

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*That which is an eternal subject of dispute is an eternal inutility.—VOLTAIRE.*

## Voltaire and the Venus of Milo.

ON the thirtieth of May, 1778, the greatest light in France went out. Voltaire died in his eighty-fourth year. That he lived so long is a disproof of all the pious stories about his profligate life. He was so delicate in childhood that he was not expected to live to be a man. His lasting for more than four-fifths of a century shows how carefully he must have preserved his strength. And this reflection is strengthened by the knowledge we possess of his laborious and indefatigable career. He was one of those who might wear out but never rust out. He was ever a worker. Probably he filled more pages than any other writer in the world, yet every page is valuable, and is always more or less illuminated by his sleepless wit. How could such a man have dissipated his energy in disorderly living? Everyone with a grain of sense and candor will know how to answer this question.

The house in which Voltaire died is at the corner of the Quai Voltaire and the Rue de Beaune. It was even then, apparently, an old house; a kind of mansion, solid and well-built, that had "come down in the world" in the chances and changes of things. The ground-floor is now a wine-shop. On the front wall of the first floor a plate announces that Voltaire died there. For many years, I was told, the room in which he died was left undisturbed. But those came who knew not Voltaire, and it became used again for ordinary purposes.

At the other end of the Quai Voltaire there is a statue of the grand old Freethinker. It stands well upon its lofty pedestal, and seems an excellent work of art. The fine face wears the historic smile—a unique mixture of satire and benevolence; and no one understands Voltaire unless he grasps these two opposite sides of his extraordinary nature. On the pedestal are chiselled his name, the date of his birth and the date of his death. No more is necessary. All the world knows Voltaire. But bigotry could not help adding its paltry criticism. Someone had scrawled in French that he was the wickedest man in the world. And when one read it, and looked up again at the great man's face, it seemed to wear an intenser smile, as though a touch of Mephistopheles had been added to it by the thought of how many mean pietists still crawl between heaven and earth.

In front of that statue of Voltaire, so that it might be included in the picture, the National Secular Society's delegates to the Paris International Free-thought Congress were photographed; and, as soon as possible, the readers of the *Freethinker* shall have an opportunity of judging of the result. The picture will appear on the front page of an early number of this journal.

My own mind, as I left the statue, dwelt rather upon Voltaire's heroism than his wit. Never silly enough to court martyrdom, always believing that he was worth more to freedom and progress living

than dead, he was none the less a born fighter, and for half a century the forces of tyranny and reaction quailed before his single onset. One has only to say the word "Calas" to recall an immortal chapter of modern history. Voltaire came out of that magnificent fight as the noblest man in Europe. Carlyle, who sneered so cheaply at Voltaire—Carlyle, who never did a day's fighting for any unfriended cause—was fascinated in spite of himself by the story of the Calas struggle. Who indeed, with a spark of imagination in him, could help being thrilled by the sight of one man challenging the world—the soldier of humanity going forth alone to battle for truth and justice against the banded hosts of lies and wrong—and winning at last against the tremendous odds?

Across the Seine, opposite the Quai Voltaire, stands the Louvre, one of the most famous places in Paris, containing a priceless collection of art treasures. Days, weeks, might be spent there, if one could afford the time. But one thing, above all others, I wanted to see again in the Louvre. It was the Venus of Milo—Our Lady of Beauty, as Heine called her—Heine who dragged his paralysed limbs there for the last time before sinking helpless upon his mattress-grave, and fell at her feet in grief, and heard her say that she could not lift him up because she had no arms. So he said, with characteristic pathos and humor, and we need not contradict him.

Hundreds of years before the Christian era some unknown great artist chiselled that wonderful figure. Our Lady of Beauty, the goddess of the best and highest as well as the deepest in man, still stands there as Heine saw her, in nude perfection. Ravishing loveliness rounds every limb, and each delightful breast, and quivers on the tender lips and exquisite chin; but divine chastity sits upon the noble brows, and subdues desire into reverence. Here is the eternal feminine that, as Goethe said, has led man on. And this beautiful and splendid dream in marble gladdened men's eyes, and thrilled men's hearts, and inspired men's minds, hundreds of years before Christ, a thousand years before the advent of the Madonna.

In other rooms, leading from that of the Venus of Milo—as it is in all probability wrongly called—are inferior, yet magnificent, specimens of Greek sculpture, or Roman sculpture by Grecian artists. Again and again one is struck by the mixture of beauty and chastity in their female statues. Not the mistress, but the potential wife and mother, appeals to the spectator. Sweet serene faces, sometimes as grave as the thought of sorrow, look at you as if saying, "Behold thine own rarest thought made visible." And one understands Shelley's lines about the—

"Praxitelean shapes whose marble smiles  
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love."

Hundreds of years before Christ, I repeat, many of these glorious statues embodied man's ideals. What, I ask, had the possessors of those ideals to learn of Christianity? Do you still believe that Christianity taught the world the dignity of woman? Go to the Louvre, and gaze at the Venus of Milo.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Religion and the Stage.

THE London Coliseum is providing its patrons with a new "turn," that is proving itself anything but pleasing to the Christian public. It consists of a reproduction of the old Egyptian story of the *Two Brothers*, that has been incorporated in the Bible as a piece of literal history in the story of Joseph and his brethren. I have not seen the production, but the papers report it as being prettily staged, and there is, in truth, quite enough of the dramatic element in the story to make it an agreeable sketch. But the Christian portion of the press is not taking kindly to the representation. It is admitted that it is produced in a "spirit of reverence," by which I presume is meant that Joseph does not do a clog dance, nor Pharaoh sing a comic song, but—there are various "buts," one that it brings the story down to a low level, another that it suggests profane thoughts, another that it is not necessary as an aid to the understanding of the sacred story, and so forth. And the net result of these qualifications is that in the opinion of professional Christians, anything that tends to visualise the biblical narratives and so make them a genuine popular possession, or anything that tends to divest them of their customary associations, is to be resisted for the reason that it makes for the injury of Christian belief. Of course, this is not said openly, but it is what is really meant.

The psychological aspect of the matter is interesting. To begin with dramatic representations of "sacred" incidents and stories are not new. There were, for instance, the miracle plays of the earlier Christian centuries, performed with the full sanction of the Church, and in which even priests took a part. The miracle plays consisted chiefly of biblical stories performed in a more or less realistic manner, in which figured such scenes as the creation, the flood, the story of the garden of Eden, etc. In the latter story, we are told, that in at least one instance Adam and Eve appeared, as Breitmann would have described it, "dressed mit noddings on," and without causing any particular scandal, God the father figured as a venerable old gentleman with grey beard, the devil was there in his traditional costume, and the characters, speeches and scenes would have been laughable to a modern observer in their childlike crudity. Eventually when these performances became utilised as a means of satirising the conduct of monks, nuns, and others, they were discouraged by the Church, and so fell into disuse.

But there does not appear to have been any feeling that these representations tended to destroy the sanctity of "sacred" things. Not even the sight of God the father stumbling round on a dark platform, before creating the sun, and the appearance of several people with lanterns at the command of "Let there be light," did anything to create an impression of profanity. It is this fact that the psychological interest of the case lies. These people were not shocked by dramatic representations of biblical stories, because their belief in these stories was real and living. And every living belief is necessarily visualised. Belief under such conditions is a verbal expression of what already exists as a mental fact; and the witnesses of the miracle plays were only seeing in actual form what they really believed. It is when a belief is no longer real, when it is a mere string of phrases corresponding to no mental picture, that the actual contemplation of what people believe they believe acts as a shock or as a corrective. And were people in the habit of visualising their beliefs, the majority of the world's impostures would quickly disappear.

The real cause then, of the objection of contemporary believers to the stage representation of biblical stories, is that they show people what they are expected to believe, and so make the absurdity of such beliefs apparent. Under different conditions, as I have said, the effect would be different. An audience that really accepted the supernatural as part of the order of things, that saw it and felt it everywhere in their

daily lives, could never feel shocked at seeing it brought upon the stage. But an audience that does not believe in the supernatural, or whose belief in it is nothing more than a mere expression, will just as certainly witness such things with amusement or discomfort. Those whose belief is confined to mere words will feel that there is something out of place in such scenes. And so there is. But it is not in the play, but in themselves. It is they and their pretended beliefs that are out of gear with the times, and all that the performers are doing is making this plain. The stage acting of religious stories is not, therefore, a "profanation," it is only an exposure; and modern religion, like all impostures, dreads this above all else.

For it may be noted that nothing else, not the most important or the most solemn of things or feelings suffer by stage representation. All phases of domestic and social life may be reproduced on the stage, but no one feels any the worse therefrom. No one has ever even hinted that the depicting of the love of one sex for the other, of parent for child, or the devotion of friend to friend profanes or degrades such feelings. On the contrary, the tendency is for them to gain in strength and clearness thereby. And this is so because the scenes on the stage mirror, more or less accurately, what each of the audience feels or has felt. Religion is the one thing that it is held suffers from such a mode of presentation. And just as obviously this is because the whole system of religious belief is, in a modern civilised society, artificial to the highest possible degree. It does not correspond to the best feeling, or the best knowledge of the educated people who profess belief; and as a further proof of this, it may be noted that plays dealing with religious questions, are far more repugnant to cultured than uncultured people, who are nearer the intellectual level of what they are witnessing.

There is yet a further lesson from the objection to religious plays. This is that religion is kept alive in a modern society largely by its associations. Consider the effect, for instance, of hearing the Biblical stories read in church. There is usually a good building, everybody is in their best clothes and on their best behavior, there is music of suitably impressive character, the lessons are read perhaps by a man of venerable aspect, and there is an air of solemnity brooding over all. Everything tends to lull people into an uncritical state of mind. They are sitting in an hypnotic atmosphere. More; they are specially commended to train their minds to a perfectly passive condition while in the "house of God." Under such conditions one might almost recite "Old Mother Hubbard" without rousing a smile. Consider the difference of a man in the pulpit solemnly reciting, with appropriate intonation and responses, "In the days when Josiah was king a woman of Samaria did seek for food for the one faithful companion left her of all her husband's possessions. But when she sought for food, lo, and behold! none was to be found. Then did the woman grieve sorely and cry, As my redeemer liveth I will yet find food for thee, thou good and faithful companion; and she girded up her loins and set out for a far place, while her dumb companion was left guarding her domestic potsherds," with—

"Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard  
To get her poor dog a bone;  
But when she got there the cupboard was bare,  
And so the poor dog had none."

Recited under such conditions, not one in a thousand would ever consider whether fact or fiction was being put before them; and one can imagine the moral that would be drawn concerning truthfulness, faithfulness, etc., from the story.

Now, obviously, what the theatre does with the Biblical stories is to strip them of all these artificial and adventitious aids to faith. The stories are, to use Wendell Holmes' phrase, depolarised. People do not feel when they enter a theatre that they must not criticise what they see and hear, or that they must believe all they witness. And to a very considerable

extent how much they approve will depend upon its harmony with their experience or knowledge. At any rate, it must not be in flagrant contradiction to experience. But the essentials of religious belief—that is, the supernatural—is so antagonistic to modern ideas that to present it even with the most elaborate of modern scenic effects is to fail to convince—most probably to rouse a smile; while to deal with religious legends by dwelling upon their human aspects only is to cut them adrift from all those associations that make them religiously valuable.

From the point of view of a modern believer, therefore, there is everything against producing on the stage sketches that are merely reproductions of Biblical incidents. From the Freethought point of view much may be said in its favor. The healthiest thing in the world is for a man to see himself as he really is. He would seldom think the worse of himself for the experience, and would often think better of other people. And the value would be quite as great for each of us to see our beliefs as they really are. The religious man never does see his beliefs as they are because he has them forced upon him before he is old enough to understand them; and when he does reach the age of understanding they are kept in a specially-prepared atmosphere, and seldom brought out into the world and into actual contact with the plain facts of life. The world, physical and intellectual, is split up into sacred and secular, and the rules of plain common sense that obtain in the secular world are not allowed their sway in the other and artificially-created one. The distinction is a wholly mischievous one. The world is a unity; whether we choose to call it sacred or secular is a mere matter of words. And the work of Freethought is to break down this distinction. The very growth of the distinction is in itself an indication of the growth of unreality and hypocrisy. As I have pointed out, when religious belief is really vital, dramatic representations of the kind described create no revulsion of feeling and arouse no antagonism. When people believed in Christianity, its supernaturalism was in accord with their mental condition, and the religious drama no more caused them to feel that religion was being injured than we feel that the love scenes in a Shakespearian play makes love a poorer or a coarser thing. But to-day essential religion answers to nothing in the intellectual and social environment save that which is artificially fostered. It is out of touch with the realities of life. Freethinkers know this, and Christians feel it. Hence the outcry when it is presented to them in anything like a concrete shape. It is a characteristic of all impostures to dread the dry light of unbiased examination. But, nevertheless, it is an ordeal they must all, sooner or later, undergo.

C. COHEN.

### Mischievous Inferences.

It is well known that majorities are apt to be cruelly autocratic in their treatment of minorities. Usually the many have their heels on the necks of the few. For example, no one can be unaware of the fact that in the present educational controversy both Church and Dissent ignore the Secularists. The latter are supposed to be numerically and influentially so weak that it is not worth while to consider them. No rights and privileges have they save the solitary privilege of being compelled by law to fall in with the crowd. Secularists are looked upon as social Ishmaelites, whom it is quite legitimate to leave out of the account whenever any great question requires to be settled. They may have deep-seated convictions, but the State is called upon to act as if they had none. Such is the tyranny of which majorities are capable, and of which, as a rule, they are always guilty.

Have we not all noticed the theologian's habit of speaking in the name of humanity? It is a very

safe habit, of course, inasmuch as humanity as such cannot offer any contradiction. Being non-existent, except in idea, humanity is silent however grossly its name may be taken in vain. A preacher vehemently exclaims: "At heart, no man can be an Atheist." How often one hears that wild assertion! The people who say that they do not believe in God are declared to be self-deceived. The preacher himself and the people who listen to him believe in a loving Heavenly Father, and the inference is boldly drawn that *all* men are at bottom believers in his existence. Hence all Atheists are conscious or unconscious hypocrites. They are said to be disloyal to their highest selves, or to stifle the voice of their noblest instincts. If you tell the preacher that he has no right to speak for the race, he informs you that you must have done violence to your finer nature, that you are trying to muffle your conscience, God's viceroy within you, or that you must be seriously astray morally. It never even occurs to him that *he* may be mistaken, or that another man's unbelief may be as sincere as his belief, and perhaps a great deal more so. It never occurs to him that the Atheist might, with as much justice, say to him: "At heart, sir, you are not a believer in God; you only think you are; you are only deceiving yourself and those who follow you." Indeed, the Atheist might go further and address the preacher thus: "Sir, without being able to adduce the slightest evidence, you do not hesitate to assert that there is a God, nor to present your hearers with a most minute description of him, as if He had always resided in your own house, while I am much more modest and merely say that I have no knowledge of, and therefore, no belief in, any deity." The Atheist simply confesses his ignorance while the Christian pretends to know when he does not.

My point, however, is that the Christian apologist has no right whatever to assert that no man can be a sincere Atheist. There *are* thousands of perfectly sincere Atheists in England at this hour. This is a fact which no unbiased man would dare to dispute. I do not affirm here that the Atheists are right and the Theists wrong. That is not the point in question. The only point now at issue is the right of the believer to characterise the unbeliever as insincere, or the right of the majority to condemn the minority without duly examining the merits of the case between them.

How would Christians like to have their own argument levelled against them? How would they enjoy being taunted with the fact that in the great world Christians are miserably in the minority, and to have that fact used as an argument against the truth of the Christian Religion? Such reasoning would be monstrously unfair, I admit; and yet there would be as much fairness in it as there is in the reasoning generally indulged in against Atheism. We are deeply convinced that Atheism is immensely more logical than Theism; but that conviction would not justify us in the assertion that consequently all Theists must be hypocrites. Neither does the conviction that Theism is the only true faith give Theists the right to denounce Atheists as dishonest and immoral.

The same remarks are applicable to the subject of Immortality. Here again believers *infer* that unbelievers are guilty of insincerity. Christians commonly allege that "the desire for personal immortality is a wish implanted in the whole human race." They cherish "the conviction that, at the bottom of every human soul, even of those who deny it, there lurks the insatiate hunger for eternity." That is equivalent to affirming that only believers in personal immortality properly understand human nature. The impudence of such an inference is colossal. Only omniscience could tell what is "at the bottom of every human soul." I know what is at the bottom of mine, and I can honestly adopt this language once used by Mr. G. M. Trevelyan:—

"If I cannot claim to be believed, the least I can do is to affirm, that though I have felt an insatiate hunger for many things, personal as well as universal, I have

never felt the slightest desire to be condemned to my own company through eternal æons. I am very fond of my own company in this life, but I agree with Nature in thinking that it would, in a few centuries, 'begin to be a bore to me.' If I had reason to suppose that good would cease out of the Universe, I should certainly feel despair, but I am unable to see that the cessation of my personal identity will constitute an 'irreparable loss' to the world."

No matter what the divine may state to the contrary, there are people at the bottom of whose souls there is no "insatiate hunger" for personal immortality beyond the tomb. While enjoying this life to the full, they have no instinctive wish for another beyond it. Why then should the believer lay claim to omniscience by saying that even those who do not believe in immortality have yet an "insatiate hunger" for it? With a much greater show of reason might Secularists address Christians thus:—

You fancy you have within you an "insatiate hunger for eternity," but it must be a vain fancy. Your practice belies your belief. We have often heard you sing with absorbing rapture:—

" Brief life is here our portion ;  
Brief sorrow, short-lived care ;  
The life that knows no ending,  
The tearless life, is there.  
O happy retribution !  
Short toil, eternal rest ;  
For mortals and for sinners  
A mansion with the blest !"

There are many other hymns of similar import which you are never tired of singing, such as:—

"For thee, O dear, dear country  
Mine eyes their vigils keep ;  
For very love, beholding  
Thy happy name, they weep."  
"For ever with the Lord !  
Amen ; so let it be ;  
Life from the dead is in that word  
'Tis immortality."  
"Jerusalem the golden  
With milk and honey blest."

If we were to take such hymns as trustworthy expressions of your deepest yearning, we would naturally expect to find you in an attitude of eagerness to grasp the very first chance to cross over to the Better Land. But such is by no means the case. You are never in a hurry to leave this wretched "vale of tears," but always do your utmost to prolong your exile here. "This world is very evil," you say, "Jerusalem on high my song and city is, O happy place ! when shall I be, my God, with thee !" And yet, in spite of all that, you avail yourselves of every possible means to remain in this miserable world ! Surely, the "insatiate hunger for eternity," of which you boast, is a vain delusion."

We know, however, that many Christians do sincerely cherish the hope of immortality, and our only plea is that Secularists are equally honest when they state that they do not possess such a hope, and that they are quite happy without it. It by no means follows that, because I have a certain feeling, all others must have it too.

Secularists declare, in the most solemn manner possible, that they do not believe either in God or in personal immortality, and they vehemently resent the vulgar audacity of those who declare the opposite about them.

Now, while the two inferences already described, which Christian teachers are too fond of making concerning Secularists, are wholly mischievous, there is still another more mischievous still, if possible. This inference is that *in the absence of faith in God and the hope of immortality, this earthly life is not worth living.* It was the apostle Paul who first drew this wicked inference in the Christian Church. "If the dead are not raised," he wrote, "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." It may be true enough that tomorrow we die ; but by what reason does the date of death determine the character of life ? Does self-indulgence lead to happiness ? Does riotous living ever yield genuine enjoyment ? Are gluttons and drunkards ideally happy ? All feel that the only true answer to such questions is a thundering No. Whether life be long or short, whether death ends all or not, it is incontrovertible that the highest pleasure is not

to be found in mere eating and drinking. Under no circumstances whatsoever can self-indulgence be recommended as the true philosophy of life. Someone asked John Wesley, one morning, if Divinely informed that he would enter heaven that night, how he would spend the interval. His answer was in the highest degree philosophical. "I would spend the interval," he said, "just exactly as I have already arranged." If the altruistic life is in itself the best life, it is truest wisdom to live it, whether it lasts for seventy or eighty years, or to all eternity. As Emerson so wisely says, "it is not length of life, but depth of life" that matters. "Future state," he again exclaims, "is an illusion for the ever present state." Emerson did not believe in personal immortality, but he could confidently affirm that "a great integrity makes us immortal," and that "an admiration, a deep love, a strong will, arms us above fear. It makes a day memorable. We say we lived years in that hour." The man who leads a virtuous and philanthropic life, not only is happy himself, but adds to the sum total of the happiness of the race. He increases the vitality of the whole world. He makes a valuable contribution to the joy of existence. The apostle Paul was wrong, therefore, when he asserted that the earthly life by itself is not worth living for the benefit of humanity ; and his successors are equally wrong when they recommend self-indulgence as the best philosophy for a brief career.

We are not deniers of a future state any more than we are deniers of the existence of God. We are simply zealous believers in the possible dignity and glory and blessedness of human life on this earth. We are violently opposed to the practice of using the hope of heavenly bliss as an inducement to endure earthly wrong. It is but a poor gospel to say that the sweaters shall go to hell-fire and the sweated to heaven's joy, when they die. What is needed is such a conception of human nature and of human life here and now, as shall make the sweating system, and all other unjust and anti-social systems, an utter impossibility. The belief in a loving and forgiving God is an encouragement to wrong doing, and the hope of immortality weakens the effort to secure justice and fair play on earth. What is wanted is a deeper sense all round of the Brotherhood of Man, an increase of the love of life for its own sake, and a firmer grip of the fundamental laws of morality, which ought to govern all social relationships.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Living on God.

WE remember reading in an article by a Jesuit priest a passage in which the writer expressed his surprise and scorn that any ex-priest should seek to make a living by attacking the God and the Church he had formerly served. We are not concerned to identify the person aimed at (if indeed the writer had any particular individual in view). We will take the Jesuit's expression of opinion as of general application and criticise it accordingly.

Now, in the first place, we would point out that the percentage of priests who serve God at their own expense—that is to say, who live on their private incomes—must be infinitesimal. We believe there are cases of the kind, but they are extremely rare. The great, the overwhelming majority of priests live on God and on the Church. Or rather, we should say, on belief in God and in the Church ; for it is, of course, really the believers they live upon. The latter have to pay the piper, have to dance to the music, and have not even the satisfaction of calling the tune. Their privilege is confined to dancing and paying. We wonder sometimes if Mr. Schooling—who is so clever at making figures interesting—is equal to preparing a diagram showing the proportion of the world's wealth eaten up by the priests of all denominations during the last two thousand years. Such a diagram would be instructive to the public if its preparation were feasible.

The priests, we say, make their living by acting as the protagonists of deity and supernaturalism, with which duty they combine the exploitation of the superstitious terrors of the unintelligent multitude. Ultimately this resolves itself into living on the God idea; so the title of this article is justified. Such being the case it is scarcely fitting that a priest should rebuke anyone for taking payment for attacking certain beliefs, when he himself accepts payment for supporting them. The aspersion sought to be cast on the anti-clerical lecturer is nothing short of an impertinence. It also goes far to show how difficult it is even for the spokesman of an infallible church to see more than one side of a question. Our readers may reflect, that it is just the individual who sees only one side of a question who always assumes an air of infallibility. We will not gainsay them. Ignorance is very often the mother of self-assurance.

Why should it be considered any more discreditable for one man to earn a living by denouncing God (putting the case in a crude form) than for another man to eke out a livelihood by praising him? If anything, it should seem that the latter method is the meaner, the more despicable of the two. Who so contemptible in the eyes of true manliness than the sycophants who fawn upon the occupant of an earthly throne, either for favors received or (which is more general) for favors they hope to receive? Yet an equally fulsome adulation of God, of Christ, of the Virgin, and of the Saints forms a considerable part of the life-work of the priest, and with much the same object as the earthly courtier has in view.

We have further to remember that the priest runs no risks. In addition to what he receives here, he will be rewarded in the next world for his laudable efforts in the praise and worship of God here below—at least so we are told. While as for the poor Atheistic lecturer and writer—Well, we know what is going to happen to him when he dies, according to orthodox Roman Catholicism. Why then should the Free-thought or Anti-Catholic lecturer be grudged his poor recompense here? It is all he will get if Roman Catholicism is true. And it seems to us that the man who makes a comfortable living out of religion in this world, and has the prospect of an eternity of bliss hereafter for acting as God's champion for a few years, is hardly entitled to boast of disinterestedness. Consideration of the fragile nature of his own dwelling-place should deter him from discharging offensive missiles.

Which brings us on to say that there is an insufferable amount of cant in circulation regarding the self-sacrifice of the priesthood, and of the various religious orders—male and female—in the Roman Catholic Church. In small out-of-the-way country districts in Scotland, and in England, the priest may occasionally have a hard struggle to make ends meet, but not more so than the bulk of his flock. So far as the city priest is concerned, there is not one of them who is not better fed, more comfortably clad, better housed, and with less anxiety as to the morrow than ninety per cent of his parishioners. We might safely put the percentage higher and not overstate the case.

With one or two honorable exceptions, the spirit of abstemiousness and self denial is not conspicuously in evidence amongst the Roman Catholic clergy, or the men and women of the religious orders. People who are cognizant of the quantity and quality of food and drink that enters the average presbytery-house, or who know something of the daily regimen in conventual establishments, are aware that those who live on belief in the supernatural are not within measurable distance of the starvation line. We do not, of course, refer to those orders that live under a very strict rule. These are not very numerous nowadays. Nor are we insinuating that the average priest's house is an abode where gluttony and high-living are rife. We are merely protesting against the notion that the acceptance of Holy Orders, or of the Religious, habit necessarily entails a life of hard work and deprivation of worldly comforts. The bulk of the clergy—like the bulk of the laity—do not take the Christian religion quite so seriously as all that.

Those who are conversant with the inner side of Roman Catholic ecclesiasticism, know quite well that the clergy do not err on the side of excessive asceticism.

Another point is this. Before we credit the man who enters the priesthood, or becomes a monk, or the woman who turns nun, with an abnormal share of the spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice, let us consider why he or she adopts such a mode of life. Manifestly because the inclinations of both tend in that direction. It will scarcely be maintained that a man enters the priesthood because he abhors the idea of a priestly career. Nor will it be seriously suggested that any woman "takes the veil" out of sheer repugnance to conventual life.

This would be self-renunciation indeed! The idea of course is preposterous. It is well enough known that what is called their "vocation" is, as a rule, nowadays, pretty thoroughly tested before the prospective priest or nun is called upon to take the final and irrevocable vows. And without examining too closely into the nature of the persuasive influences, that may be brought to bear upon the *novice* or the *postulant* to induce them to persevere in their course, it is undoubtedly the case that the embryonic priest or nun is at liberty, in the event of a change of view, to draw back ere it is too late. Consequently we may fairly assume that the priest is a priest of his own choice, and that he chose his calling because it had an attraction for him in some way. In what therefore does his self-sacrifice consist? He has given up the *world*, forsooth, and all the seductive pleasures covered by that word. Well, he must have given it up because he wanted to give it up, and we fail to see any self-sacrifice in that.

But what is it that a priest has really surrendered? The right to marry, the privilege of going to a theatre or music-hall, and the chance of making a name and position in the secular sphere. There is really nothing else. As regards abstention from marriage, we will say nothing meantime but this: If a man deliberately adopts the celibate life, he surely does so because he has weighed the alternatives and prefers single blessedness to matrimonial felicity. That is,—to repeat what we have already said—he becomes a celibate priest because it is in accord with his inclination and with the predominant motive of his mind. There is no self-denial in that. We are not ignoring the probability that many individuals of both sexes embrace the "religious" life out of youthful enthusiasm, only to find in later years that it is not all their fond imagination painted it. But at any rate they chose at the outset of their career what they considered the better part. Why then should they come whining to us about their self-abnegation, and why should their supporters plead for special consideration to be extended to them on that score?

We need not occupy space dealing with the embargo laid upon theatre-going; nor need we assume that the average priest has any particular hankering after the racecourse or the football field, and feels mortified in spirit owing to his inability to patronise overtly these and kindred places of amusement. As regards the third count—that the priest has thrown away his prospects of worldly advancement—here again we would point out that it is done voluntarily and presumably as a matter of preference. And it must further be noted that to the man of a certain type of ability the service of the Catholic Church is not barren of all honor and emolument. Taking the average Catholic priest in this country, and remembering the rank in life from which he most often springs, it cannot be said that he has gone down in the social scale by donning cassock and biretta. In viewing his worldly condition all over, we see that the priest in an ordinary parish is well fed and clothed, comfortably housed, not very hard worked, enjoys a lengthy vacation with reasonable frequency, occupies a position of security, and is generally a very privileged mortal. He can find time, means, and opportunity for golfing, cycling, and a quiet game of cards or billiards. In all these particulars his lot is immeasurably to be preferred to that of hundreds

of working men and women, who more or less patiently contribute to his support year after year.

We have but to note in conclusion that the priests are never tired (or at least never cease) telling their congregations of the peace of mind the contentment, the joy passing all understanding, which even here below form the blessed portion of those who give their lives unreservedly to the love, worship, and service of God. One would naturally expect that the priest—having a special intimacy with God and being perpetually dedicated to his service—would enjoy this peace and happiness in superabundant measure. The idea of there being any self-sacrifice in the matter ought not to enter into consideration at all. The whole earthly pilgrimage of priests and nuns should be a dream of sweetness and delight. Instead of which the faithful are treated to constant complaints regarding untimely "sick calls" (the priest any more than any one else does not like to be hauled out of bed at two in the morning to serve the Lord), sacerdotal duties are too often carried through in a sadly perfunctory fashion, and Catholics are continually implored to relieve their priests of a load of debt which nobody asked them to contract. The latter point is scarcely relevant to the present article, but the monetary exactions made in some parishes are nothing short of scandalous. Where does all the money go to? Verily, the priest doth not live on bread alone, and if you converse with some Roman Catholics anent the reputed asceticism and abstemiousness of the clergy, their response is reminiscent of the worthy sacristan in the *Ingoldsby Legend* who

"Spoke no word to indicate a doubt,  
But put his thumb unto his nose  
And spread his fingers out."

G. SCOTT.

### Acid Drops.

We ought to have dealt earlier with the September number of the *Message*, a penny magazine, published by H. R. Allenson, Ivy-lane, London, E.C., and edited by the Rev. Hugh C. Wallace and the Rev. Dr. J. Warschauer. The special feature of this number is an editorial interview with Mr. W. T. Stead at the *Review of Reviews* office. The interviewer went there to read the Torrey correspondence, and then to talk over the whole subject with Mr. Stead. This is what he says of the correspondence:—

"An amazing series of documents, truly, are these Torrey letters; a record which should be of infinite interest to the moral pathologist, to the student of the abnormal in the domain of ethics; a record not to be read without incredulity, indignation, disgust, culminating in the end in a kind of moral despair. Here is a man who has made wickedly untrue statements against two dead freethinkers, accusing them of acts of odious immorality; he is begged by a friend to withdraw these slanders, but fights against the course which a spark of decent feeling would dictate—fights with all the crooked weapons of evasion and subterfuge. He declines to retract, first, because his actual words cannot be produced, though he cannot deny having made the statements in question; next, he pretends to believe that the pamphlet convicting him of mendacity is 'anonymous,' and thus beneath his notice, when all the while it states its authorship by the Editor of the *Freethinker*; finally, brought face to face with his own words, as used by him in a letter, he attempts to throw doubt upon the authenticity of that letter, which betrays its origin in every phrase—all sooner than own up and express regret at having borne false witness. And that man tells others to 'get right with God,' and boasts of his thousands of converts. You feel, by the time you are half-way through this squalid chronicle, that you want to wash your mind....."

This bears out what we have said all along, namely, that the publication of the correspondence between Mr. Stead and Dr. Torrey, even without a single word of comment or explanation, would have been the most damning exposure of the "great American revivalist."

The *Message* interviewer, probably Dr. Warschauer himself, regrets to state that Mr. Stead would not consent to the publication of the interview as it was reported. We are told that it was "a thoroughly frank, amusing, straightforward interview, full of characteristic flashes and sallies." Perhaps that was the reason why it could not be published. The interviewer, however, confesses that he is unable to understand Mr. Stead's attitude. Particularly he does not understand why Mr. Stead still wishes well to Dr. Torrey's

mission and expects good results from it. Here are his own words:—

"Here is the man who has administered to Dr. Torrey a tremendous public chastisement, which in an enlightened Christian society should prove that person's *coup de grace*, and who in the August number of his magazine returns to the attack with undiminished vigor; the man who besought the 'evangelist' to purge himself from the sin that lay at his door by a 'full, frank, ample and humble acknowledgment' of that sin 'before God and man'—an acknowledgment which has never been made; we have Mr. Stead, in the full knowledge that this man is an unrepentant slanderer, not adopting an attitude of extreme personal forbearance—that one could understand—but regarding this propaganda of obscurantism and calumny as still a likely instrument for the regeneration of souls."

Dr. Warschauer cannot profess "to share Mr. Stead's view of the usefulness of a mission conducted by the man he himself has exposed." "As for Dr. Torrey himself," he concludes, "far be it from us to suggest that he is past conversion; only, until he has publicly expressed contrition for having systematically borne false witness against his neighbors, we remain of the opinion that his only place at a revival meeting is that to which Mr. Stead, in his own words, tried, and failed, to bring him—the penitent form." We wish bold criticism like this were catching. It is sadly wanted in the Christian world.

Take the case of the *Daily News*—a journal which positively prides itself on its exceptional virtue. We understand that its reason for not referring to Mr. Stead's article on Dr. Torrey was that the latter gentleman was best passed over in silence. Yes, but the silence is so terribly one-sided. The organ of the Nonconformist Conscience is silent over Dr. Torrey's lies and libels, but it goes on puffing his mission just as though no exposure of his methods had ever taken place. The real truth is that the *Daily News* doesn't care a straw how many "infidels" Dr. Torrey calumniates. False witness is only false witness against fellow Christians. It is legitimate, and even virtuous, against everybody else.

The morning of the publication of the new Anglo-Japanese treaty of alliance the *Daily News* condescendingly said "we have not a word to say against Japan," but could not conceal its mortification at the idea of Great Britain being in such close alliance with a "heathen" nation. Japan, our pious contemporary said, was only "a new-comer in the field occupied by the great States." But the great objection was that "neither in faith nor in color is she at one with Western Europe." Could anything be sillier or more bigoted? What has the color of the skin to do with intellect, courage, honor, and magnanimity? What has a mere climatic condition to do with mental and moral virtues? And is it not high time that the freemasonry of "faith" gave place to the broader conception of humanity? If this is all the *Daily News* can say against them, the Japanese must be regarded as excellent allies.

General Booth has been forging ahead since he had that interview with the King. Now he has won what a pious newspaper calls "the final mark of the world's conquest." He is to receive the freedom of the City of London and a subscription of a £100 for the Salvation Army. Probably there is more roguery to the square yard in the City of London than in all the rest of the metropolis, and its great rich Corporation has always stood in the way of the good government of this vast capital. For these reasons we suppose General Booth is to be congratulated. And there is another thing to be said. The classes recognise that William Booth is a "safe" man—one who helps to keep the masses quiet.

The *Morning Leader* was good enough to say that the City of London's "graceful tribute" would be "endorsed by all London." This is not an accurate prophecy. There are many people still left in London—and our contemporary's staff ought to be amongst them—who object to the patronage of religious bodies by the public authorities. Our contemporary seems to forget that the Salvation Army is first of all a religious organisation. Its social work is quite secondary. Moreover, it is all carried on by the religious agency, and not by independent instruments.

The "service" at the late Dr. Barnardo's funeral was held in a tent. Many boys from the Homes were present, and one of the hymns sung was the well-known: "There's a friend for little children, Above the bright blue sky." And all the time the "friend above" was battering the tent with a deluge of rain.

Canon Fleming told the funeral party that "Dr. Barnardo

had gone up to God." How does he know that? We were not aware that he keeps the register of heaven.

At the death of Spurgeon it was officially announced—at this end of the Heaven and Earth railway—that the great preacher had joined the Glory Chorus. The following telegram was affixed to the rails of the Metropolitan Tabernacle:—

"Mentone, 11.50.

Spurgeon's Tabernacle, London.

Our beloved pastor entered heaven 11.5 Sunday night.

HARRALD."

"Harrald" we believe was Spurgeon's private secretary. It was rumored that St. Peter telegraphed a few hours later: "Spurgeon not arrived yet: getting anxious."

Lamb once sent Coleridge a number of pertinent if satirical questions. Amongst them was this: "Whether an 'immortal and amenable soul' may not come to be damned at last, and the man never suspect it beforehand." The italics are Lamb's own. We commend this query to the attention of those who are so cocksure of heaven—and to those of the Harrald and Fleming fraternity who talk as though they had handled the visitors' list.

The *Christian World* makes a great ado over the discovery by Mr. John Sawyer of an interesting document in the city archives at Gloucester. It is the record of the then treasurer of the city of various moneys paid by him in connection with the burning of Bishop Hooper in the reign of "Bloody Queen Mary." The expenses include the cost of bread, ale, wine, and meat for sundry persons engaged in the vivi-cremation of that "glorious martyr." It was apparently a very merry affair to some of those who were on the right side of the flames. But the "glorious martyr" had himself been on the right side of the flames while persons who differed from him had been on the wrong side. Bishop Hooper had persecuted Catholics and heretics and helped to send them to the fire. So the "glorious martyr" was, after all, much like a poisoner who dies eventually by having to drink his own mixture. We confess to being quite unable to get up any enthusiasm over such cases as his. He died for his religion; true; but he had made others die for theirs.

Rev. Dr. Horton, the Free Church leader, waxed eloquent the other day before the Hooper memorial in Gloucester Cathedral. He also made this bold declaration: "I would rather go to the stake and be burned as was Hooper, if I could thus make sure that England would never again come under the yoke of Rome." A very large "if" which makes the vaunt a perfectly safe one!

Why do men say such silly things? Even a Rationalist, we are sorry to see, can, in an unlucky moment, talk in the same sort of vein. Mr. Joseph McCabe, for instance, after referring to a portrait of Giordano Bruno which he saw at the Paris Congress, exclaims: "Three centuries ago I would have met the fate of Giordano Bruno: I would have looked out from a circle of flame and pain on a howling, superstition-sodden mob, and a group of priests that kept them in ignorance by such ghastly devices." The mob, the priests, and the fire would have been ready at any time; but is it so certain that Mr. McCabe would have been ready too? What he says may be true; but it is one of those things that a potential martyr should leave to be said (if at all) by somebody else.

Colonel Ingersoll was a bold, brave man. Did he say that he would have faced the fire three hundred years ago? Nothing of the kind. He said that he might shrink from torture and say anything to escape it. This is modest and honest; and it gives one a better idea of Ingersoll's courage than if he had bragged. Real bravery is involved in a confession of possible cowardice.

The newspapers gave the Rev. G. E. Thorn, of Asylum-road Congregational Church, Peckham, a fine advertisement last week. The following bill was displayed on the walls throughout the district:

"SPECIAL ATTRACTION. SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 23.

The Rev. ERNEST THORN

Will positively appear for this night only in

'THE SWISS EXPRESS' at the CROWN THEATRE."

The theatre was packed, but what happened was simply this: in an interval of the clowning, the reverend gentleman came upon the stage and invited the audience to attend his religious service in the same building on Sunday evening. Calls were made for the Glory Song, and the reverend gentleman responded. Then he went home—unless he

lingered behind the scenes. By this action he gained a good advertisement. So did the theatre manager. That is the other side of the arrangement. Perhaps it pays them both.

This arrangement, by the way, is capable of great development. In an interval of one of Mr. Arthur Roberts's performances the General of the Salvation Army might come upon the stage, talk for five minutes on rescuing "submerged" sinners, and oblige the audience with a turn on the concertina. In an interval of "The Darling of the Gods" Mr. Tree might lead on the Bishop of London, to give a sample of his old sceptic-slaying prowess—say under the bill-line of "Three Rounds with an Infidel." Or in an interval of "Becket" Sir Henry Irving might introduce the Archbishop of Canterbury, to talk on "The Cry of the Poor Clergy," or "My Month with Pierpont Morgan." Ycs, we think the clergy might work this idea with considerable advantage.

Rev. Edwin Hobbs, B.D., of Chicago, contributes a rather satirical article to the *Christian World* on "Evangelism in America." He tells in plain language how the revival business is worked, not forgetting the inspired press notices, the excursion trains, the noise and bustle, and the "ancient and fish-like" theology. And an excellent business it seems to be—for the revivalists. One gets 800 dollars for a few weeks' work. Another was "recently given 6,000 dollars in two months, in addition to all expenses—four times as much as any pastor there had received for a year of devoted labor." The "converts" are paraded (on paper) by the thousand, but only a few of them are of any account after the mission fever has run its course. Crudities are not only tolerated, but expected, in the evangelist. "An evangelist," Dr. Hobbs says, "attracts by contortions, as an acrobat wins the applause of the circus by knotting his limbs; and the thoughtful are patient for the sake of the unreflecting, and large accessions to church membership atone for everything." Naturally the revival system leads to "much imposture." "The woods," says Dr. Hobbs, "are full of freaks and frauds who have found religious America a happy hunting ground. England will have to take its turn when the same system is fully naturalised there."

The strained relations existing between Mrs. Elizabeth B. Grannis, national purity president, and the Rev. Benjamin Q. Denham, pastor of the church which she attends in West Fifty-sixth-street, have been referred to in these columns. The Rev. Denham denounced Mrs. Grannis as a trouble breeder and wanted her to get out. Mrs. Grannis wouldn't budge. On the contrary she assembled her forces and made a demonstration having for its object the ousting of the minister. It is presumed she attacked the enemy at the weakest point, for Denham was in court not long ago charged by his women neighbors with appearing unclothed at his window and saluting them with indecent gestures. Anyway, he has tendered his resignation, and it is said he will leave the ministry. Whether Mrs. Grannis has done the community a service or not is an open question. Does the world want ministers like Denham turned loose, or is it better to encourage them to remain in the pulpit where so many of the kind are segregated?—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Mr. William Tallack, in his recently published *Howard Letters and Memories*, tells the following instructive story about the grant of a piece of land to Nottingham for a cemetery by a local Quaker, Mr. Samuel Fox:—

"This good Quaker presented eleven acres of land to the town for a public cemetery. The local Anglican clergy, with a subtlety more sacerdotal than apostolic, persuaded him to allow it to be consecrated by the Archbishop of York. The good-natured Friend consented, and then was astounded and indignant to learn that, by the act of consecration, the cemetery had legally become the exclusive possession of the Church of England, which was already provided with local burial grounds."

For ways that are dark, and tricks that are not vain, the English clericals are peculiar—and the game they do understand.

We clip the following from the *Morning Leader*:—

"There was an unexpected incident after the conviction at Nantwich yesterday of John Johnson, of Bunbury, who was fined for shooting a pheasant on the estate of Mr. Henry Tollemache, M.P.

The fine was paid by the Rev. L. Townsend, vicar of Bunbury, who said Johnson had strayed through drink. The clergyman said he had requested every publican in Bunbury not to serve him.

Turning to Johnson the vicar said, 'This is the last time I shall do anything for you, John. Will you swear you will not go into a public-house again?'

Johnson, taking the Bible, kissed it, and exclaimed, 'I swear!'

Parson Townsend is a very optimistic gentleman. But he might remember the lessons of his own "Blessed Book." The only statement in the New Testament that was confirmed with an oath was a flat lie. Its author was Peter.

The denunciation of the female division of the hatless brigade has spread to America. Dr. Stoddart, an Episcopalian divine, of Jersey City, thundered straight at fifty hatless ladies in his congregation. He hurled St. Paul's injunction at them from the pulpit—but we do not read that it did them much injury. The reverend gentleman described a woman's hair as one of her chief vanities. So was a hat, but it was detachable, while hair was "part of a woman's physical personal charm." Poor man! How he must suffer! It is really too bad of the ladies to agitate him in this way. They should recollect that men of God are apt to be so inflammable.

A Stoke-on-Trent laborer carried to the mortuary a child who had been crushed to death by a wagon and rendered unrecognisable. He afterwards discovered that it was his own child. Was there ever a more striking piece of "Providence"?

The man Head who killed his six children and then himself, was one of the "true believers." After disposing of the little ones he scrawled a pencil note for the coroner, saying: "All are dead and in heaven. God have mercy on my soul." In a letter to the vicar of Amesbury he said: "I have just been to your church and asked my God to forgive me and have mercy on me. Bury us all in the same grave." Another case for Dr. Torrey.

The dear *Daily News* burst out the other morning with "To-day's story." It was the mouldy chestnut about the English bishop's butler who turned away several colored bishops, who had been invited to dine, as nigger minstrels.

"Passive Resistance" Boordman, a gentleman who cannot "abide" the *Freethinker*, and did his best (or worst) to keep it off the West Ham Free Library tables, appeared before the Stratford Justices quite recently and implored them not to carry out the law in his case. "The act is unjust," he said, "and therefore it is unjust to issue warrants." This method of reasoning in a court of law is worthy of Boordman's intelligence.

The Oxford Diocesan Conference has had a discussion on Sunday recreation. Some of the speakers were against all amusement on the Lord's Day. Others pleaded for a little freedom. At last a resolution was adopted in favor of "innocent recreation" as long as it did not interfere with "religious observance." No doubt it was felt, if not said, that a great clerical interest was at stake, which it was the supreme duty of a Diocesan Conference to preserve. Any recreation compatible with *that* might be conceded—especially when the laymen were clamoring for it, or even taking it without asking. "Do what you will," the clergy say, "as long as you come to church on Sunday—and keep us going."

During the recent visit of Evan Roberts there was no Chapel more enthusiastic than the Ebenezer Welsh Baptist, Plymouth-street, Merthyr. But, alas, brotherly love has broken out there in a too, too striking fashion. After a financial dispute between the pastor and the deacons, there was a Homeric struggle over the chapel ledgers. One of the senior deacons, according to the *Merthyr Express*, was roughly handled, and "received a blow which left a cut about half an inch long on the left side of his forehead." "The worshipers," it is said, "became very excited, the women shouting and screaming, and the seats were freely used for the purpose of getting a better look at what was going on." Perhaps the great Evan Roberts will pay the chapel another visit. Meanwhile—"Let brotherly love continue."

Rev. Samuel Wilkes Gibson, rector of Caundle Marsh, Dorset, has been fined £5 and £4 costs at Sherborne for cruelty to a mare by working it while lame. Had it not been his first offence, the chairman of the Bench said, they would probably have sent him to prison. So we judge it was a bad case. But the culprit being a man of God there is no more to be said. There would be a lot to be said, however, if he had been a Freethought lecturer.

Rev. Edward Henry Griffith, vicar of Wickham Market, has been inhibited from preaching "until sentence shall have been given in a cause now pending in our consistorial court of Norwich, wherein the said Edward Henry Griffith

has admitted to the truth of certain charges against him of immoral conduct and habits." Another man of God gone wrong. Dr. Torrey and his like will please note.

"How to Pray" is the title of a serceed by Dr. Torrey in the *Christian Age*. "How to Tell the Truth" would be a better topic for his attention.

More facts for Dr. Torrey. Elias Lyons, of Gosfield-street, Langham-place, London, committed suicide through business troubles, the jury returned the usual verdict. In a letter to his parents, found in his writing desk, he said: "May God bless you as I think you deserve." A Wellingborough groom, named Northern, drowned himself in the river on the anniversary of his wife's death. In a letter he said: "God bless us both. Bury me with her." Poor fellow! But where does the "Atheism" come in?

The one who "doeth all things well" has been active at Manila, which has been swept by a typhoon, which destroyed the native district and rendered 8,000 persons homeless. Hundreds of buildings were unroofed and thousands of electric wires blown down, so that the current had to be turned off and the city left in darkness. Three cheers for "Providence."

The Young Men's Christian Association of the Wallasey District states in its Prospectus that "Associates must be Young Men of good moral character," and that "Members must be Young Men of acknowledged Christian character." From which it is to be inferred that there is a difference between "moral character" and "Christian character."

The Archbishop of Canterbury is inaugurating a scheme for the training and testing of women teachers of theology. Evidently the supply of male teachers is running short.

All the clairvoyants and second-sighted people—those who see through millstones and into the middle of next week—are unable to shed a single gleam of light on the "Tunnel Mystery." As far as they are concerned, it is clear that Miss Money's death will remain a problem for ever. Scotland Yard never thinks of consulting these people; which proves that there is nothing in them—for detectives are always glad to get hold of any clue that will lead to the detection of criminals.

#### THE PRIEST IN IRELAND.

I ask the reader to picture to himself the condition of this town of Galway, and realise from it how the priest and nun can fatten on the decay of the people. In 1851 the population was 23,787, and from that day to this it has been falling as follows:—1861, 16,967; 1871, 16,596; 1881, 15,417; 1891, 13,800; 1901, 13,426. During the fifty years since 1851 the priests and nuns have been multiplying; and this poor but historic town, which now contains only 13,000 odd people, at the opening of the 20th century possesses a bishop and nine secular priests, as well as four houses of regular orders—Franciscans, Augustinians, Dominicans, and Jesuits, with 21 admitted priests. It contains three establishments of the Sisters of Mercy, one of the Presentation nuns, one of the Poor Clares, and one of the Dominican nuns. It possesses a community of the Patrician Brothers, and a male and female "industrial" school. It also contains a priests' diocesan college, and last, and most significant in a town of thirteen thousand inhabitants, a Magdalen Asylum! There is a State-endowed, non-sectarian Queen's College in Galway, fully equipped for giving the best possible instruction, containing chairs of Greek, Latin, mathematics, natural philosophy, history, English literature, and mental science, modern languages, chemistry, natural history, mineralogy and geology, civil engineering, anatomy, and physiology, practice of medicine, practice of surgery, materia medica, midwifery, English law, jurisprudence, and political economy, all filled by men of the highest qualifications. This splendidly-equipped institution was only attended in 1900-1901 by 97 students, of whom 59 were Protestants of various denominations, and only 38 were (Roman) Catholics. All honor and credit be to those 38 students and their parents. They are better men for the State than all the students at the priests' colleges in Connaught put together. . . . There is little sense and no mirth in Galway to-day, either for the resident or thoughtful visitor; the "man from Galway" is as dead as Charles Lever himself.—MICHAEL J. F. MCCARTHY, *Priests and People in Ireland*.

Names of sects are names of error. Truth has no sect. No man is called a Euclidian.—*Voltaire*.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 8, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W., at 7.30 "Oscar Wilde and Jesus Christ: with reference to *De Profundis*." Music before Lecture.

October 15, Glasgow; 22, Birmingham; 29, Newcastle-on-Tyne.  
November 5, Manchester; 12, Liverpool.  
December 3, South Shields; 31, Leicester.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton, Essex.—October 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.

E. A. P.—A paper read by thousands may well suit many tastes. Why should you wish the *Freethinker* to be all in one vein—even if it be the vein that you personally approve? Remember what the proverb says: "There are others." Thanks for the references. Glad you "found the *Freethinker* in a shop at Bolton, and were told it sold well." It would sell everywhere if newsagents would only do it justice.

J. BLACKHALL.—"James Boyce, C. E. lecturer" is not a person with whom we could ask Mr. Cohen to break a lance. We don't invite our best contributors to play in pantomime. Thanks for the cuttings.

J. CLAYTON.—Strict orders are given that unstamped letters are not to be taken in, and paid for, at our office. Too many unstamped communications are sent us by "clever" Christians, who probably chuckle as they imagine us (quite wrongly) reading their rubbish and finding the value of our investment. We have had to stop their little game, and to adopt the only certain way of doing it. You will see, therefore, that your accidentally unstamped letter being "refused" is not due to our poverty or our economy. We have explained our rule before, and we hope you understand it now.

G. SCOTT writes:—"In reply to those who have been interested in *The Gadfly* through the notice which appeared in your columns, may I be allowed to express my regret that, owing to an oversight on my part, neither author's nor publisher's name was mentioned. The book is written by E. L. Voynich, and published by Heineman. The cheap reprint is issued by Warne and Co."

A. S. VICKERS.—Received.

MANCHESTER SAINT.—Excellent sentiment but poor verse.

W. G.—Thanks, though we had already seen it, and written a paragraph on it.

ANONYMOUS correspondents are once more warned that their letters cannot be answered.

ALMA.—Thanks for cutting and good wishes.

W. P. PEARSON, Secretary of the Liverpool Branch, writes:—"Your remarks about the N. S. S. and 'money' were needed, and I hope will put a stop to the cheap sneers that certain people have been making. Our Branch here is a good instance of what can be done, not with 'money,' but with enthusiasm." This correspondent hopes our Congress articles will be followed by some articles on Paris and its associations.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your ever-welcome cuttings.

H. A. RUSSELL.—The crossing of the Red Sea by the Jews is a legendary story. In any case, it could have had nothing to do with "the tide," for the story says that the waters divided and stood like a wall on either side of them. Explaining a miracle is simply giving it away. We cannot tell you who publishes Dr. Menzies' book referred to by Mr. Lloyd. Perhaps he can.

GEORGE JACOB.—The Paris Congress was officially called a *Freethought* Congress. We cannot give it a new name. At the same time, we never scruple to use the term "Atheist" in the *Freethinker*, though we cannot impose it on others. Technically, an Anarchist is one opposed to "government by force" in human affairs; but the term is often used loosely, both by enemies and friends.

S. A. TURNER.—The proprietors of Queen's Hall make it a condition that tickets shall not be advertised and sold at less than one shilling. The expenses are far too heavy to allow of a large number of free seats.

PARIS CONGRESS FUND.—Frank Smith £1 1s., Mrs. Siger 2s., W. Hatty 1s. These fresh subscriptions give us the opportunity of saying that we hoped the necessary £50 would have been made up long ago. Cannot the balance, (some £15) be subscribed forthwith?

HARRY HYMAN.—There is not a word of truth in that missionary's statement as to the death-bed of Voltaire. Send us details about his "converted infidel" when you get them.

TRUTHSEEKER.—Your present questions have all been answered before.

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

The new Queen's Hall course of meetings opened finely on Sunday evening. There was a splendid audience, including a large number of ladies. The professional gentlemen who had volunteered their services took the platform first, and "discoursed most excellent music" to the evident delight of all who were present. The highly accomplished instrumentalists (who do not desire a more particular advertisement) played in a masterly manner, and were enthusiastically applauded. After the conclusion of the musical program, which lasted nearly three quarters of an hour, Mr. Foote took the platform, accompanied by his chairman, Mr. F. A. Davies, and delivered his lecture on "Dreams of Death," which was followed with profound attention and frequently greeted with rousing cheers. Questions were invited after the lecture, and many were asked and answered, but no one came forward to offer formal opposition.

Mr. Foote occupies the Queen's Hall platform again this evening (Oct. 8), and will lecture on "Oscar Wilde and Jesus Christ." We are sorry to see that some foolish persons have raised an objection to this title. The objection only shows their ignorance. Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* has been reviewed in the leading daily and weekly papers, and has been the subject of sermons by leading preachers, such as Dr. Campbell, of London, and Dr. Aked, of Liverpool. Reviews and sermons alike have dwelt on Oscar Wilde's flattering references to Jesus Christ, which fill a great portion of the book; yet a fuss is made by some people because Mr. Foote associates these two names in the title of his lecture. All that Mr. Foote aims at doing is to show what Oscar Wilde's praise of Jesus Christ is worth. But perhaps, as the Christians are playing their usual game, the Freethinkers will do their best to crowd Queen's Hall on this occasion, as they can easily do by giving publicity to the lecture amongst their friends and acquaintances.

We are happy to state that there will be music before the lecture at all these Queen's Hall meetings. Most of the musicians, if not all of them, have kindly promised to attend again this evening (Oct. 8), and some of them will attend at Mr. Cohen's and Mr. Lloyd's lectures. A little good singing may be added to fill up the program.

The following is the band program at Queen's Hall this evening (Oct. 8):—March, "Fatinitza," Suppé; "Chanson Italien," Reinecke; Valse, "Hydropaten," Gungl; Three Dances from "Nell Gwynne," German; Violin Solo, "Romance," Svendsen.

There was another grand audience at Stratford Town Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Cohen delivered the second of the present course of lectures. On this occasion there was some opposition—of a kind. It is a great pity that the Christians cannot put forward decent representatives to oppose leading Freethought speakers before crowded meetings. Is it that they prefer to let judgment go by default? If they say that they do not wish to advertise Freethought meetings, we reply that the hall was filled without their assistance.

Mr. John Lloyd delivers the third and last of the Stratford Town Hall meetings to-night (Oct. 8). We hope he will have a splendid audience and a splendid reception. Mr. Lloyd turned his back on all the interests of a lifetime in throwing in his lot with Freethought. That speaks for his high character. His eloquence speaks for itself.

Monday, October 9, is the Great Day of Atonement, and the orthodox Jews will celebrate it in the usual fashion. The freethinking Jews in London will celebrate it in a very different way. They have engaged South-place Institute for the afternoon and evening, and will gather there in full force. It is sure to be crowded, and probably over-crowded.

Mr. Foote has promised to attend and speak. We understand that Mr. Cohen will also be present.

Mr. W. T. Stead has written to Mr. Foote from St. Petersburg and from Moscow. He thanks Mr. Foote very heartily for the spirit and tone of his "Open Letter." He cannot, however, deal with the Ingersoll-Dixon matter (with reference to Attorney Griffin's statement) himself. He says that he will be in Russia for some time, unless he is expelled. "I am in great hopes," he says, "that the sun of liberty is rising in these Slavonian lands, and I am here trying to dispel the clouds." We hope Mr. Stead is not taking too sanguine a view of the situation.

A "Holiday School Society" has been formed at Liverpool in the interest of the junior and senior scholars of the city, as well as boys and girls of maturer years. It aims at supplying, as a supplement to the ordinary school curriculum, attractive School Extension Classes, instruction in physical culture and rational entertainment, concerts, nature rambles, and various other opportunities for the development of sound social instincts upon modern scientific lines. It is entirely unsectarian, and is not under the wing of any other Society, though it should, in consequence, appeal with special force to Freethinkers. The two inaugural meetings will be addressed by Mr. J. Arnold Sharpley, and will be held to-day (Oct. 8) in the Alexandra Hall, at 8, and next Sunday, at the same hour, in the rooms of the Ethical Society, Colquitt-street.

The Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch has been fortunate enough to secure the Lovaine Hall for a course of Sunday lectures. This hall is handsome and commodious, and conveniently situated. Some seats will be free, but a charge will be made for the rest, and the Secular Society, Limited, is contributing towards the cost of the effort. Mr. Lloyd leads off with two lectures (afternoon and evening) on Sunday, October 15. Mr. Cohen follows with two lectures, and Mr. Foote winds the course up on October 29. Local saints who can help to advertise these important meetings should apply for handbills etc. to Mr. T. H. Elstob, 24, Woodbine-road, Gosforth.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures in the Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday, October 22. The local "saints" will please note. Next week we may have something more to say on this subject. A strong effort is being made to deprive the Birmingham Branch of the use of the Town Hall once a year. No doubt the same people are at work who drove the Branch out of the Bristol-street Board Schools.

In spite of all difficulties the Birmingham Branch is bent on valorously pursuing its work. Arrangements have been made for lectures in the Prince of Wales Assembly Room by Mr. A. Barber (Oct. 15), Mr. Cohen, Mr. Ward, Mr. McCabe, Mr. Lloyd, and Mrs. Bonner. The committee appeal for financial help, and should not appeal in vain. Local "saints" might bring contributions to-day (Oct. 8) at the opening "tea and social," or send same to Mr. J. Partridge, 183, Vauxhall-road. There may even be outsiders ready to extend assistance to this hard-working and much-persecuted Branch.

The Glasgow Branch successfully opened its winter lecture season last Sunday with two lectures by Mr. J. M. Robertson to capital audiences. Mr. Cohen occupies the Glasgow platform to-day (Oct. 8) and Mr. Foote the following Sunday. The Branch's new annual report shows that real progress has been achieved during the past year, and the financial position is better than ever, thanks very largely to the generosity of an anonymous friend. Mention is made of the fact that "the local sale of the *Freethinker* has gone up considerably."

The *Humane Review* (quarterly) for October, opens with an important and interesting article on the late Elisée Reclus, the author of the monumental "Universal Geography." The writer, Mr. Richard Heath, pays the highest tribute to Reclus's intellect and character. He frankly admits that the great Frenchman had "lost his faith in Christianity," but he tries to bring him into the Christian fold by a side door. "His justifiable resentment against modern Christianity," Mr. Heath says, "led him at times so far that one might think him fundamentally anti-Christian. But I have said enough to show that no one could be more in harmony with the spirit of early Christianity. Jesus Christ would, I believe, have regarded him as a brother." This special pleading is not in the best taste. Elisée Reclus was never in need of an apology. He was what he was, and it is absurd to try to make him otherwise. But this does not affect the value of the rest of Mr. Heath's article, which we have read with much pleasure.

## The Design Argument.

"Nature is not an aggregate of independent parts, but one organic whole."—TYNDALL, *Fragments of Science*.

IN the above words of Tyndall, we have, from one aspect, a complete answer to the design argument, and in order to make this clear, we will examine certain conclusions flowing from Tyndall's statement.

The ancient and perennial stock sample of the design argument is, of course, Paley's watch, an article of commerce which, however superb it may have been in the eyes of that theologian, would most likely be promptly refused by any third-rate pawnbroker to-day if tendered to him across the counter by a poverty-stricken Christian. The well-known argument runs somewhat as follows, put very briefly:—Seeing that a watch shows marks of design and has been made by a watchmaker, then in a like manner, the world around us shows marks of design, and must have been made by a correspondingly enlarged watchmaker, or more correctly, a great being who had intelligence sufficient to do the miraculous work in a manner, known only to himself. This, I trust, is not putting the matter unfairly, and will not be considered in that light. And now let us proceed to criticise this argument.

At the outset, we would point out that the general run of argument against the existence of Jehovah as a creator, leads against the "conclusion" of Paley's argument, and not the premises, and overthrows the Christian's contention by showing that the character of Jehovah as a creator is contradictory to the god idea, even as the Christian's entertain it. For instance, it is often urged by the supernaturalist that there are marks of benevolence in the world, which could only proceed from a benevolent creator. This is quite easily answered by pointing out that if there are signs of benevolence in the world, it is just as certain that there are signs of malevolence, such as tape-worms, scorpions, etc., and if the benevolence is to be ascribed to the creator, so also must the malevolence. But as the inconsistent Christian will not admit that his creator is or can be a malevolent being, the argument destroys the creator idea by showing that logically the creator must, as such, have ungodly attributes. In this article, however, we will not attack the conclusion, nor the necessary character of a creator, but restrict ourselves to an examination of the premises, which if shown to be invalid, of course, destroys the conclusion in another way.

To begin then. Has the watch been made by a watchmaker? Without thinking, the man in the street would, as Paley did, take it for granted that it had been so made, and, following Paley, would raise on that idea the false analogy of a creator "watchmaker" for the world. If, however, the question is looked at more carefully, it will be seen that the answer is not so ready nor yet so simple. As a matter of fact, the watchmaker is but the last instrument in the hands (speaking metaphorically) of nature in the production of the watch, and it is nature as a whole in her infinite and eternal capacity that produces the watch. We may just as logically say that the vine makes the grape, and that therefore the creator is a great vine, as that the watchmaker makes the watch, and that therefore the creator is a great watchmaker. The vine, of course, is but the last instrument, impelled by the general laws and powers of nature as a whole, that brings the grape into existence. It is the same with the watch. Millions of different agencies must concur before the watch is or could be produced. Unknown geological processes had to take place ages ago to get the metal for the watch into the proper place and condition to be excavated. Mankind had again to evolve into being, in order to prepare the tools to get it out of the earth, to build the ship that will bring the metal to the smelters, and then, after innumerable other processes get into the hands of the "watchmaker." All this has to take place even before he can begin his making. Besides, he has to

have a preparatory education in watchmaking, which he can only obtain from his fellow men, who are thereby part makers of every watch he finishes off; and his fellow men could only obtain their education through uncountable years of unsuccessful and successful experiment. The tools with which the watchmaker does his work are made for him by other men; without them, both the men and the tools, he could do nothing. He cannot do his work without food, and for him to get this necessary part of himself, as watchmaker, how many other human beings are required. The most important tools are his own hands, and did he make these or are they not a product of evolution? And without his nervous system, including his brain, for which he must thank his parents through heredity, he could, once more, do absolutely nothing. It is so clear that it is almost a truism. Subtract from the watchmaker the help that he gets from the rest of the universe and what watch would be produced? None at all. The truth is that the production of a single watch, nay, of the slightest part of that watch, requires the intimate co-operation of the whole universe. It is the universe that makes the watch, using the "watchmaker" as the last instrument in the manufacture by means of general laws. Thus Paley's first premise is destroyed, and, of course, there is no conclusion where there is no premise. In a true philosophical sense the watchmaker does not make the watch, he is only an infinitesimal fragment of the true worker, nature.

Jehovah as a designer, in accordance with Paley's argument, is represented as a single person, and the Christian often brings forward what he somewhat stupidly fancies is a poser when he asks "Who made the world," taking it for granted that everything that has been made, has been made by a "who" or person. Of course, nature as a whole has not been made at all, neither by a person or anything else; for nature "is," not "is made." But let us take the making of things by men, and see if "who" can even come in there. Our previous criticism of Paley's premise has shown that no single individual "who" has ever made anything, for the manufacture of a single watch is only possible through the instrumentality of the whole of the "whos" of the human race acting together, while billions of undeveloped animal "whos" were equally necessary in order to permit of the evolution of the human "whos" into existence. The watch is not the work of any single human being, that is of a "who," at all, but the outcome of eternal natural evolution. Thus the single "who" idea as a factor in the production of any article is shown to be erroneous, and this part of Paley's premise goes by the board also. And if the individual life is not an efficient factor in production it cannot be used as a sound analogy in argument towards the conclusion that Jehovah is a magnified individual of a like productive character.

We now come to another part of Paley's premises. The watch he declares shows design and purpose, seeing what is undisputable, that the watchmaker has designed it with the purpose of indicating the passage of time; and the Christian, following up this lead of Paley, endeavors to nail his opponent down to the admission that there is design and purpose in the world even though we have to limit it to the works of man. Every machine, building, etc., that has come from human hands, the Theist declares, show design, and if so, there is design in nature to that extent, and thus to the same extent, teleology is proved. We must review this position, and to do so it will be necessary to examine the nature and the character of human design and purpose, and ascertain whether such design and purpose can be attributed to a Jehovah.

Watches have come into existence by a slow process of mechanical evolution. Innumerable attempts have been made in past ages towards the accomplishment of time-measuring machines, such as sundials, clepsydras, etc., and the vast majority of the experiments have naturally been failures. Every now and then some experiment has been comparatively suc-

cessful, and this success has, of course, been noted and thenceforward remembered and repeated, while the failures, because they were failures and perfectly useless, have been forthwith consigned to oblivion. The watch, as we have it to-day, is the result, in one direction, of the steady accumulation of these repeated successes out of innumerable failures, and we would press home the important point that if there had been no failures, there would have been no successes to repeat; for plainly the successes cannot happen except through the means and during the course of failures. We may therefore define human design in mechanism as the result of accumulated and repeated successes out of innumerable mechanical failures. This is the essential character of human design, which cannot possibly be attributed to a being like Jehovah, who is supposed to design with immediate and instantaneous success. "Let there be light and there was light." No Christian will argue that his Jehovah made the world by repeated successes out of innumerable failures; he cannot say that his God had to experiment continually and creep towards his results, as man has been forced to do because of his limitations; and, consequently, it is impossible to argue from human design to creator design, for they do not bear comparison.

It is exactly the same with human purpose. Notice a child forming its habits. You will see that it makes innumerable small actions to attain certain ends which fail; but now and then, in the middle of the groping, one partially succeeds. This action, which partially succeeded, the child remembers and repeats on a fitting occasion when the end presents itself again; and whenever in later life it wants anything, it remembers what happened to be the successful way to get what was wanted, and goes through the actions successfully once more. Accordingly, purposive action is successful action remembered and repeated out of innumerable failures. Anyone can satisfy himself on these points by studying an infant's attempts to walk and talk. Owing to the condition to success in human purpose being preceding failure, human purpose is inapplicable in analogy to creator purpose, which, by hypothesis, must go straight to the bullseye without any preliminary missing of the mark; a species of purpose of which we have not the slightest conception.

This analysis shows that human design and purpose fall into line with the general evolutionary process. As all the world knows, or should know, any evolved species in the organic kingdom is the result, by hereditary processes, of the accumulated and repeated survival of successful variations out of innumerable useless variations which were failures, in the struggle for existence. The organisms make speaking metaphorically, various attempts to survive in different directions, but only a very few of those attempts can survive; the vast majority fail. The successful variation is repeated in the next generation where another crop of variations come up, the greater number of which are failures once more and a few turn out successes, which successes are again repeated in the next generation, added on to the previous ones, and so the process goes on indefinitely. The fact of the matter is human design and human purpose are only special instances of the general evolutionary process, and cannot be predicated of any other-world being such as the impossible Jehovah.

From the foregoing it can now be seen that the premises of Paley's argument do not hold, and consequently, the conclusion is illusory. All products are social, nay, more, universal; there is no single individual life that is an efficient or complete factor in the production of anything whatsoever, and design and purpose are words applied to methods so tentative and approximative in results as to be quite "blasphemous" when applied to a creator, and of the sin of "blasphemy," a Christian knowing so well what it is and means, should be extremely careful. Altogether Paley's premises are not grounded on facts in Nature, and the conclusion that there must be a designing creator is what the French call a "chateau d'Espagne," that is, a castle in the air.

CARL QUINN.

## Popular Hymns.

"Talk about it as much as we like, a man's breeding shows itself nowhere more than in his religion."—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

HYMNS have always held an important place in the Christian superstition. From the days when the early Christians got into trouble with the Roman soldiers down to the most elaborate choral services of the present day, they have been growing in popularity. Yet it is doubtful if the average hymn of today has any more claim to be considered as real literature than the usual music-hall song. This may well appear a grave indictment; but the hymns which are regarded as being eminently suited for public worship are, as a rule, ungrammatical, unrhythmical, and silly. The hymns used by Churchmen and Non-conformists alike are not really much better than those painfully familiar and disgraceful compositions which are used by Salvationists, Revivalists, and other howling Dervishes of our streets and alleys. The charge of sentimentalism is not the only one that can be brought. Some hymns are brutal in tone and language, and written in the worst possible taste. The hymns on the Passion are full of sanguinary details and a gloating satisfaction which is eminently repulsive. Here are some samples:—

"Here I rest, for ever viewing  
Mercy poured in streams of Blood."

"By Thy red Wounds streaming,  
With Thy Life-Blood gleaming."

"There is a fountain filled with Blood  
Drawn from Emanuel's veins."

"Drinking of His roseate blood."

"Lift up Thy bleeding Hand, O Lord,  
Unseal that cleansing Tide;  
We have no shelter from our sin  
But in Thy wounded side."

"Thy precious Blood must be  
My only hope and comfort,  
My glory and my plea."

The following displays a beautiful tranquillity in the presence of physical suffering:—

"Come let us stand beneath Thy cross;  
So may the blood from out His side  
Fall gently on us drop by drop;  
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified."

For sheer, downright bathos this triplet is worth noting:—

"Upon the Crucified One look  
And thou shalt read, as in a book,  
What well is worth thy learning."

The solitary attempt at rhyme in the next sample is enough to break a critic's heart.

"Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,  
This is the total sum;  
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit,  
Then let Thy mercy come."

The author's reason must have been tottering on its throne when he penned these ridiculous lines:—

"God the Word, the sun maturing  
With his blessed ray the corn,  
Spake of Thee, O sun enduring,  
Thee, O everlasting Moon,  
Thee in whom our woes find curing,  
Thee that liftest up our horn."

The great popularity of certain hymns is due mainly to the music. On this point there can scarcely be any doubt.

"As long as the tune has a right good swing  
It doesn't matter much what words you sing."

And Lewis Carroll's advice to speakers, "Take care of the sense and the sounds will take care of themselves," is commonly inverted when applied to singers. Such hymns as have a slight claim to literary merit are little esteemed by the popular mind compared with "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "The Glory Song," and "Tell mother I'll be there." But one would have imagined that when a believer approaches the "Almighty" in public praise, the words which he addresses to "Him" would be of primary significance.

Is there any merit in preserving such a conceit as this, addressed to St. John?—

"O dear to Christ! to thee upon  
His cross of all bereft,  
Thou virgin soul, the Virgin Son  
His Virgin Mother left."

Or these lines addressed to the martyred innocents?—

"First victims for th' Incarnate Lord.  
A tender flock to feel the sword;  
Beside the very altar gay,  
With palm and crown, ye seem'd to play."

The last line of the chorus in "Onward, Christian Soldiers," is commonplace in expression and atrocious in rhyme.

The following apostrophe to the cross is unadulterated doggerel:—

"Faithful Cross, above all other  
One and only Noble Tree,  
None in foliage, none in blossom,  
None in fruit Thy peer may be;  
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron;  
Sweetest weight is hung on Thee."

But, perhaps, the silliest and most contemptible couplet of all occurs in this hymn:—

"May all these our spirits sate,  
And with love inebriate."

"These," as a reference to the preceding lines in the hymn will show, refer to thorns, cross, nails, lance, wounds, vinegar, and other "properties" connected with the tragedy of the Crucifixion. We fear that the inebriation was not confined to the poem.

One of the most popular hymns is Toplady's "Rock of Ages." Very little is to be said in its favor. It is a medley of confused images and misapplied metaphors. "Cleft rock, riven side, to Thy cross I cling, to the fountain fly," are examples.

Another favorite, "Hark! hark, my soul! angelic songs are swelling," is not above criticism. Bishop Alexander, who is himself a poet, has said of this gem that it "combines every conceivable violation of every conceivable rule with every conceivable beauty."

Hymns like these are bald and prosaic, or unnatural and uninspiring. They are the works of versifiers rather than poets, or of poets trammelled by the fetters of a complicated theology.

We do not expect a high literary standard in all the hymns commonly sung. The Church of Christ is notoriously weak among the upper and the working classes, and especially among the male portion of the community. For this reason we are not surprised at the retention of some hymns which are intended to appeal by their vigor and bathos to the uncultured and unrefined. But the clergy should see to it that luscious hymns, hysterical hymns, bombastic hymns, are avoided.

A most significant addition to the hymns is Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar." Here it is certain that the clergy, with their customary acuteness, have exploited a great name in literature. "Crossing the Bar" is a poem of a personal and psychological interest; it is not a hymn; and if it had been written by some unknown writer the chances of its adoption would have been infinitesimal.

There are hymns in which the authors attempt to pour out the vials of Divine wrath over lands and seas, to track the course of God-like vengeance, to prefigure Antichrist, and assign to people their part in the Divine Comedy; but we refrain from quotation. Certainly we have seen that popular hymns need not rely on poetry, nor even common sense, for their success. Christian congregations must have lost, wholly or in part, the power of distinguishing between poetry and doggerel, pathos or bathos. Singing their delirious rhymes, they are intellectually on a level with barbarians. Savages do this one way, and Christians another; but the nature of the act, and the results, are very much the same.

MIMNERMUS.

All who joy would win  
Must share it—Happiness was born a twin.

—Byron.

## Correspondence.

## THE PARIS CONGRESS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have read with considerable interest your account of the Paris Congress. But do you not expect too much of these international gatherings, and would not a purely business meeting be something to be deplored and not to be desired? As a demonstration of the virility of Freethought, and a proof of its far-reaching influence, these Conferences are magnificent; yet, I take it, no Freethinker would be the better, but much the worse, by being hampered, if the Conference sat squarely down to business and decided upon courses of action. A Conference called to decide some course of action in a particular emergency, and which had sufficient restraint to keep itself to the matter at issue, is always of advantage; but Freethinkers, of all men, do not want actions, formulas, and creeds set up by synods and suchlike. The life's breath of Freethought is individual freedom.

Please do not understand that I am in any way opposed to concerted action. Perhaps if a society of Freethinkers could be gathered together whose members would make a religious virtue of party loyalty our cause would prevail. Nevertheless, at present, I can see no good in those international assemblies saving our bold assertion of our being and strength.

W. J. LIVINGSTONE ANDERSON.

## SOME USES AND ABUSES OF RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I followed with a good deal of interest your noble defence of Thomas Paine and Robert G. Ingersoll against that mountebank Torrey. Having personally experienced various phases of religion, and being now an Agnostic, I have observed the workings of various forms of religion and Freethought on other people as well as myself. The human race is composed of various grades of men and women. There is not the least doubt that certain forms of religion have been a check on some people, while it is equally certain that it has been the cause of much mischief in the world. Religion has helped to reform some people, and it has driven other people insane. There is religious fanaticism and anti-religious fanaticism, and there is religious indifference. I have often thought that the wisest people for their own peace of mind were those who treated the whole matter with profound contempt. Personally, my quarrel with what goes under the name of Christianity now is its extraordinary paradoxical character. We have a book called the Bible, which we are told is the Word of God, and its instruction is supposed to help people to become wise and good; yet the heroes of the book have been notorious villains. In this country we have the Mormon problem, and at the same time we have the same people denouncing from the same pulpits and platforms the evils of Mormonism and advocating the indiscriminate circulation of the book on which Mormonism is based. Not very long ago the Archbishop of Canterbury made a tour of Canada and the United States, accompanied by Pierpont Morgan, the notorious Yankee millionaire stock-jobber. To me it is so extremely ridiculous to see these men posing as the followers of the Jewish Socialist and Communist, Jesus, the iconoclastic Carpenter, whose message was, first and foremost, a wholesale denunciation of all rich men, and the first condition that he imposed on them before they could join his society was that they should divide up. With all our boasted civilisation and development, mankind seems to be so hopelessly dense and stupid that they cannot see the joke of the monkey riding the elephant and using the cat's paw to take the nuts out of the fire. It is hard to say sometimes whether one ought to laugh or cry at the whole spectacular exhibition of a crucified Jewish Freethinker, Socialist, and Communist being made a God of and worshipped 2,000 years after his execution.

Montreal, Canada.

NORMAN MURRAY.

## LITERARY GRUNDYISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I notice the R. P. A. sixpenny edition of Paine's *Age of Reason* contains the announcement on the cover, in bold type, that it is the work of a fervent Theist and then follows a bowdlerised version of Paine's profession of belief in Deity "I believe in (one) God."

Of course, it is quite true Paine was a Deist and that he gave utterance to the passage misquoted, but why should an avowedly Agnostic, that is Atheistic Press Association, pledged to contravert the belief in the God idea, make so much of the

fact that Paine was a Deist? If the R. P. A. existed for the purpose of converting Christians to Deism, then it would have been appropriate for it to point out that Paine was a Deist; otherwise, it seems to me the R. P. A. is only playing to the "religious gallery."

If the intrepid Richard Carlile, of revered memory, who spent over nine years in prison for selling the *Age of Reason*, were alive now, he would not, I think, sanction the sale of he book under the pretence it was a "respectable" work written by a "respectable" believer in God.

If Freethought works are only to be sold between "religious" covers, the sooner the R. P. A. changes its name the better.

I wonder whether Mr. J. M. Robertson, who furnishes an introduction to this edition, approves of this sort of thing.

HY. SILVERSTEIN.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted the chastity of his mind as to subscribe his professional belief in things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and, in order to *qualify* himself for that trade, he begins with a perjury. Can we conceive anything more destructive to morality than this?—*Thomas Paine*.

For he made verses wild and queer  
On the strange creeds priests hold so dear,  
Because they bring them land and gold.  
Of devils and saints, and all such gear,  
He made tales which whoso heard or read  
Would laugh till he were almost dead.  
So this grew a proverb: "Don't get old  
Till Lionel's 'banquet in hell' you hear,  
And then you will laugh yourself young again."  
So the priests hated him, and he  
Repaid their hate with cheerful glee. —*Shelley*.

What is meant by "the heaven and the earth: mount up to heaven, be worthy of heaven"? 'Tis but stupidity, there is no heaven; each planet is surrounded by its atmosphere, and rolls in space around its sun. Each sun is the centre of several planets which travel continually around it. There is no up nor down, ascension nor descent. You perceive that if the inhabitants of the moon said that some one ascended to the earth, that one must render himself worthy of earth, he would talk nonsense. We do so likewise when we say we must be worthy of heaven; it is as if we said we must be worthy of air, worthy of the constellation of the Dragon, worthy of Space.—*Voltaire*.

## "MARK TWAIN" AGAINST THE PEACE.

"Russia was on the high road to emancipation from an insane and intolerable slavery. I was hoping there would be no peace until Russian liberty was safe. I think that this was a holy war in the best and noblest sense of that abused term, and that no war was ever charged with a higher mission. I think there can be no doubt that that mission is now defeated and Russia's chains riveted, this time to stay. I think the Czar will now withdraw the small humanities that have been forced from him and resume his medieval barbarisms with a relieved spirit and an immeasurable joy. I think Russian liberty has had its last chance, and has lost it. I think nothing has been gained by the peace that is remotely comparable to what has been sacrificed by it. One more battle would have abolished the waiting chains of billions upon billions of unborn Russians, and I wish it could have been fought. I hope I am mistaken, yet in all sincerity I believe that this peace is entitled to rank as the most conspicuous disaster in political history."

## RESULT OF THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE.

Some heathen whose idol was greatly weather-worn threw it into a river, and erecting a new one, engaged in public worship at its base.

"What is this all about?" inquired the new idol.

"Father of joy and slaughter," said the high priest, "be patient and I will instruct you in the doctrines and rites of our holy religion."

A year later, after a course of study in theology, the idol asked to be thrown into the river, declaring himself an Atheist.

"Do not let that trouble you," said the high priest, "so am I."

J. B. Rousseau showed his *Ode to Posterity* to Voltaire. "My friend," said Voltaire, "here is a letter that will never reach its address."

**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, "Oscar Wilde and Jesus Christ." Instrumental music at 7.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall, Stratford): 7.30. J. T. Lloyd, "Are Freethinkers Miserable?"

**OUTDOOR.**

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.30, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; Brockwell Park, 3.15, W. J. Ramsey.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., "Hell Fire."

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 5, Tea and Social. Thursday, Oct. 12, Coffee House, Bull Ring, at 8, A. Barber, "Bruno."

FAIRSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, H. Percy Ward, "The Christian Creed: Irrational and Immoral."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): C. Cohen, 12 noon, "Breaking the Idols"; 6.30, "The Non-Religion of the Future."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Is Christianity a Failure?" Collection in aid of Organising Fund.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, L. Bergmann, B.Sc., "The Origin of Life." Monday, 8, Rationalist Debating Society: Fergus Marsden, "The French Revolution."

LIVERPOOL HOLIDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY: Inaugural meeting will be held at Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, at 3. Mr. J. Arnold Sharpley will deliver a brief address. Parents and friends are requested to bring children.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, Dr. A. W. Gorton, Medical Officer of Health for Gorton, "Science in Relation to Spiritualism and Theosophy."

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, D. J. Williams, "Evolution."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-Place): 7.30, Business Meeting—Mr. Foote's lectures.

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