands of Christians.

Holy Trinity Church, Twickenham, with a fashionable congregation of four hundred, had a collection of 100 small silver coins and 200 coppers. The vicar tells his flock that they ought to be ashamed of themselves. Evidently they think that "the one above" does not watch the collection plates too closely.

The vicar of St. Stephen's, Lewisham, wishes that his parish contained more pharisees. The pharisee, in the New Testament story, did give a tithe of all he possessed. Out of an income of £360 a year, the vicar says, he has to pay curates £390 a year, and live on the balance himself. How does he do it? Some of us would like to know. When times are hard it is well to know how to subsist on a minus quantity.

Yarmouth race week furnished the Rev. E. Cornwall Jones with an opportunity for a sermon against gambling. He preached it in the Congregational Church, of which he is the pastor. We should hardly have thought it was necessary for a Christian congregation, but the reverend gentleman probably knows them better than we do. Still, he need not have talked so much about the "dishonesty" of gambling. It is hardly that, unless there is cheating going on. It may be foolish, degrading, and anti-social, without being dishonest. Moreover, the reverend gentleman does not allow for the love of excitement. This is the cause of a great deal of gambling. And the love of excitement is often the result of want of experience of something better. People will have *some* excitement. They will even go to hear Christian preachers, in default of a more elevating entertainment.

A suit of clothes was found on Blackpool beach. It is not known whom they belonged to. Perhaps the wearer committed suicide. In one of his pockets was found a letter from a lady, which was larded with pious expressions. The recipient was urged to "do some direct work for God." It seems to be another case for Dr. Torrey.

Samuel Day, a brewer's drayman, of Camden Town, committed suicide by drinking oxalic acid. A letter he left

addressed to the coroner was full of pious expressions. He hoped to meet his relatives "in heavenly realms above," and exclaimed: "May the blessing of God forgive me for this rash act." The poor fellow was no Atheist anyhow. It looks like another case for Dr. Torrey.

The "Stop Press News" in the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience on Monday morning reported the sudden death of the Rev. J. S. Moore, headmaster of Landaff Cathedral Schools. The reverend gentleman was carried off by apoplexy after officiating at St. Mary's Church, Barry Dock. Another case of "Providence."

More "Providence." The Rev. W. H. Gooch, rector of Broxholme, has been killed at a railway crossing at Saxilby, Lincoln. A Freethought lecturer couldn't have fared worse in the same circumstances.

The essential unfairness of the Christian mind in everything relating to those who differ from orthodoxy is far from being confined to evangelical preachers like Dr. Torrey and his peculiar friend Dr. Dixon. Many of the best and most distinguished Christians have displayed it, less malignantly, perhaps, but still in a very shocking manner. We will take two conspicuous instances—those of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Wordsworth, in his *Prelude*—an unequal work, containing some rather ordinary writing varied with magnificent purple patches—refers to his experience in France, in 1790, when the French Revolution seemed to be promising a general millennium, and in particular to his experience on a certain evening in the native town of Robespierre.

"That eventide, when under windows bright  
With happy faces and with garlands hung,  
And through a rainbow-arch that spanned the street,  
Triumphal pomp for liberty confirmed,  
I paced, a dear companion at my side,  
The town of Arras, whence with promise high  
Issued, on delegation to sustain  
Humanity and right, *that* Robespierre,  
He who thereafter, and in how short time!  
Wielded the sceptre of the Atheist crew."

Wordsworth must have known better than this. He wanted to dispose of the "monster" of the Reign of Terror, so he made a present of him to Atheism. But he could hardly have been ignorant of the fact that Robespierre did not belong to, and was never connected with, any "Atheist crew." Robespierre sent several Atheists to the guillotine. He was himself a fanatical Deist. He declared in the Assembly that Atheism was aristocratic—the most hateful adjective then known to the French Republicans. He induced the national representatives to decree that a belief in God and immortality was necessary to human society. A "Feast of the Supreme Being" was arranged. Robespierre, in the name of France, delivered a diatribe against Atheism, and set fire to an image of it which had been constructed by the painter David. Such was the leader of "the Atheist crew."

Coleridge did a similar service to Thomas Paine. In one of the appendices to the first of his *Lay Sermons*—"The Statesman's Manual"—he refers to the eighteenth century French philosophers, who taught people to believe "Christianity an imposture, the Scriptures a forgery, the worship of God superstition, hell a fable, heaven a dream, our life without Providence, and our death without hope." And he asks: "What can be conceived more natural than the result: that self-acknowledged beasts should first act, and then suffer themselves to be treated, as beasts?" Then he proceeds:

"Thank heaven!—notwithstanding the attempts of Thomas Payne and his compeers, it is not so bad with us. Open infidelity has ceased to be a means of gratifying even vanity: for the leaders of the gang themselves turned apostates to Satan, as soon as the number of their proselytes became so large, that atheism ceased to give distinction."

Of course Coleridge was perfectly well aware that Paine was not an advocate of "Atheism," but he felt that "Atheism" was an ugly word with the orthodox mob, and he thought he would do a stroke of good business for the orthodox cause by fastening it upon the accursed author of the *Age of Reason*.

Wordsworth calls the Atheists a "crew." Coleridge calls them a "gang." This is how Christians set about teaching Atheists manners. Coleridge even brands all Freethinkers as naturally "beasts" and pretends to think that nothing but vanity could lead a man to be an apostle of "infidelity." But he knew a great deal better. In one of his sincerer moments he said: "Not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to be an Atheist."



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 1. Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W., at 7.30 "Dreams of Death."

October 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.—October 1, a. Victoria Park; c., Stratford Town Hall; 8, Glasgow; 9, Falkirk; 15, Queen's Hall, London; 22, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 29, Queen's Hall, London. November 5, Birmingham; 26, Manchester. December 3, Birmingham.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 8, Stratford Town Hall; 15, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 22, Queen's Hall; 29, Liverpool; November 5, Glasgow; 19, Glasgow; 26, Neath, South Wales; December 3, Forest Gate; 10, Coventry.

J. GRANT.—Your Jewish friends object to our statement in "The Wandering Jews" chapter of *Bible Romances* that none of the miraculous manna fell on Sunday, but a double portion fell on Saturday. We suppose they mean that we should have said "Sabbath" instead of "Sunday," and that the Jews had no "Saturday"—just as they had none of our other days of the week. Well, we reply that *Bible Romances* was written for Christians. We wanted to bring the Bible "facts" right home to them; so we used language they could not fail to understand. After all, what does it matter whether the "holy day" is called Sabbath or Sunday? They call it Sabbath in Scotland, and Sunday in England. Yet the Jews seem to like England better than Scotland.

R. T. FLETCHER.—The special value of the "Oxford" Shelley, edited by Thomas Hutchinson, and issued by the Clarendon Press, is that it gives the bibliography of every poem. This is a boon to the student, and can easily be neglected by the ordinary reader, who will find a good text printed in good type on good paper.

W. MERCHANT.—Glad you have been "delighted" with the six-penny edition of our *Bible Romances*. Cheap editions of some of our other books are being arranged for—including *Bible Heroes* and the *Book of God*. The latter will be produced very shortly.

N. CHALMERS.—You ask: "Can a man violate the laws of nature?" Certainly not. A human law has absolutely nothing in common with a law of nature, and it is a great pity that the same word *law* is used in both cases. Properly speaking, a law of nature can neither be obeyed nor disobeyed. It takes care of itself, as it were, and does not trouble in the least about our attitude. If you fall off a fifty-foot ladder, or descend by the rungs, it is equally gravitation that brings you down. You may be killed one way, and safe the other way, but it makes no difference to gravitation. The late Canon Liddon was foolish enough to say that he violated the law of gravitation every time he raised his hand to his head. That only showed his ignorance of the meaning of gravitation. If he had stood on a weighing machine, he would have seen that gravitation was operating accurately all the time. The force that lifted his arm worked concurrently with gravitation, not in opposition to it.

JOHN WILLIAMS.—Thanks for cutting. Glad to hear that "Freethought is gaining ground, slowly but surely" in Monmouthshire, in spite of the revival, or perhaps because of it.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for cuttings.

T. S.—Is not the Dr. Leach you refer to a Unitarian himself? Can you tell us?

PARIS CONGRESS FUND.—Robert Lloyd 2s. 6d.

T. MARTIN.—You catch us on the hop. We cannot say who publishes the new edition of Dumas mentioned by "Mimnermus." Perhaps he will send us an answer to your question for our next issue.

ROBERT LLOYD.—Certainly it is better late than never, though some who could subscribe appear to read the maxim upside down.

J. BRYCE.—You have ideas, but you have not yet learnt to express them properly in verse.

H. CROFT.—We thank you for the postcards, although we had already seen a copy of the Christchurch Priory monument to Shelley. It was good of you to think of us.

G. CROOKSON.—Thanks for the paper.

C. E. SMITH.—The *Gadfly* publisher is unknown to us.

S. M. BARBER.—Shall be sent as desired. Thanks for good wishes. Glad you are looking forward with so much interest to the Queen's Hall lectures.

J. CLAYTON.—You are quite right. Our esteemed contributors who introduce books to the readers' notice should mention the publishers.

SECULAR.—We took the verses from an American exchange. Probably the *Weekly Dispatch* took them from our columns. You could hardly expect a live Freethought letter to appear in that newspaper.

G. B.—Thanks for the extract. We may find it useful.

LIVERPOOL SAINT.—We don't see anything in Mr. George Wise's lecture to reply to. It is simply a rapture from beginning to end. You can't fight a cloud, you know. Thanks all the same.

M. E. PEGG.—Glad to hear of good meetings at Manchester on Sunday. Mr. Foote is keeping well.

E. V. STERRY.—Thanks for your interesting and encouraging letter. Glad to hear that the *Freethinker* is "the most live paper" you ever came across, and that you think the editor and his staff have all taken "a fresh lease of life during the past year."

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

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### Sugar Plums.

The new special course of Freethought lectures at Queen's Hall opens this evening (Oct. 1), when Mr. Foote will occupy the platform. Before the lecture there will be some first-class instrumental music by professional players who do not wish to advertise their identity. The musical program will start at 7 o'clock, and will last for half or three-quarters of an hour. There ought to be a crowded attendance. Of course the "free seat" accommodation will be somewhat limited. Tickets for the "reserved" seats will be obtainable at the pay-box in the entrance.

Stratford Town Hall was packed on Sunday evening with a grand audience, and Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Beautiful Land Above" was freely punctuated with loud laughter and enthusiastic cheers. Mr. Spence, who occupied the chair, made a warm appeal for questions and discussion. Many questions were asked and answered with great rapidity during a lively twenty minutes, evidently to the delight of the great meeting—which, we are glad to say, included a very considerable proportion of ladies. Unfortunately the social distress prevailing at West Ham—a distress that everybody knows of—made some difference to the collection. Perhaps a few of the better-off Freethinkers in the district, on hearing this, will forward a little pecuniary help, so as to lighten the burden resting upon the organisers of these important meetings.

There are two more Stratford Town Hall lectures. The second will be delivered this evening (Oct. 1) by Mr. C. Cohen, whose subject is "Christianity at the Bar." Mr. Cohen is well-known in West Ham and should have a large audience. Next Sunday evening (Oct. 8) the third (and last) lecture will be delivered by Mr. John Lloyd, who is sure of a hearty welcome.

Mr. Cohen wound up the Stanley Hall course of lectures on Sunday evening, and had an excellent and interested audience. This evening (Oct. 1) he delivers the second of the Stratford Town Hall course of lectures. On the following Sunday he lectures at Glasgow. The local "saints" will, of course, make note of his visit. On the Monday evening (Oct. 9) Mr. Cohen lectures, for the first time, at Falkirk.

Mr. Lloyd opened the lecture season at Manchester on Sunday. His lectures were greatly appreciated and heartily applauded by good audiences, including a gratifying proportion of ladies.

There are copies still left of our two Torrey pamphlets—*Dr. Torrey and the Infidels* and *Guilty or Not Guilty?*—which we hope our friends will distribute judiciously. Application for parcels of these pamphlets should be made to Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C. We must

not let this matter drop. Dr. Torrey must be exposed to the very end of his mission.

"A Despiser of Humbug" wrote a very pungent letter to the *Sheffield Independent* on Dr. Torrey's libels on "Infidelity," Ingersoll, and Thomas Paine; and ended by asking what the clergy meant by standing sponsor for this unrepentant slanderer. "J. D." takes the matter up editorially in large leaded type, and makes the following admission:—

"Dr. Torrey's argument that agnosticism and immorality go hand in hand falls to pieces before the test of facts. He seems also to have been altogether wrong in his special instances. Well, that being so, he should admit it. He ought not to leave an unjust accusation lodged against the characters of men from whom he differs."

This is rather a mild way of putting it, but anything is better than the general conspiracy of silence on this subject. "J. D." goes on to say that Dr. Torrey is honest, means well, and does good. But can a convicted and impenitent libeller do "good" by appealing to other men to be virtuous?

Dr. Chas. F. Aked, preaching in Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, to a crowded morning congregation on "George Macdonald, Novelist, and Preacher of the Larger Hope," stated that a correspondent of his, one of the most cultured members of the Church, had drawn his attention to the remarkable "predestination" catechism which used to form a supplement to the New Testament as supplied to the Scottish Churches, adding that Dr. Geo. Macdonald had done more than any other man to render unpopular the cruel creed of Calvin. Dr. Aked remarked that not only had he made it unpopular, but impossible; and further declared that if the choice had to be made between Calvinism and Atheism we should instinctively choose the latter. "Rather than that our children should believe in a God who had predestined many to an eternity of torment we would take them upon a pious pilgrimage to the grave of Charles Bradlaugh, or bid them weave a laurel wreath around the massive brows of Colonel Ingersoll."

On Monday morning we received a letter from a friend, residing at Southend, in which he stated, with a good deal of concern, that he had heard a Christian Evidence speaker, called Maycock publicly state, on the alleged authority of Mr. J. Livingstone Anderson, that Mr. Foote had received £14,000 to be applied to the benefit of the Secularist cause and had only paid over £100. We told our Southend friend that we could not hunt down every lie told about us by Christian scoundrels, and that we were not foolish enough to go into a court of law and ask a Christian judge and jury to do justice to the most "hateful" Freethinker in England; but we would write to Mr. J. Livingstone Anderson and ask him for an explanation. On Tuesday morning we received Mr. Anderson's answer. He says—"It is a lie." Mr. Anderson adds that he has always had the highest opinion of Mr. Foote, and wishes he could get hold of the mythical £14,000, as "I am sure it would be applied to the benefit of the cause."

The *Wigan Observer* notices Mr. H. Percy Ward's recent lecture in the Old Court Hall and takes him to task for confounding "atheist" with "agnostic." Well, what is the difference? Will our contemporary explain? Meanwhile we must hold that Mr. Ward is right.

#### THE SAVIOR.

I will beget a son, and he shall bear  
The sins of all the world; he shall arise  
In an unnoticed corner of the earth,  
And there shall die upon a cross, and purge  
The universal crime; so that the few  
On whom my grace descends, those who are mark'd  
As vessels to the honor of their God,  
May credit this strange sacrifice, and save  
Their souls alive: millions shall live and die,  
Who ne'er shall call upon their Savior's name,  
But, unredeemed, go to the gaping grave;  
Thousands shall deem it an old woman's tale,  
Such as the nurses frighten babes withal:  
These in a gulf of anguish and of flame  
Shall curse their reprobation endlessly,  
Yet tenfold pangs shall force them to avow,  
Even on their beds of torment, where they howl,  
My honor, and the justice of their doom.  
What then avail their virtuous deeds, their thoughts  
Of purity, with radiant genius bright,  
Or lit with human reason's earthly ray?  
Many are called, but few will I elect.

—Shelley, "Queen Mab."

#### Dixon and Ingersoll Again.

READERS of the *Freethinker* will recollect that I dealt, in the month of June, with Dr. Torrey's statement that Dr. Dixon was prosecuted for libelling Colonel Ingersoll, by publicly stating that he was paid by the publishers of obscene literature to support them in polluting the minds of the youth of America; and that Ingersoll was so frightened by Dr. Dixon's "evidence" that he let the action drop. I showed from the court record, which was sent to me by Mr. Macdonald of the New York *Truthseeker*, that Dr. Torrey's statement was absolutely false; that it was Dr. Dixon who shuffled and delayed, and that Ingersoll eventually became tired of the case, but not before he had made Dr. Dixon show his hand, and satisfied the American public that there was nothing in it. The only fact that Dr. Dixon alleged in his statements of defence was that Ingersoll was one of fifty thousand persons who had signed a petition to Congress for the repeal or modification of the Comstock Laws; and what Ingersoll's object was in signing that petition was demonstrated by producing, in reply, the exact language of the petition itself, which showed that all the petitioners asked for was that the Comstock laws should be "repealed or materially modified so that they cannot be used to abridge the freedom of the press or of conscience." Mr. W. T. Stead's view of this matter is perfectly clear. "If I had been an American citizen at the time," he says, "I would have signed the petition."

Mr. Stead, therefore, is as much a friend of the vendors of obscene literature as Ingersoll was, but Dr. Dixon knows better than to call him so.

Dr. Dixon, being in England, made a descent upon Mr. Stead, and left a long written statement which was printed in the August number of the *Review of Reviews* with Mr. Stead's reply. That letter of Dr. Dixon's contained the following paragraphs:—

"Ingersoll refused to allow the suit to come before a jury, which I tried to bring about, that the facts concerning his career might be made known. He first brought it before a judge on some technical objection, which the judge set aside. He then brought it before another judge on some other technicality, which was also set aside. At length he wrote me through his attorney that he was willing to acknowledge that he did represent the vendors of obscene literature and pictures in their movement to have repealed or modified the Comstock laws, but he was not paid for it.

If, now, I would admit that I had no proof that he was paid for his service he would dismiss the suit. My reply was: 'I hope that for the sake of your own reputation you can prove that you were the paid attorney of that vile crew, for, if you did it for the love of the dirt, the moral tone of the act was a hundredfold worse. I therefore accept your confession as positive proof of the charge I made against you.'

Within a few days the suit was brought before a judge who gave his decision that it was not libelous to say that a lawyer was paid for his services; so that the whole case was reduced to one issue—Did R. G. Ingersoll represent the vendors of obscene literature and pictures in their efforts to have the 'Comstock Laws' repealed, or did he not? If he did, the charge is not libelous, because true; if he did not, the charge is libelous, because not true. Mr. Ingersoll's attorney, of course, knew that I had his letter confessing that he did represent them, but was not paid, and the suit was immediately dropped."

These statements were utterly at variance with the court record which I dealt with in my June articles, but they contained nothing new, except the reference to a letter written by Ingersoll "through his attorney" admitting that he "did represent the vendors of obscene literature and pictures." This I saw was a precise and critical statement, and I advised Mr. Stead to pin Dr. Dixon down upon it. This he did. He denied "in the most absolute terms" that Ingersoll ever wrote such a letter, and called upon Dr. Dixon to produce the original or a certified copy. Dr. Dixon, however, has not accepted the challenge, and it is easy to understand the reason of his silence.

Unfortunately for Dr. Dixon the "attorney" who is alleged to have sent him that remarkable letter on

Ingersoll's behalf is still living, and is able to give a flat contradiction to the whole story. He is also able to give a chronological statement of the libel action as far as it went, which disproves all the rest of Dr. Dixon's assertions.

Mr. Robert H. Griffin, the "attorney" in question, has drawn up the following statement in answer to enquiries made by Mr. Macdonald of the *New York Truthseeker*, from the columns of which I reproduce it *in extenso* :—

"44 Pine St., New York, Aug. 29, 1905.

Eugene M. Macdonald, Esq., Editor *Truth Seeker*—  
My Dear Sir: Referring to the article entitled: 'Torrey: Ingersoll and Paine' in this August issue of the *Review of Reviews*, and more particularly to the letter therein set forth addressed to Mr. Stead, signed A. C. Dixon and dated London, 25th July, 1905, I beg to reply to your inquiries concerning that letter as follows:

#### I.

As to the statement by Mr. Dixon that: 'At length he (Ingersoll) wrote me through his attorney that he was willing to acknowledge that he did represent the vendors of obscene literature and pictures in their movement to have repealed or modified the Comstock laws, but he was not paid for it;' and that, 'If, now, I would admit that I had no proof that he was paid for his services he would dismiss the suit,' the following are the facts:

(1) I was from the beginning of the action, the 26th of February, 1892, and at all times thereafter, sole attorney for the plaintiff in the action of Ingersoll vs. Dixon, and must be the attorney referred to.

(2) I did not write to Dr. Dixon, either as attorney, or individually, or in any capacity, either in the words stated, or to any other effect, or on any subject. He has not and never had a line from me.

(3) The statement that I did so write constitutes an accusation of a serious breach of professional ethics on my part. None but his attorneys should have been addressed by me. They were in the first place Messrs. Tracy, Boardman & Platt, who, on their withdrawal from the case, 8th October, 1892, were succeeded by Mr. William C. Beecher, who thereafter continued to act for defendant.

(4) As to these gentlemen, both individually and as a firm, the denials above made are repeated.

#### II.

As to the statement that: 'My reply was: I hope, for the sake of your own reputation, you can prove that you were the paid attorney of that vile crew, for, if you did it for the love of the dirt, the moral tone of the act was a hundred fold worse. I therefore accept your confession as a positive proof of the charge I made against you.'

(1) He never replied to me. He had no reply to make, as I never wrote to him.

(2) He did not write to me in the words stated, or on the subject mentioned, or on any matter whatever. I never had a line from him.

(3) Had he written to me as stated, or on any matter connected with the litigation, it would have been a breach of the proprieties and an obvious reflection on his own attorneys, who alone should have addressed me.

(4) This frees him from the charge of actually having committed these two offences, but his letter is an admission of his entire willingness to have done so.

#### III.

As to the statements: 'Ingersoll refused to allow the suit to come before a jury which I tried to bring about that the facts concerning his career might be made known. He first brought it before a judge on some technical objections, which the judge set aside. He then brought it before another judge on some other technicality, which was also set aside. Mr. Ingersoll's attorney, of course, knew that I had his letter confessing that he did represent them, but was not paid, and the suit was immediately dropped;' the facts are:

(1) The defendant did what he could to delay the trial.

(a) The action was commenced the 26th February, 1892; his answer should have been interposed the 18th of March, but it was not until the 25th of April that it was received.

(b) The original answer contained much irrelevant matter which plaintiff moved to have stricken out. The motion was returnable the 23d of May, but defendant succeeded in delaying the argument to 4th of June.

(c) The 15th of June an order was entered denying our motion, for the reason as stated by the Court that

our remedy was by demurrer. From this order we appealed the 27th of June. The appeal was not reached until the 20th of October, and was decided adversely to us on the same grounds.

(d) In the meantime, on the 8th of July, we had demurred to the answer. The demurrer was reached for trial the 3rd of January, 1893. Again the defendant was 'not ready,' and the trial was adjourned to the 16th of January.

(e) In the meantime, on the 11th of January defendant moved for leave to amend his answer. The 16th of January, the plaintiff not opposing, leave was granted him.

(f) The 20th of January the amended answer was received, to which a demurrer was interposed the 1st of February. The issue of law so raised was tried the 3rd of April, and the 4th of January, 1894, judgment was entered thereon sustaining plaintiff's demurrer to 'the defendant's Third and Fourth defenses and to Article XX' and overruling it as 'to the second defense and to Article XIX.'

The judgment gave leave to defendant 'to amend his amended answer within twenty days.' This he did not do, nor did he avail himself of his right to appeal from the decision.

On the other hand, the judgment gave plaintiff 'Leave to withdraw his demurrer to the second defense and to Article XIX within twenty days.' This he did not do, perhaps because in overruling the demurrer to the second defense and to Article XIX the trial justice, in his opinion, said among other things: 'Some of the matters set forth in such defense are probably irrelevant, .....and it may be that many of the matters set forth in such defense are not true, or that they are misrepresented, or that when viewed in connection with other matters the construction to be placed upon them will be very different from that which must be placed upon them now.' (See *New York Law Journal*, 2d May, 1893.)

Perhaps this arrangement deterred the defendant from striving to get before a jury.

#### IV.

Of my own knowledge I declare that no proposition of settlement, either as stated by Dr. Dixon, or of any kind or nature was ever made. Yours faithfully,

ROBERT H. GRIFFIN."

This careful and decisive statement by Ingersoll's attorney drives Dr. Dixon into a very awkward corner. He must either produce the original or a certified copy of the letter he alleges that Ingersoll's attorney wrote him, or stand before the world as a thoroughly unscrupulous liar.

While I am writing Mr. Stead is still at St. Petersburg. I cannot hold this matter over until his return. My own readers are entitled to know the new facts as promptly as possible. But as soon as I can see Mr. Stead I shall lay Mr. Griffin's statement before him, and ask him whether he is going to let the readers of the *Review of Reviews* have an opportunity of seeing this formal and official "lie direct" to Dr. Dixon's public declaration.

G. W. FOOTE.

## The Resurrection of Jesus—An Historical Inquiry.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH C. ALLEN.

[Reprinted from the *Open Court* (Chicago) as a sign of the disintegration that is going on in orthodox theology.]

(Concluded from p. 621.)

To such a disintegration of the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, Paul himself was a witness and, though he did not know it, an unwilling contributor. He for his part went so far as to reject belief in a strictly physical resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 50). However, he held to the rising of a "spiritual body" resembling the natural one, but not the same, and free of all grossness (1 Cor. xv. 35 f.). This conception is necessarily vague and unstable; and it is obviously a modification of the idea of a physical resurrection. It is not surprising, then, that some of the followers of Paul took more advanced ground, and denied any sort of resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 12 f.). We must not infer that they doubted or denied the immortality of the soul. They were Greeks, and could conceive of the soul as something utterly distinct from the body. But Paul, with his Jewish training, could not go so far; and so an utter denial of the resurrec-

tion meant to him a denial of personal immortality. Such a fear we cannot share; but the point is well taken when he declares, "For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised." The immortality of the spirit of Jesus is not disturbed by doubts of a physical resurrection. But His resurrection as a historical fact was unsettled by Paul's spiritualising tendencies, and constructively denied by some of his followers.

The visions Paul enumerates could not of themselves alone be of great historical significance. Seeing dead men in visions was never a very rare occurrence. These visions might perhaps be subjective; but probably in an unscientific age they would be accepted without much question as evidence of the immortality of the person so seen. Such appearances, however, if they occurred at different times for a month or a year, or possibly for several years, could not, even to an unscientific and susceptible mind, lead to the conclusion that a resurrection had taken place on a certain day. But given beforehand a report of such a resurrection, and these visions might confirm people in the belief that it had actually occurred.

But suppose these visions, or most of them, occurred on the same day—the third after the death of Jesus? In that case there must have been some occasion for their occurrence at that particular time. And that occasion could hardly be anything else than a report then received, that Jesus had risen from the grave. But even in that case it is difficult to believe that the visions would be confined to that day alone.

Accepting, then, as historical, these visions or most of them, that are mentioned by Paul, we must think that they were partly, at least, occasioned by the report of the women's experience at the tomb. This story would set the disciples in an attitude of expectancy and emotional tension very favorable to visions. Some difficulty appears, however, from the record of Mark. He declares that the women, after they had been to the tomb, "said nothing to any one." This may mean one of two things. First that they did not immediately report what they had seen. If this is the meaning, there is no difficulty. It is easy to imagine that the women, "seized with trembling and astonishment," kept silent regarding the sight until their awe had somewhat abated. Prudence, too, may have dictated silence until they were safely out of Judea. It is possible, also, that Peter, suspecting they had something interesting to tell, questioned them until he obtained their secret.

Secondly, however, the meaning may be, that the women had carefully kept this a secret for years, until the writer of Mark, or of Mark's written source, obtained it as new or perhaps private information. In that case Mark must have had some particular reason for this explanation. We might conjecture that his purpose was to allay the wonder and suspicions of disciples that would ask, "How is it we never heard this story before?" But it is not likely the disciples would examine very curiously into such a story, or receive it with suspicion, even if it were not known until a generation after the event. They would gladly accept without question any tale of the resurrection that was not wildly improbable. We must seek another reason for Mark's explanation. It may have been felt that this evidence of the women was, after all, a weak point, and would weaken the whole story, not indeed in the eyes of the believers, but of unbelievers. Perhaps the disciples had willing to die for it. It is impossible to think these apostles were anything but sincere. So if the body was removed, this must have been done by order of the owner of the tomb, and the apostles must have remained in ignorance of the fact. The story of the Fourth Gospel about Peter and the beloved disciple going to the tomb after the report of the women, and carefully inspecting the place, is highly improbable. The disciples were probably at this time well on their way back to Galilee. But if Peter and John did inspect the tomb and ascertain its true condition, it would be their duty to enquire whether human hands in fact removed the body. Or, at least, what they had seen ought to have been made public, and become a part of the apostolic tradition. But the absence of any account of this in the Synoptics (Luke xxiv. 12 is an interpolation), shows that it was not a part of the apostolic tradition.

The story of the women is not improbable on either historical or scientific grounds. As Jesus was crucified on Friday, it was natural that the women should defer their return to Galilee until after the Sabbath. It was natural, too, that before beginning their trip homeward they should go to see the place where Jesus had been buried. The tomb may have been opened over night. The body may have been removed just after the Sabbath to some other resting place. If this was done, it was probably done by order of the owner of the tomb. A reason for haste might be found in the fear that decomposition would set in, so that soon the removal of the body would be offensive. In the warm climate of Judea a dead body would soon show signs of decay. As to the

appearance of the angels, two living men may have been in the tomb at this time. They may have returned for some purpose after removing the body. Perhaps they were talking together, and the women heard something about Galileans. This would be natural, since Jesus and His disciples were Galileans. The women, finding that the tomb was open and the body of Jesus was not inside, but seeing instead the two living men and hearing them speak—and all this in the dimness of early dawn—would naturally run away in great fear, instead of tarrying to make a careful investigation. The garments of the men may have appeared preternaturally white against the shadows of the tomb, so that the women would think they had seen angels. The men may have said to them that the body was not in that tomb. The imagination of the women would quickly add to the words, "He is not here," the further words, "He is risen." As they had overheard some remark about Galileans, they would interpret it, "He goeth before you into Galilee," or else, "He told you in Galilee."

We may vary the conjectures. It may be that the men were not at this time in the tomb, and that the voice was not heard but imagined. Certain grave-clothes may have been left when the body was removed. In the dim light of early dawn, the women may have taken these grave-clothes for living persons. Again, it is possible that the body had not been removed, but that the men were in the tomb for that purpose, at the time the women made their visit. Finding the tomb to be open, and seeing what seemed to be angels within, they concluded that Jesus had come to life and walked away. Finally, we may conjecture that the body was not at this time, or ever afterward, removed from the tomb. But the great stone door may have been hastily and carelessly rolled against the entrance, leaving an aperture through which one could look within. Some grave-clothes may have been left beside the body, as there had not been time for proper burial before the Sabbath. The women may have been ignorant of these circumstances. When they came to the sepulchre, they would marvel at seeing that the stone was not quite in its place. When they peered within, they could not make out the body in the dim light, but could see the grave-clothes, and thought they were looking at angels. There is, in short, a variety of not unlikely conjectures that can be made. The essential and trustworthy parts of the story are as follows: The women came to the tomb early in the morning. The stone was not in place. They looked in perhaps hastily but did not see the body. They did see two white objects that they took to be men or angels.

Naturally the women would think, from the presence of the angels, that something supernatural had taken place. The displacement of the stone they would attribute to the work of these angels. The fact that the body was not seen would make them think Jesus had come back to life with the assistance of these angels, and had walked out of the sepulchre. When they told the disciples the things they had seen and surmised, their story would cause great excitement, and in this excitement visions would easily be experienced. The first of these visions, we may well believe, was experienced, as Paul states, by Peter.

It may be well, at this point, to show that it is altogether unlikely that Peter, or any of the apostles, could have been concerned in the removal of the body, if it was really removed, or in any way parties to a fraud or deception. In the first place, they were too much dismayed by the death of their Master to think of any such scheme. But chiefly it must be urged, if they knew the faith of the early Church to be based on a fraud, they would not have been already found this in their efforts to convince others of the fact of the resurrection. Mark, then, may have wished to answer the charge already made, or to avoid its being made in the future, that all this story of the resurrection grew out of the report of two excitable women, respecting something they had seen at a tomb "very early in the morning." We can, then, imagine Mark to be saying in effect, "No, this story of the resurrection could not have begun with the women; for, until quite recently, they have been silent respecting what they saw." If such purpose was behind Mark's statement that the women "said nothing to anyone," we need not question his honesty, but may think it likely that the wish was father to the thought. On the other hand, it is very unlikely that the women would keep the story strictly to themselves for any long period of time.

We have, then, in this visit of the women to the tomb, the true historic basis for the Gospel stories of the resurrection. There was, however, at least one other factor that contributed to the formation of these stories—namely, the visions that our Gospels have omitted to mention, but Paul has enumerated. The story of the women would probably not have brought about this general belief in the resurrection of Jesus, without the help of these visions. It is true, on the other hand, that these visions must have been largely occasioned by the

story of the women. But that is not to say that the visions were caused only by the excitement due to this story. What spiritual cause they may also have had, and whether they were entirely subjective, or were real manifestations of the spirit of Jesus, or revelations of His immortality, are questions that are, for the present at least, beyond the reach of historical enquiry. By these visions the disciples were at least convinced that their Master was still alive. If, as it appears, because of the report of the women, they also thought he had walked bodily from his tomb, it was a rash conclusion, it is true, from such slender evidence, but at any rate, only an incident to their conviction of the glorious immortality that belonged first of all to Jesus, and then to His disciples.

Lastly, it is proper, even in a strictly historical enquiry, to glance upon a certain poetic aspect of this story of the resurrection of Jesus. Without doubt the belief of disciples, from the first century until now, in the resurrection, has been based somewhat on their own personal experiences. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," are, according to Matthew, the last words of the risen Jesus, before he disappeared forever from the eyes of the disciples. The promise has been fulfilled from that day to this in the experiences of many believers, who feel the actual presence of Christ in their hearts. This doubtless has made many feel that the resurrection of Jesus is indeed a thing they know to be true. And in this sense the resurrection is really true. For, beyond all considerations of personal immortality, Jesus lives to-day, perhaps as no other human personality, in the hearts of His followers.

## Correspondence.

### SCOTTISH CHURCHES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You have knocked the stuffing out of "Passive Resistance" and "Undenominationalism in Schools" until they are limp and laughable. May I have a punch at two figures crammed with sawdust that have just been kowtowed to in the Scottish Churches Bill?

Three-and-thirty years ago some of us in the Free Kirk held the theological position at present occupied by the U.F.'s, and were politely or otherwise bowed out. Those who recast their trial sermons, as one did in my presence and hearing, into more mediæval mould are to-day high in the land, while I, for my part, lost business, pupils, and profession, and have lived amid hardships abroad such as you, Mr. Editor, know something of at home.

Now the "ministers," careful from the first of New Colleges and Sustentation Funds (I have met men in my youth who had left honest trades to enter the Disestablished pulpit, not the other way about), are estopped from denying the value of worldly means in aid of good intentions; they have admitted in the face of the world that they, the majority of them now living, think my attitude of thirty-three years ago correct; and they have cried aloud against spoliation. Spoliation! Those who fleeced themselves and their children in and after 1843, let us say for conscience sake, but at any rate to weave the pastoral plaid, did so in many cases to the ruin of family friendships and even of family fortunes, as a will-case in the House of Lords has only recently reminded me. I merely mention this in a general way, as the Self-made Merchant says in the book to his Son, or at most to justify a general watchfulness over voluntary religious bodies; but here comes in my question. Have you, Mr. Editor, in all this wrangling about the appropriation of funds by the Wee Frees, through alleged intellectual wrongness joined to technical right, heard any proposal to compensate such rejected candidates as had to make room for the more orthodox of the day? Who were technically right and intellectually wrong then? Responsibility to the founders of endowments is only one aspect of the matter, if moral claims are to upset the letter of the law? What, then, of those confessedly injured for many and many a year? Where is their remedial clause in the Act of Parliament? Let us hope that "ever in the van of fight" they survive as Freethinkers, every one.

This brings us to the still more outrageous second part of the legislative measure. You, Sir, have more respect for the Established Churches than for the others, and I agree with you. But where have Scotch logic and seriousness gone to when injustice is sanctified and truth defined as a shifting quantity? This definition or reservation would not matter, indeed it would be praiseworthy, in a philosophical system; but why compulsory profession of a creed practically guaranteed to be soon cast off? The Bill—or Act, if now passed—speaks of Standards as from time to time appointed; and what in future is to be the status of the Scottish preacher? He cannot call anything essential to

salvation, for changes come where least expected. He cannot claim to be of a class best qualified to lead the flock, for such changes may originate outside—perhaps in the *Freethinker* itself. And since changes are, to give him his due, only made as being improvements, the only oath he ought to take with regard to each item of his articles of faith is faithfully to discard it when he can, and so he ought to teach the laity to do. What high motive can they credit him with when he does otherwise and solemnly subscribes—he and his fellows—from time to time? And if the Church is to declare, why not the man individually, "from time to time"? Why should a new hand have signed one thing and an old one another? Are the people, however pious, to allow their sons to be crushed out as I have described, when the possibility of their being prophets after all is now officially granted? What mental pose can be ascribed to a teacher, not a tragedian, poet or artist intensifying a phase of things, but within a religious body, pretending to seriousness and yet taking his convictions on lease? Only something like this: "Dear brethren, I know you to be a lot of fools looking at a mountebank. See me put my head in a bag to please you!" For it is now for the first time formulated that formulæ are for those that know no better. Indignation is likely to come of it and further dissension in the camp—I had almost said the circus.

True, the warlike aspect of the religious world is turned our way, but we are not without amusement. The allies of Freethought—Science, History, Criticism, and even Sunday recreation—have fought gloriously for us since the twentieth century opened. Only a good laugh was wanted, and this the enemy have given us with the dummy guns and padded uniforms of a too, too conspicuous *ruse de guerre*. When will secularism in school and government relieve our lawgivers of the dignified disgrace of taking such things in earnest?

COLONIAL READER.

### A SAD CASE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am engaged to be married. I have always been a staunch believer in the Divine Inspiration of the Bible, and consequently in every statement it contains. My *fiancée*, belonging to the Church of England, induced me to leave my own Church (Wesleyan) and to join hers. I joined "preparation" classes for the Confirmation ceremony, where I received instruction in the doctrines of the Church and Christianity. A firm believer still, and desiring to strengthen the foundations of my belief, to find the true meaning of life, and if possible to avoid the wide separation between profession and practice which I observed in many other Christians as well as myself, I read whatever I thought would help me, such as Tolstoy's *On Life, How I Came to Believe*. Then Paine's *Age of Reason* scattered all my old beliefs to the wind. And now I read the *Freethinker*.

When I in justice informed my *fiancée* of my new views she was horrified, and offered to break at once our engagement. Having further considered the matter, and received advice, she has decided to stay by me in the hope of re-converting me by her admittedly good influence. But she will never marry me unless I return to the old faith. What am I to do? I feel I can never again believe as I did, and to pretend would be wrong to both. I seem doomed to make her unhappy, and to be myself a lonely man.

If this letter is of sufficient general interest to be worth publishing, please publish it, concealing my name and address under the *nom-de-plume* of "Arturon."

ARTURON.

[This is one of the inevitable incidents in a world where even truth and justice cannot triumph without suffering. There are penalties for being a man amid makeshifts, but there are also compensations. Nothing, not love itself, can atone for loss of self-respect. We tender our profound sympathy to this correspondent; and we venture to hope that the sun will yet shine through the cloud that overshadows him. Time does much, and a manly attitude of strength and tenderness may do more.—EDITOR.]

Suppose I were to say that when I sat down to write this book a hand presented itself in the air, took up the pen, and wrote every word that is herein written, would anybody believe me? Certainly they would not. Would they believe me a whit the more if the thing had been a fact? Certainly they would not. Since, then, a real miracle, were it to happen, would be subject to the same fate as the falsehood, the inconsistency becomes the greater of supposing the Almighty would make use of means that would not answer the purpose for which they were intended, even if they were real.—Thomas Paine.

## 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.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, London, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Dreams of Death." Music at 7.  
WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall, Stratford): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Christianity at the Bar."

### OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.30, a Lecture.  
BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen.  
CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; Brockwell Park, 3.15, Debate, A. Taylor and W. J. Ramsey, "Is Man Immortal?" Wednesday, Oct. 4, corner of Rushcroft-road, Brixton, at 8, A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., and L. B. Gallagher.

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Coffee House, Bull Ring): Thursday, Oct. 5, at 8, Readings—A. Barber, C. Whitwell, and others.

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Fails-worth String Band.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): J. M. Robertson, 12 noon, "Henry George and Malthus"; 6.30, "The Character of John Knox."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Concert (in aid of the Leicester Infirmary).

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 3, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Exist?" 7, "How was the World Made?—The Answer of Theology and the Answer of Science." Monday, 8, Rationalist Debating Society: J. C. Gilham, "Progress."

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

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, P. B. Williams, "Indispensability of the N. S. S."

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