

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXV.—No. 42

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1905

PRICE TWOPENCE

*If you divide suffering and dross, you may  
Diminish till it is consumed away ;  
If you divide pleasure and love and thought,  
Each part exceeds the whole ; and we know not  
How much, while any yet remains unshared,  
Of pleasure may be gained, of sorrow spared.*

—SHELLEY.

## Keeping it Dark.

LORD Edmond Fitzmaurice has written a Life of the late Earl Granville. We have not had time to look into it yet, but judging from the reviews in Tuesday's newspapers it must be rather interesting. According to one review, the biographer says that Lord Granville was of the religion which all sensible men believe and no sensible man ever tells. He appears to have shrugged his shoulders at Gladstone's religious controversies; and when the Grand Old Man tried to draw him into the stream of disputation, he would fence his impetuous friend off by cool questions such as, "I want to know in what way an Agnostic differs from an Atheist?"

Here are two points of considerable importance. We will take the second first. What is the difference between the Agnostic and the Atheist? Lord Granville could not discover it. Neither can we. How many times we have asked this question, and how long we have waited for an answer! The Agnostic has no knowledge of God, and the Atheist has no God. This is a verbal, not a substantial, distinction. Both the Agnostic and the Atheist are "without God in the world." To deny this is to transform the Agnostic into a Theist. And really if you are without God you cannot be *more* without God. Consequently the Atheist is as much an Agnostic as the Agnostic, and the Agnostic is as much an Atheist as the Atheist.

Nevertheless we understand why some people prefer the term Agnostic. It has been said that an Agnostic is an Atheist with a tall hat on. This may not be the whole truth, but it is true as far as it goes. The great god "respectability" has multitudes of worshipers, and some who despise it in their hearts offer a pinch of incense on its altars. Is it any wonder, then, that those who wish to conciliate what is called "the world" should adopt the least offensive label? The term Atheist is an old one, and has a long inheritance of orthodox hatred. The term Agnostic is a new one, and children have not yet been trained to detest it. But we may be sure that they will be. It is only a question of time. In the meanwhile, however, the Atheist stands in front of the Agnostic, like a sea-wall that bears the first brunt of the waves. The other gentleman only gets the spray.

We have said nothing yet about positive timidity. But who will deny that there are crowds of timid

people in the world, and who can wonder that there should be some of them even amongst those who have brains and originality enough to emancipate themselves from religious superstition? Some excellent men and women, in other respects, are wanting in courage. They cannot face opposition. We see this often in the common affairs of life, where the finer nature is often overborne by the coarser one. Some of these good souls, so devoid of self-assertion—which is, after all, an indispensable part of a satisfactory equipment—give way to all around them; and when they cannot possibly conceal their intellectual dissent from the popular faith, they still shrink from encountering the sour looks, and perhaps the oburgations, of friends and acquaintances, and thus call themselves by a name which excites the least possible amount of unpleasantness. To such persons we extend our sympathy. Theirs is not a vice but a defect of nature. And perhaps their greater sensitiveness to reproach and ill-will makes them suffer, in their own way, as much as the bolder and braver spirits who may even go on to absolute martyrdom.

There is another form of timidity, of course, which is a vice of nature; the timidity which would ever walk in the sunshine, and never dares turn into the shade; the timidity which would play the hypocrite, and even lie, rather than make the smallest sacrifice for conviction. This is a vulgar and purely selfish form of timidity, and is entitled to nothing but condemnation.

And now for the second point in our first paragraph. Lord Granville was of the religion of all sensible men, and no sensible man tells what it is. We take it that this is a certain way of saying that he had no religion at all. It is difficult to see any other meaning in the words. Lord Granville would not publish his irreligion. He concealed it in his own bosom, except so far as he communicated it to those who were not likely to give him away—being in all probability in the same predicament themselves. To use the language of the man in the street, he kept it dark. The truth is only disclosed to the world after his death, when it does not matter.

Even so great a man as John Stuart Mill "kept it dark" pretty carefully during his lifetime. His views on religion were only published after his death—and he was far from being a young man when he shuffled off this mortal coil. Yet in a conversation with Mr. John Morley, towards the end of his days, Mill told his younger friend that he regarded Gibbon's style as detestable. Apparently this was because Gibbon dealt in irony, and really meant the opposite of what he said. But every man of decent intelligence knew what Gibbon meant. Why else did the clergy reply to him? They knew very well that (to use Byron's words) he was sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer? There was no real concealment of his opinion of the Christian faith. His masterly and magnificent irony was his defence

against the bigots of his day. By expressing himself as he did he evaded the Blasphemy Laws, under which he had seen men cast into English prisons. He was determined that the bigots should never deal with him in that way. But although he attended to his self-preservation, he took care to deliver one of the most deadly attacks upon Christianity. Mill himself never did this, or anything like it. He once told Carlyle that *he* was the man to bell the cat, but Carlyle was not "having any" either. The "scholars" and "thinkers" kept silent, and the proclamation of the falsehood of Christianity was left to heroic men of the people like Bradlaugh.

How many unbelievers in Christianity are still "keeping it dark"! There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of them in the medical profession alone. There are hundreds of them in the literary profession. There are myriads of them in the business world. Men who never go to church, or as seldom as possible—but let their women-folk go, and let them take the children there; men who laugh at the popular religion in the smoke room, when they think they cannot be overheard, and believe the jest will not be repeated. If all these unbelievers spoke out, the result would astonish themselves, as well as the rest of the world. Their number is more than legion. They might shake hands and defy all the Churches. What they want is just a little courage. And, after all, in this case, courage is only another word for common sense.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Primitive Fruits in Modern Religion.

THERE are three stages in the history of religion. In the first, the phenomena associated with religion are accepted by practically all as the working of the supernatural. In the second, the people are roughly divisible into two groups, one of which passes by certain phenomena with silent unbelief, the other, and larger group, still holding to the primitive explanation. The third stage marks the application of the scientific method to religious phenomena. Here the *facts* upon which religious advocates build are admitted, but studied. They are taken, as all other phenomena are taken by the true scientist, for what they are worth, and are then shown to be susceptible of a perfectly natural explanation, the supernatural being put on one side as an unnecessary and useless hypothesis. And against this religion has absolutely no defence. Sooner or later it is bound to yield, although the defence may be protracted by various methods.

The scientific method began to make itself felt just so soon as the various phases of religious belief were brought together and their common features pointed out. There could be no special claim on behalf of any one religion, when it was found that its main features were present elsewhere. And in more recent years science has carried its iconoclastic work yet a step further. Not content with classifying the broad and external features of rival religions, it has dealt with the physiology of religion, and by considering in detail the phenomena which it was imagined conclusively proved the operation of the supernatural, has shown that these consisted of nothing more than mistaken interpretations of phases of emotion or nervous states, which when found in connection with non-religious conditions are dealt with as what they really are.

Several important books on this aspect of religion have been published during the last few years; and to this number Professor Davenport, of Hamilton College, U.S.A., has just added a very interesting and

suggestive volume.\* Mr. Davenport's book, as the title indicates, deals directly with but one aspect of religion, but indirectly it goes much further, nor will the author's remark that his treatise does not eliminate the supernatural from religion, prevent the careful reader drawing this conclusion. Moreover, the work is interesting as indicative of the growing dislike among educated people to the methods of the camp meeting, and the tactics of the travelling evangelist. Men of the stamp of Dr. Torrey will no doubt appeal for some time to come to the unthinking crowd, and so long as this is the case they will be supporting a large number of professional religionists. But the more developed portion of society will surely look with growing disfavor upon such exhibitions of primitive feeling and morbid emotion.

Christians who think of revivalism as being peculiarly a Christian phenomenon, will receive a shock, and will certainly be anything but flattered on learning from Professor Davenport, that it is nothing more nor less than a recurrence to a primitive form of religious belief, that is as common with uncivilised people as with modern Christians. The instances cited are taken chiefly from the Indian tribes of North America, but it would be easy to compile a similar list from savages in all parts of the world. But the description of the religious dance, the rhythm, the trance, the vision, the ecstasy, the impassioned preaching, etc., as occurring among the Indian tribes, would serve, with a change of name, equally well for a description of the Welsh revival, or similar movements. The American Indians seem to have their revivals as frequently as their white Christian neighbors, the enthusiasm is worked up in the same way, there is the same selection of "sinners" from the audience, with the experience meetings afterwards, during which the individual recounts his or her experience.

To give detailed accounts of these meetings would be only to repeat what all are familiar with, either from experience or from published reports of Christian revivals. We may pass on to Mr. Davenport's explanation of the phenomena, which, however, only endorses what has already appeared in these columns. The first, and very obvious, reflection is that the spasmodic action, shouting, trembling of the body, singing, prostration, etc., are all evidence of a high degree of nervous instability and of a plastic and susceptible mental and nervous organisation. And while this is a characteristic of primitive types of people, with whom the power of the highest inhibitory nerve centres, is proportionally weak, and is specially manifested when they are gathered in crowds, it will be either strengthened or weakened, transitory or prolonged, as the physical and social conditions are of a primitive or a developed kind. It is certainly noticeable in Britain, that it is with this type and amid these conditions that revivals succeed best. In villages the contagion spreads rapidly, but in towns, for the most part the result of revival effort is comparatively small, and in a city like London, the result is a dismal failure, none but the primitive type of mind that has, so to speak, persisted, being affected.

The two most primitive emotions of man are fear and joy. And where there is not an adequate development of the higher and inhibitory functions, these emotions, easily excited, find vent in some very energetic movement. The jumping and shouting of children, or the muscular trembling due to a flow of nerve force following excitement in adults, are all expressions of this truth. In less developed adult natures these feelings find easy expression in channels of action most habitual to the subject. In better developed natures, education and other influences tend to modify their expression, and probably keep them under complete control. But fear and joy are precisely the two emotions that are appealed to in all revivals. The fear of hell, the joy of heaven, the necessity of complete surrender, with the contagion of a crowd, are the stock cries and influence, and all serve to keep the higher mental functions in abey-

*Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals. A Study in Mental and Social Evolution.* Macmillan: 1905.

ance and to foster the power of suggestion. How easily this power of suggestion operates on people of the type indicated is seen in the instance mentioned by Mr. Davenport, where the accidental vagary of one individual at a Christian camp meeting led to the ceremonial performance of the other members of the sect going on all-fours at the foot of a tree and snapping their teeth while the minister preached. This they called "treering the Devil."

What has been said will also explain the cases of conversion of drunkards, criminals, etc. Physiologically they are the likeliest of individuals to fall an easy victim to the contagion of a revival meeting, and, as experience proves, just as likely to "backslide" on the first opportunity. Mr. Davenport cites numerous facts which show that the same impulsiveness and strong primitive passion that is responsible for the spread of revivals in the States is also responsible for some of the ugliest features of American life. For instance, "The three millions of white people in the southern mountains from Virginia to Northern Alabama are known chiefly for their moonshine stills, their feuds, their murders, their excitable religious temperament, and their illiteracy." Kentucky has long been famous for its revival fervor. In this State the three counties of Loyal, Simpson, and Todd have only about 50,000 population out of the two million of the entire State. Yet these three counties provide quite an abnormal number of the cases of lynching for which Kentucky is famous—or infamous. These counties have also been famous for their feuds and general lawlessness. But it was also the area of one of the greatest revivals of the nineteenth century, and is to-day a fruitful soil for such efforts. Mr. Davenport well remarks:—

"It is well known that lynching in the South is carried on largely by the ignorant and baser elements of the white population. It is also well known that the chief method of religious influence and training of the black man and the ignorant white man alike is impulsive and emotional revivalism. It is a highly dangerous situation, and deserves the earnest consideration of the ecclesiastical statesmen of all denominations which work in the South. It will be impossible to protect that part of the nation or any other from the epidemic madness of the lynching mob, if the seeds of it are sown in the sacred soil of religion.....Their preachers are great 'soul savers,' but they lack the practical sense to build up their emotionalised converts into anything that approaches a higher life."

I have pointed out in the *Freethinker* on more than one occasion how professional revivalists make for a degradation of the people mentally, morally, and politically; and it is gratifying to have the opinion endorsed by a man like Professor Davenport, whose endorsement is the more valuable from his still professing a belief in Christianity.

Professor Davenport's qualifications in the shape of expressions of opinion concerning the nature of the "New Evangelism," and the remark that his investigation does not "eliminate the supernatural from the process of regeneration," may be passed without lengthy comment. If the explanation of all the phenomena of revivalism as being due partly to pathological causes and partly to the operation of unreasoning primitive passion is not correct, one is at a loss to understand what is the true significance of his work. And if the supernatural in religion is not to be found in this direction, where is it to be found? The most superficial study of the history of religion will show that it is in the phenomena of trance, vision, ecstasy, convulsive movements, etc., that the supernatural has been detected. Reduce these phenomena to problems in physiological psychology, and the supernatural disappears. It may linger awhile in the shape of a reading into nature at large of indications of the supernatural; but this is clearly a survival of the earlier form, and in time must disappear also. What Mr. Davenport really proves is that these revivals consist in the exploitation of the lower feelings of people by exhortists who are, probably enough, ignorant of the real nature of the manifestations they induce. He shows that these phenomena are as common with savages as with

Christians, and that in Christian revivals the people are simply reduced to a primitive state of mind, being for the time divested of the saner controlling influences that come with the development of civilisation. It is a case of pure atavism. And, finally, perhaps without being fully aware of it, he has exhibited professional Christian evangelists as being among the most demoralising forces that exist in a civilised community.

C. COHEN.

### The Dupes of Dogmatism.

It would be inexcusable folly, it would even be morally criminal, to charge all Christians with hypocrisy. We will rather spontaneously grant that the great majority of them possess the high virtue of sincerity. At the same time, it cannot be denied but that most church and chapel goers are the dupes of their teachers. As is well known, the preacher in his pulpit occupies a position of splendid isolation. He speaks as the servant of the Lord, as the very mouthpiece of God, whose mind and will he pretends to know and declare with perfect accuracy. The pulpit is the preacher's throne, from which he delivers authoritative messages from the unseen world. No question may be asked, no opposition or even disagreement expressed, the hearer's one duty being to receive with deep thankfulness whatever the Lord may send. Consequently the preacher is of necessity a dogmatist, and cannot possibly be anything else. To be God's spokesman is to be infallible. It also follows that church and chapel goers, if they are sincere believers, are bound to take the man of God at his own valuation. It would be the height of disloyalty on their part not to believe Heaven's messenger.

We are convinced that preachers represent only themselves and the systems with which they are identified, and that they have arrogated to themselves the right to speak in the name of a Supreme Being. As a matter of fact, they are guilty of making statements which are unsusceptible of verification, and which they would be incapable, if publicly challenged, of substantiating. Furthermore, they often deliver themselves of assertions that are palpably false. Therefore, their hearers, in so far as they are believers, are the dupes of dogmatism.

On Sunday evening, October 1, the minister of a well known Nonconformist Church, in the heart of London, chose for his text John vi, 57: "He that eateth me shall live by me." The church is large and comfortable, but on this occasion it was not quite half filled. The pastor is young, clean-faced, with a shock of long curly black hair. He began his sermon by proclaiming the absolute originality of Christ's teaching. He endorsed the opinion of the Jewish officers who are reported to have said: "Never MAN spake like this man." Only God could have spoken like Jesus, therefore Jesus must have been God. Such a positive declaration sounded very impressive, and the preacher smiled as if he fully expected it to carry conviction with it, as it doubtless did. Only God or a maniac could have said, "He that eateth me shall live by me!" Yes, the words of the Master were original and unique because they were the words of God! The people seemed to be deeply impressed by this piece of bold dogmatism. But the preacher ought to have known, if he did not, that he was grossly misleading his congregation by such an assertion. The plain historical truth is that the words of Christ, upon which the sermon was founded, are in no sense original, but express an idea that was common to many religions much older than Christianity.

It should be noted that the sermon under consideration was followed by a celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and it is evident that the preacher had that fact in his mind throughout his discourse. He scornfully denounced the theories of Transubstantiation and Consubstantiation. In these words, he said, our Lord did not recommend a species of religious Cannibalism. Is he not aware, however,

that Cannibalism is of a distinctly religious origin? What Christians are asked to do in the Lord's Supper, is to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God. It is a holy meal they are to partake of, at which God appears, not as host, but as food, and they, not as guests but as consumers. At the institution of this Sacrament, Jesus is believed to have said: "This (bread) is my body which is broken for you; this cup is the new covenant in my blood." "But," the preacher exclaims, "you are not to take that language literally, both the eating and the drinking being purely symbolical acts." True, O preacher, but your proviso does not alter the case in the least. The contention of historical criticism is that neither the teaching of Christ, nor the Sacrament that grew out of it can be regarded as original. The sacramental idea is common to all the so-called Pagan religions, and in most of them it is not to be construed literally, any more than in Christianity. Acosta informs us that the Mexicans "took a captive at random," and that "before sacrificing him to their idols, they gave him the name of the idol to whom he should be sacrificed, and dressed him in the same ornaments, identifying him with the god." Let this great authority be well heeded as he proceeds thus:—

"During the time that the identification lasted, which was for a year in some feasts, six months or less in others, they revered and worshipped him in the same manner as the idol itself. Meanwhile, he was allowed to eat, drink, and make merry. When he went through the streets, the people came forth to worship him; and every one brought alms, with children and sick people that he might cure them and bless them. He did as he pleased in everything, except that he had ten or twelve men about him, to prevent him from escaping. In order that he might be revered as he passed, he sometimes sounded a small flute, to tell the people to worship him. When the feast arrived, and he had grown fat, they killed him, opened him, and making a solemn sacrifice, eat him."

In that strange custom we find a prototype of both the Sacrifice and the Feast of the Christian Church. Christians worship their Lord as both the sacrifice or propitiation for their sins and the food and drink of their souls. Observe the Mexican captive, after his selection, was treated as a god. It was as a god that he was sacrificed, and it was as a god that he was eaten. *This cannibalism was symbolical, just as eating bread and drinking wine at the Lord's Supper are said to be symbolical.*

Where now is the originality of Christ's teaching on this point? Every god has always said, "He that eateth me shall live by me," an expression that has invariably found embodiment in some sacramental practice. If Jesus ever uttered such words, which is doubtful, He only repeated one of the common-places of ancient religions; and, as is well known, St. Paul refers to existing parallels to the Lord's Supper at Corinth (1 Cor. x. 21). Mr. John M. Robertson does not hesitate to affirm that this Sacrament was "an imitation of a pre-existing ritual practice" in heathen lands. We may go further and assert that not one saying attributed to Jesus was original, and that every Christian institution began as an adaptation of a pre-existing Pagan one.

From the originality of Christ's words the preacher passed on to their meaning. The food of souls, according to him, is the Lord himself; not a creed, not dogmas, not even the Master's own teaching, but the person of the God-man. The preacher waxed exceedingly eloquent on this head, and kept on repeating himself, almost as if he had lost the thread of his discourse. But did it never occur to him that the conception of Christ's personality, which he advocated, is itself a product of creed-making? The deity of Jesus of Nazareth is not a simple fact, but a theological deduction. It is all very well to decry creeds and dogmas; but it is not edifying to find a theologian doing so. This preacher depreciated the very sources from which he obtained the view of the Savior which he was urging his hearers to adopt.

We were next instructed as to how to assimilate this Divine soul-food. What is it to eat Jesus

Christ? Not merely to believe that what He says about God, and man, and the future life is true—multitudes do that and remain spiritually dead—but to believe in himself, in his all-efficient sacrifice and his all-prevailing intercession, to trust him as a husband trusts his wife or a wife her husband. Here there came a note of tenderness into the preacher's voice, and a vast accession of emotional fervor characterised his appeal. Trust, we were told, involves two things, namely, self-renunciation and complete dependence on another; a thorough rejection of one's own works and merits and a whole-hearted acceptance of the works and merits of the Redeemer. Spiritually, then, eating is synonymous with believing, trusting, leaning, and relying on or in the Beloved.

Such is the religious fare served out in most of our churches and chapels. Such is the advantage taken of the proverbial gullibility of mankind. No lecturer in a public hall would dare to indulge in mere dogmatism, because he knows that his statements may be challenged on the spot, and that if he is not prepared to substantiate them he may be openly humiliated. The pulpit is the only real coward's castle in the world, the only platform from which a man may make the most extravagant and absurd assertions without being called to account, or asked to justify himself at the bar of common sense. It is the preacher alone that is permitted to discuss subjects about which he knows absolutely nothing. There is a vague, superstitious belief abroad that at his ordination a clergyman is initiated into the mysteries or inner secrets of eternity, and that throughout his subsequent career God and he are in a kind of sacred partnership, so that whenever he officially opens his mouth he does it in the name and by the authority of the Firm. It is this impression, however vague, that accounts for the half-reverential attitude of Christians towards their ministers, and that secures even for dull, ignorant preachers such a vast amount of toleration. When this old-world superstition dies out the power of the pulpit will soon become a thing of the past, and preachers will be listened to, not for the sake of their office, not because of a conviction that they get tips from heaven, but alone for the sake of the sound sense and ethical sanity embodied in their utterances. It will then be seen that no information whatever is obtainable, at any price, concerning the incomprehensible and unknowable, that it is utterly impossible to prepare a map of the world nobody has ever seen, or to give minute descriptions of beings the mere existence of whom is only imagined, and that to play and trade upon the credulity of the ignorant is a crime of the deepest dye.

Alas, that happy time has not yet arrived. There are still people who are awed by pulpit threats. "You may live in complete forgetfulness of God," cried the preacher, "but you will need him when you come to die. Some years ago Mr. Rudyard Kipling had such an illness that everybody feared he was going to die. One day, as he lay in a terribly exhausted condition, the nurse noticed that his lips were moving. She bent down and whispered in his ear, 'Do you want anything?' 'Yes,' he replied; 'I want my Heavenly Father.' Yes," thundered the preacher, "you will all need your Heavenly Father on your dying-beds, when, perhaps, it will be too late! O why do you not seek, and trust, and serve him now?" You could have heard a pin drop while that closing appeal was being made. It was an application that went straight home. Neither the preacher himself nor his hearers seemed to be aware how radically absurd the appeal was. By way of emphasis the preacher added: "You need your Heavenly Father, but your Heavenly Father needs you infinitely more." But that emphasis gave the game away. If I have a Heavenly Father and He needs me more than I need him, how is it that He does not find me, and declare himself? And if God needs me in this world, will He not need me quite as much in the world to come? If He will, what difference can death make? Thus the preacher's

appeal falls to the ground, and the Christian scheme of salvation is wholly discredited. The idea of the Heavenly Father of men loving his children with supreme affection, and longing unspeakably for their society, and yet allowing such multitudes of them to remain in total ignorance of the fact is preposterous in the extreme! And the idea of his making himself known to a few and authorising them to declare him to all the rest is more ridiculous still, if possible. And yet, according to the Christian Gospel, that is precisely the course which the infinitely loving Heavenly Father of the human race has seen fit to pursue! That is the dogmatic teaching of the pulpit. Our only hope lies in the fact that the dupes of such baseless dogmatism are rapidly decreasing in number. Indeed, Dr. Horton, in a recent communication to the daily press, sorrowfully admits that the "bulk of the people" have already ceased to tolerate it. It is possible that Dr. Horton exaggerates; but in any case, the fact that causes him poignant pain fills us with delight, and justifies us in believing that even now we are at the beginning of the Golden Age of mental sanity.

J. T. LLOYD.

### A Story for the Bairns.

ONCE on a day when the world was young, there lived above the clouds a person of the name of Mr. G. O' Dee. Many people say, though they don't know it for a fact, that he lives there still. He had *aliases*, for instance, Jove, Javeh, Jupiter, and others too numerous to mention. It is not considered respectable now-a-days to have even one *alias*, therefore we will not blame him, but rather the foolish persons, in every age and all over the world, who gave him those titles. The floors of Javeh's house were covered, it is said, with diamonds and other hard stones, and in consequence he suffered from his poor feet. It would, perhaps, have been wiser to have had parquetry, or even a good linoleum on his floors, but he preferred to have them jewelled, hence he had his temper much tried with corns growing on his toes. It may have been some other cause which irritated him so frequently against all and sundry, but after giving the matter much thought we are inclined to blame the condition of his feet. Now, when they pinched him much Mr. G. O' Dee was wont to thunder out loudly, "Those Humans are plotting some mischief again," and he was generally right. Javeh thought well to see what his puppets were up to. He lifted a star from the floor and sticking his head quickly through the gap, his nose came in violent contact with a solid mass of masonry, a kind of Eiffel tower that the Humans had piled up from the earth.

His wrath was terrific and naturally it awoke the baby, his only son lying in a lovely cradle hollowed out of a great pearl. Little Jesus, such was his name in after ages, wept aloud; he could weep very sweetly though, it is said, no one had ever heard him laugh. There was a tame pigeon hopping about which took alarm and flew up into a golden tree out of the storm. The dove was a kind of poor relation of the other two. The Russians say he was son of Javeh, while the Westerns maintain that the pigeon was the grandson of the old gentleman and the son of the baby. We will not dive further into this jumble, because since the year Anno Domini one, it has caused nothing but bickering and bloodshed. Javeh was furious, the crying of the divine infant got on his nerves, whilst he wanted to think of some terrible disaster to inflict on those creatures beneath him. "Can no one rock that cradle? Where's his mother?" Then he remembered that the babe's mother was not born yet, nor would she be for many centuries to come. It was very sad, because no one can quite sooth a baby like its own mother. Besides the baby should have been excused for a little peevishness, his father No. 2 was also yet unborn, though that did not matter much because he was only a credulous old carpenter. It would be bad

for us to acquire the habit of being born before our mothers, and also before our grandmothers, as was the case in this instance. Ann, wife of Joachim and mother of Mary, did not appear until 2,344 years after Jesus was born.

The angels had been misbehaving themselves on the earth, and it is not quite clear if they had been readmitted to heaven as yet, the baby had in consequence no other attendant but the Dove who was flighty. But in spite of his flightiness, he was a very wise bird, even if he did not look it. Indeed he has been always celebrated for his wisdom and when his father, that is his grandfather, hem,—when I say Javeh got into difficulties through his irascible temper, it was always the Dove which extricated him.

Javeh, having no choice, called the Dove in consultation how to keep mankind out of heaven as long as possible, they were even now at the portals. The bird shook his head and said peevishly. "This is in consequence of that idiotic flood. Did I not prove to you what a mistake you were determined on? You have made a horrible mess of things. My sympathies are entirely with the poor wretches who don't want to be caught napping when your holy spouts leak again. They are evidently building this tower to keep their feet out of the slop." "Come, Come, don't be cross Cooy, I promise you there shall be no more floods, we nearly got washed out our holy selves. Besides you made no objection to the introduction of those blessed angels into our kingdom, who have if possible been worse than the humans. We have, as you know, to keep half the heavenly host stoking the burning pit, into which we had to put the other half of them, bedad!" The pigeon scratched his feather head. "I don't want the unruly tribe in here any more than you do. How would it be to drop a few thousand languages and dialects among them, cram them into their mouths until not one of them understands what the deuce the other is talking about, then we'll see how they get on with their Eiffel? It will doubtless cause endless quarrels and contention, but remember yourself are to blame for all the wars that ensue. The din of their brazen trumpets, catapults, and guns will cause you to repent you made man." "Don't say another word, my Dove, I've repented long since. I've had nothing but trouble from the day I dropped him in the garden until now. Let us go down and confound their language."

Then the unholy conspirators against man's peace went down and effectually accomplished their murderous deed. No man knew what his neighbor was talking about. Each thought the other was calling him bad names, while he himself was giving utterance to lofty ideas in choicest phrases, and these misunderstandings led to divisions, and the whole race, which till then had been in unity, now divided up into separate nations. All men became disunited and according to the heritage given them by Mr. G. O' Dee, they fought and slew each other wholesale from those days unto these.

### CHAPTER II.

Now in our days a real Prince of Peace was born into the world, one who took higher views of right and wrong than did Javeh. His idea was to reunite where Javeh had divided. Even if his highest ideal will take time to realize, through the long continued perversity of man, he has pointed the way to bring back language to the oneness and simplicity it had before the Deity plotted against it. Dr. Zamenhof has devoted himself for a number of years to the making of a language easy for all tongues, and soft sounding for baby lips to utter. His name should be written in letters of gold across the skies, because his effort was to make every nation understand all other nations. A perfect understanding makes for peace, there would be nothing left to quarrel and fight about. For a moment we will let our imagination carry us onwards.

Mrs. Smith of London, takes her seat in an air-ship, or an ocean motor-car, and sets out to take tea

and muffins with Mrs. Fiji, or Mrs. Chang Wang. After a friendly chat and kissing of the babies, she returns to find Mrs. Adelaide Tasmania, and Miss Venezuela awaiting her. They require Mrs. Smith's advice and company to Paris on a bonnet hunting expedition, while War sits by gnashing his teeth in impotency. We understand grammars will all be burnt in an *auto-da-fe*, there will be no further use for them. Then how happy we shall be. A lady can have a comfortable chat with her washerwoman without her ear being offended by ungrammatical replies.

There are men so perverse who say that Christ is the Prince of Peace, while it is patent to all who will open their eyes, that he added much to the anarchy and confusion that was on the earth. He found the sword much in evidence when he came, and he left it worse than he found it. We will decrown this false Prince and replace him by Dr. Zamenhof, the reuniter, the man of good will, and the true king of peace.

(MISS) E. HOLLAND.

### Clerical Lamentations.

IN religious papers and secular, in sermons, charges, speeches, and letters of bishops and clergy, there are many lachrymose complaints. Offertories are dwindling; coppers, nickels, and buttons supersede half-crowns and guineas; piety is decadent, and ecclesiastical religion at a discount among the laity of this land. The clergy say that religion and its observances are declining with all classes, high and low, rich and poor. There is a lamentable indifference, they say, to everything save pleasure-seeking. The rich are given over to self-indulgence, luxury, and sport, while the "baser sort," the poor, are too much devoted to pastime—overfond of cricket, football, and general enjoyment.

Is it not alarming to the priest and "the faithful who endure"—goodness knows how much!—that, in place of devout attendance on holy ministrations, the masses should think for themselves, and prefer the joys of this transitory existence to being led by the nose whithersoever the pastor chooseth? Very sad, no doubt; very trying to the sacerdotal, ministerial heart and pocket that the people are so engrossed in the things of this life, this bread-and-butter existence; that the "higher things"—too high for reaching—are overlooked. Yet so it is. The awful warnings against "sin" are lightly regarded. Sinners increase and multiply amazingly on every side. All the attempts at revivals—Welsh or Torrey and Alexander, all the moving demonstrations, the attractive services and pageants, the fervent meetings, do not "stem the tide of unbelief."

And they never will. The tendency of the age is towards Freethought and investigation. Said a preacher last Sunday: "Some go to church to hear about books, or art, or science, when they can only find comfort in hearing about Jesus and his atoning blood." He was lashing sin and sinners in the usual dull old way. But the congregation grew restive to hear the trite and ancient denunciations, the sterile arguments, the useless appeals. Some went to sleep, and the pulpit was thumped in vain, and the Bible banged; but it was ineffectual. "How did you like it?" I asked of a bright young worshiper. "Oh," said the young fellow, "it was tiresome; the same old talk; nothing about goodness and its rewards, or valor, or self-sacrifice, or kind actions; nothing but sin, blood of Jesus, etc., etc. I am weary of it."

So all must be, sooner or later. To substitute warm human love and worthy humane deeds for the mythical expiation of a mythical man in Judæa twenty centuries ago, and to harp on transgressions till the hearers almost long to commit them, instead of presenting life's bright side, humanity's supremacy, the rewards of good deeds; this is what so many preachers do. And they cannot fail to repel. Youth

and enthusiasm cannot stand all this mud-slinging, to be washed off in the crimson deluge of "the blood." A disagreeable, unpleasant method of getting clean, surely, that gory bath!

And if people are travelling rapidly away from all this delusion, who cannot but rejoice and help them in their progress? A newer brighter, happier, more sensible life is dawning on the world—thanks to Freethought. The true value of this existence is being appreciated. It is the best we know—probably the best we shall ever know; and, while sacerdotal or ministerial lamentations shall continue to be the stock-in-trade at the old stand, the coming generation will have something far better to offer, and much more satisfying.

GERALD GREY.

### Acid Drops.

At the funeral of poor murdered Miss Money a man of God had the silliness to pray that the murderer might have his heart touched and give himself up, so that the world might know that there is a God of justice. Wouldn't it have been more sensible if the God of justice had intervened at an earlier stage and prevented the tragedy altogether? Perhaps the man of God never thought of this. The clerical professional is not over troubled with "the headache called thought in the brain."

Mr. W. C. Steadman, member of the London County Council, and the new Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, attended the anniversary meeting of the Wesleyan East-end Mission at Stepney Temple, and spoke as "a believer"—which must have been very encouraging to the Rev. Peter Thompson and other men of God present. Naturally he talked not wisely. "Why," he asked, "did all the poverty exist?" And his answer was: "Because men were not permeated with Christianity as he understood it." This can only mean that there are various kinds of Christianity, but Mr. Steadman's is the right one. Well now, it behoves him to explain what he means by Christianity—and also why he calls it by that name. The Christianity of Christ, if we are to go by the Gospels, certainly does not contemplate the abolition of poverty. It regards poverty as an eternal part of human economy; nay, it describes poverty as a positive blessing, whereas Mr. Steadman obviously looks upon it as a curse; and on that point we believe he is entirely right.

Mr. Steadman said that he had arranged to see the Rev. Thomas Law privately at the Memorial Hall, and spoke of their coming meeting as though it were a great diplomatic interview. "If the Free Churches," he said, "did agree with the views of the Labor movement for humanity, there was no reason why the gulf between them should not be bridged, and the churches should be filled." One would imagine that Mr. Steadman was the Napoleon of the Labor movement, and was setting up a Concordat on its behalf with the Churches. But he is nothing of the kind. He really does not carry the Labor movement in his pocket. It does not lie with him to bridge the gulf between Labor and Christianity, nor can he send the working-men to church. The long and the short of it is that Mr. Steadman totally misconceives his position and influence. His opinion of Christianity—"as he understands it"—is simply that of one man. On this subject he represents no one but himself. And the Free Church leaders ought to recognise the fact; otherwise they may be led into a fool's paradise.

"Revivals" was a topic of discussion at the Church Congress. Rev. A. W. Robinson, of Barking, declared that "there would be a new day for the country, and perhaps for Christendom, when the Church of England accepted and welcomed revivals." Canon Allen Edwards thought that revivalism was hindered by the so-called Higher Critics, whom he accused of "tearing pages out of the Scriptures and issuing them as fairy tales for the next generation." Rev. W. Carlile, of the Church Army, said that what they wanted was a revival in the Church itself. Does he mean that every parson should perambulate the streets in a sort of nightgown, and play the trombone in the pulpit?

A Passive Resister called James Round, of Barking, appeared before the Stratford magistrates and tried to deliver a religious harangue. "When the Lord sat at Jacob's well"—that is how he started off, and the chairman tried to stop

him, but the noble Round went on with his sermon as though there were no impediment, until the officers had to be told to keep him quiet or take him out of the Court; whereupon all the Passive Resisters went out in a body. What an elegant crew!

The *Morning Leader* took the rector of Sevenoaks to task for refusing to bury an unchristened babe, four days old, in the same coffin with its mother. Now we beg to put in a word for that rector. He is in a line of business which the *Morning Leader* upholds as eminently useful and respectable. And is he not entitled to look after his business? If that babe were buried with its mother, she might snatch it up and run into heaven with it when Gabriel blew his resurrection trumpet. That would never do. If unchristened babes stand as good a chance as christened babes, what is the use of christening? Who will pay for it? And what will become of the parsons then?

Rev. Dr. Horton, president of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, appeals as "representative of religion in the British nation" to all parliamentary candidates to recognise the wisdom and necessity of Old Age Pensions for the poor. We have no objection to this appeal; on the contrary, we hope it will do some good. What we do object to is Dr. Horton's dragging "religion" into the matter. More than a hundred years ago the first Old Age Pension scheme was devised and advocated by the "infidel" Thomas Paine. It may be found in his splendid *Rights of Man*. "Religion" had nothing to say for the scheme then. It was regarded as one of Tom Paine's criminal lunacies. But it has made so much progress since that the Churches fancy there will be profit in patronising it. That explains Dr. Horton's appeal.

Lord Rosebery quotes—certainly without disapproval, and apparently with approval—the following statement of a Japanese editor: "Our country is our idol, and patriotism our first doctrine. From the Emperor downwards, the vast majority have no other religion." This quite upset the nerves of the dear *Daily News*. "We have the misfortune," it said, trying to be satirical, "to possess a religion which is not identified with the worship of country, and is therefore, we suppose, as wrong, or as inadequate, as our party system." The organ of the Nonconformist conscience, which has never forgiven Lord Rosebery for winning the Derby, might condescend to state what its "religion" is identified with. It seems to us pretty freely associated with ignorance, falsehood, and impudence. But this "religion" will not save Great Britain if it ever has to stand up against a first-class Power or two. Nothing but the "efficiency" which the *Daily News* sneers at will save it then. "Put not your trust in Princes" is no longer a necessary maxim. A much more pertinent one is "Put not your trust in Gods."

Some quaint things were said at the annual conference of the Baptist Union. Rev. H. J. Pickett, for instance, declared amidst great applause that the Free Churches would, in the forthcoming general elections, strike a blow at priestcraft from which it would never recover. We doubt it. There is quite as much priestcraft in the Free Churches as in other Churches, only the Free Churchmen cannot see it. Take the Education question: do not Nonconformists want to control it, and to begin by taking away what control of it lies in the hands of the Church of England? The whole Education question in England is simply a squabble of sects. That is why we have the worst educational system in the civilised world.

This reverend Mr. Pickett said another funny thing. He stated that the Free Churches had 200 parliamentary candidates in the field, and that their men if returned "would recognise that their parliamentary position was not merely a trust from their constituences, but a stewardship from God." Well now, suppose these men do not get returned; suppose their opponents get returned; will these opponents have the "stewardship from God," or does it go only to the Free Church candidates, and if they are defeated will God be defeated too? We wish Mr. Pickett would consider these questions.

Rev. F. B. Meyer, speaking at the same meeting, and blowing the Free Churches' trumpet as lustily as the Jewish priests' rams-horns were blown outside Jericho, said that, being free themselves, they desired to "see education free from the intrusion of secularism." This is a priestly attempt to confound "Secular Education" with "Education in Secularism." Mr. Meyer knows as well as we do that no Secularist desires the latter. What the Secularist wants is perfect religious equality. It is the "intrusion of religion" that has to be resisted. And the Nonconformists would resist it if

they were only true to their own original principle, namely, that the State should have nothing to do with religion whatever.

Judge Willis, K.C., spoke some words that the Baptist Congress must have found "grateful and refreshing"—to borrow the language of a certain advertisement. He said that as a whole the Christian pastors of our land stood superior to any class of men in our midst, and their work exceeded in value that of any upon earth. This may be true, but Judge Willis's saying it does not make it so. The statement, by itself, is merely an expression of his personal opinion. Where are his evidences? Has he any statistics to prove his assertion? If he has we should like to see them. Judging from the newspaper reports, in the absence of precise figures, there is a good deal to be said for the opposite opinion.

Dr. Henry, a revivalist who has lately been operating in Birmingham, told a cock-and-bull story about Voltaire's death bed. Being asked for proofs by one of our correspondents, he gives the *Christian Herald* of November 10, 1904, as his authority. Fancy! This same soul-saver boasted of an "infidel" he had converted at Paisley. He has shown our correspondent a letter from this ex-infidel—whose name is John Elliott, and his address, 8, Holloway Street, Paisley. We never heard of this man, and we don't believe anybody else did, although he is paraded as a leader and an advocate, one who has "lectured for Infidelity and Anarchism." He says he was a member of a club; this was changed by Dr. Henry into "an Atheist club." Of course there is no such institution in Paisley. The probability is that John Elliott has a romantic memory, and Dr. Henry a great power of convenient belief.

Sir Marcus Samuel, ex-Lord Mayor, has his own theory of the Russo-Japanese war. We should be sorry to misrepresent him, so we give his own words from the *Jewish Chronicle*:—

"Dare any man assert after the defeat of the Russian hosts by the Japs, that the day of miracles is past? Must we not clearly recognise the hand of the God of Israel who has struck the persecutors of His people in His wrath? And this punishment, great as it has been, is yet insufficient, and misfortune after misfortune will be the lot of the unhappy Russian people, until they recognise God's will and cease their cruel persecution of His people. This is the lesson of the past year, and it is the sacred duty of every Jew throughout the world to use every means in his power to impress it upon the rulers of Russia."

Jehovah, apparently, still retains his old character. He is the same blundering monster, who drowned all the world's inhabitants except eight persons, who were not worth special preservation. To punish Russia for her ill-treatment of the Jews, he arranges for the killing of some 70,000 Japanese in order to account for a yet larger number of Russians. What an idea of their own importance the "Chosen People" must have to talk in this way! And what a God they worship! One who cannot prevent the massacre of his own people, but can only balance it with a bigger massacre of their enemies.

We wish Sir Marcus Samuel would explain where the "miracle" comes in. The triumph of Japan was the triumph of patriotism and efficiency. The secret of her victory over Russia is really as open as a hat. There doesn't seem any need to drag in the God of Israel, or any other deity, to account for it. We also submit that the only way in which the Jews can put pressure upon the Czar is not to talk nonsense, which even his intelligence can see through, but to refuse him money and frustrate his efforts to raise the wind. That is their only way of bringing him to his senses.

The *Star* plays up to the pious gallery every now and then—we suppose with the usual object in such cases. Recently it preached a bathetic little sermon on a *Times* advertisement, in which Mr. and Mrs. William Roger Jones publicly acknowledged "the loan of a son"—meaning presumably, from the Lord. A representative of our Stonecutter street contemporary waited on this Christian couple, who explained that their new boy was "lent" to them by God, who might take him away—"blessed be the name of the Lord." Whereupon the interviewer, or his editor, burst forth as follows:—"A very earnest man, a man who in these days of sham sentiment and false piety one is glad to meet. A Cromwellian man—and the world is better for such men." What a pompous sermon on a slender text! But why did our contemporary stop at "a Cromwellian man?" Why did it not call him "a Jesus Christ man?" It is just as well to go the whole hog in these matters.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton is a clever man, in his way, but he

is not incapable of folly. Perhaps he would say, in his paradoxical manner, that the foolish man is the wisest of all men. But the folly need not take the form of stating silly falsehoods. In last week's *Reynolds'* he is reported as referring to the dead and buried Secular Society that was once led by Charles Bradlaugh. Had he looked in at Queen's Hall, or at Stratford Town Hall, on Sunday evening, he would have seen a striking contradiction of his nonsense. And really Mr. Chesterton is only pretending not to know of the existence of the *Freethinker*. We suppose it pays him, directly or indirectly, to assume this absurd attitude. No doubt he knows his own public.

Who shall say now that Christian charity is dead? The late Mr. H. H. Bolton, of Newchurch, head of the great colliery firm of Hargreaves & Co., of Accrington, Rossendale, and Huncoat, left provision for a magnificent present to be made to each of the 1,500 employees at the firm's ten pits. Every collier has received a fine copy of the New Testament and the Psalms. Could the force of benevolence go farther? But human nature is proverbially ungrateful, and we fear there is likely to be a glut of New Testaments, before long, in the second-hand bookshops of the district. We understand that pawnbrokers have ceased to lend anything on such articles.

General Booth's chauffeur has been fined for furious driving. Evidently the new G. O. M. is in a great hurry. Souls have to be saved, whatever happens to bodies; and why on earth will people get in the way of the Salvation motor-car?

General Booth's emigration scheme has come to grief already. Nothing could be more absurd than his charlatan project of exporting honest and competent labor from England to other parts of the world, and particularly to Australia, where immigrants seem to be positively hated. A huge sum of money was to be collected for this enterprise, and we believe it would have been obtained, for the "classes" are sagacious enough to see that a thinning out of the "masses" occasionally serves their ends, if only by relieving a threatening pressure of the unemployed. But this sum of money, judiciously expended, *not* by the Salvation Army, would plant thousands of working people upon the land in their own country, where they are very much wanted. It is said that the land laws stand in the way. Very well, then, let the land laws be altered. That is what we should insist upon. In the meanwhile, it is to be hoped that the real mind of England will look with contempt upon the mad schemes of religious saviors of society, who are generally seeking a personal advertisement or grist for their denominational mills.

Poplar Borough Council asked the King to receive a deputation on the unemployed question, and his Majesty was unable to oblige them. This is intelligible enough—for it is a constitutional maxim that the King reigns but does not govern. But it was natural that the members of Poplar Borough Council should feel aggrieved. Mr. George Lansbury wanted to know why his Majesty could receive General Booth and the Rev. W. Carlile, and yet order their memorial to be pigeon-holed at the Home Office. Another member wanted to know why the King could waste time at the Doncaster Races, and be unable to spend a few minutes on his subjects' grievances. We repeat that this feeling is natural, in view of the royal reception of the heads of the Salvation and Church Armies. At the same time, it is rather childish. Why trouble about the royal figure-heads of the ships of state? Why not let these mediævalisms die a quiet death? Why try to revive them as Haroun Al Rachids? People should think for themselves and act for themselves. The thing is easy enough. It only needs a little common sense and a little courage.

Since the previous paragraph was in type the King has "graciously" promised to receive the Poplar memorial, so all's well that end's well, as far as that goes. But why stop at the King? After the late pious talk of Messrs. Steadman and Crooks one would think it was the Christian Church that ought to be approached. But perhaps the difficulty in this direction would be concluding which *is* the Christian Church. Ay, there's the rub.

Sir John Gorst addressed a meeting of the Leysian Mission the other evening on the question of feeding starving school children, and submitted certain "practical proposals," which we are not called upon to discuss in these columns. Mr. R. W. Perks, M.P., was in the chair. This gentleman could not forget that he was the leading Wesleyan layman; so he "expressed the hope that the Bible would never be excluded from the schools." He overlooked the fact that it was not

the Bible "bread of life" that the children were urgently in need of, but something more obviously satisfying and nourishing. Perks should not be so perky.

A Newcastle friend asks whether we saw any account of the death and will of Councillor George Gillespy, the son of old Mr. Gillespy, who used to attend Secular lectures, and whom we knew very well. Councillor Gillespy, our correspondent says, was one of those pompous ambitious people who think that "Secularism is not respectable." He got a minister to bury his father, and it took three ministers to bury him. He left over seventy thousand pounds; ten thousand of it to local charities. "It makes me boil with contempt," our correspondent adds, "when I think of such men, and see you and others struggling with adversity to serve a cause which they *pretend* to love."

There were the usual "ructions" in East London on "Yom Kippur." Orthodox Jews, who kept up the Great Day of Atonement by fasting, assaulted unorthodox Jews who preferred to eat and drink as usual. This led to some appearances before Mr. Cluer at Worship-street Police Court. The worthy magistrate told one of the offenders that it was not the first time in the history of the world that the unorthodox had been in the right and the orthodox in the wrong. Addressing two other offenders, he said that they should all live according to their own lights, fasting, or not fasting, according as they believed. It really made no difference, he added, in this world or the next. Indeed! Why, if Mr. Cluer goes on in this way, the rabbis will join the parsons in protesting against the *dicta* of this modern Galileo.

Mr. W. L. Courtney, writing in the *Telegraph* on the Sir Thomas Browne celebration at Norwich, does well to point out that Browne believed in many superstitions, and "in 1664, at Bury St. Edmunds, he gave evidence against two reputed witches, which was quite enough to ensure their conviction and burning." Browne was a successful physician; he was also one of the great masters of English prose; he must therefore have had great powers of mind—for masterly prose is not written by nincompoops. What degraded him, then, to the level of a witch-burner? The Christian superstition. There is no other answer to the question.

Old Dowie has paralysed a lot of other people. Now he is paralysed himself. It is a case of poetical justice.

The Pope has been blessing athletics. Who knows if we may not live to see a mile race between the poor prisoner of the Vatican and the poor occupier of Lambeth Palace? It would be a popular "event," and we should like to have the gate-money.

According to the Bishop of Newcastle, whose opinion we do not wish to controvert, nine out of every ten professing Christians in England do not care a jot about the drunk curse, which is filling (as he says) mad-houses, unions, and prisons. Well now, the other nine Christians out of every ten offer a good ground for missionary effort. Why not attack them, and stop worrying the "heathen?"

Many preachers suffer from religious mania, but an extreme case has led to seclusion in Rochford Infirmary. A man got on the roof of a house in Alexandra-street, Southend, in a state of complete nudity, and began preaching from an open Bible. He soon had a large congregation, but his sermon was interrupted by the police.

#### PLUNKETT'S TOAST.

Col. Dick Plunkett, the brawny western plainsman and ex-United States marshal, now living in this city, is called upon at every assemblage for a toast, roast or epigram, in which he wittily abounds. At the Hotel Breslin recently in response to repeated calls, Colonel Dick arose and lifting his glass said:

"Here's to the happiest hours of my life,  
Spent in the arms of another man's wife—  
My mother. God rest her."

—*Truth Seeker (New York).*

#### ST. PETER IN A CHARITABLE MOOD.

Two women in Heaven claimed one man newly arrived. "I was his wife," said one. "I his sweetheart," said the other. St. Peter said to the man: "Go down to the Other Place—you have suffered enough."



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 15, Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow: 12 (noon), "What is the Bible Really Worth?"—6.30, "Why the 'Yellow Monkeys' Won: an Object Lesson to Christians."

October 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.—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 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.

OUR ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—J. H. Gartrell 5s., N. McClean 1s., J. C. 1s.

W. D. STOKES.—You say that you hope to meet us in heaven, and that "the gates are always open." The worst we wish you is that you may soon go through. We have glanced at your pamphlet: it is full of the hackneyed old lies about "dying infidels." The paragraphs on Voltaire and Paine are absolute inventions. They do not contain a particle of truth. As to Catholics burning Protestants, we are perfectly aware that they did so; but are you ignorant of the fact that Protestants burnt Catholics—and each other? to say nothing of "infidels"

E. H. B. (we cannot decipher the name), 68 Colchester-avenue, Manor Park.—In the first place, we cannot answer such questions by post. In the second place, we should never think of answering a question based upon something you have been told that Mr. Cohen said in Victoria Park. How do we know that he said anything of the kind? Besides, he is well able to answer for himself. We do not answer for him, or for any other lecturer. We do not believe that he said what you allege—or rather what you "have been told." Write to him direct if you want satisfaction.

A. CAYNOR.—Will you kindly tell us how the heavy expenses are to be paid if people are admitted to the Queen's Hall for nothing as freely as you appear to think they should be? Those who want free seats must come early for them. It is absurd to come in late and expect to find one reserved. Your friends can surely understand this if they try. We have already stated that the Queen's Hall proprietors will not allow tickets to be advertised and sold for less than a shilling. For the rest, the age of miracles is past—at least as far as we are concerned. Those who expect them should join a Church.

H. A. RUSSELL.—Thanks for cuttings. You appear to have overlooked our answer to your former letter.

J. W. E. BENNETT.—Please note that orders for literature should not be sent to Mr. Foote but direct to the Pioneer Press.

H. HAYMAN.—Thanks for letter: see "Acid Drops." We hope the copies of our Torrey pamphlets you gave him will do him good. There is plenty of room for it.

M. BLACKMORE.—We have no portraits of Colonel Ingersoll on sale at present. Perhaps we may get some shortly from America, though they will not be of the size you mention.

W. J. LIVINGSTONE ANDERSON.—It is not the "Milo" part of the description we doubted, but the "Venus." The statue does not appear to be a Venus at all. There is nothing in it of the light-heeled laughter-loving goddess; not even as she gathered more gravity in passing through Roman channels.

F. RITZ.—Thanks for cuttings. See paragraphs.

J. R. UPSON (India) writes:—"Your defence of Paine and Ingersoll is a complete vindication of the characters of those two great men. The best proof of their greatness is the infinite pains that Christians like Torrey take to slander them." A very just observation.

W. P. BALL.—Best thanks for cuttings.

A. GARLAND.—See paragraph. Thanks.

T. D.—Accept our thanks for the *Hibbert Journal*.

E. R. WOODWARD.—We are pleased to hear that the Wednesday evening meetings are orderly and well-attended, and that Mr. Smith's able lectures are now "run" by the Camberwell Branch. We wish him and the meetings all success. Thanks for the paper.

F. L. GREIG writes: "Have just read your front-page article in this week's *Freethinker*, and offer best thanks. Wish you would do more of this kind, and write oftener on literary subjects."

PARIS CONGRESS FUND.—F. L. Greig 10s.

A. A.—Charles Bradlaugh was buried at Woking Cemetery. There is a bust over his grave. There is also a prominent statue of him in Northampton, which so many times elected him to parliament. Glad you were so delighted with our last week's article, also to hear you say: "It is a perfect treat for

me to look forward to Thursday mornings, when the postman brings the *Freethinker* filled with the best 'wit and wisdom' of the real Fighting Freethinkers of Great Britain."

W. H. POWELL.—The *Freethinker* will be sent as requested. We hope our readers will bear in mind that we are always ready to send a free copy for six consecutive weeks to any address they may send us as that of a person who might take the paper regularly if it were only introduced to him (or her).

FREETHINKER.—We also should like to see some Freethought propaganda carried on in Dundee. Perhaps the local "saints" will communicate with us as to what might be done.

N. D.—Thanks for cuttings; see "Acid Drops."

F. A. DAVIES, whose letter arrives too late for another column, says that Mr. Silverstein is mistaken in calling that edition of the *Age of Reason* an R. P. A. publication. "I fail," Mr. Davies adds, "to see what connection there can be between Mr. J. M. Robertson and the advertisement on the cover. He simply writes an introduction to the work, and can no more be held responsible for the wording of the wrapper than he can for the printing of the book being placed with a Non-Society printing firm." Mr. Robertson's introduction, by the way, seems to be a reprint of the introduction he wrote some years ago to a new edition of the *Rights of Man*.

ALBERT FISHER.—We have no means of judging of the truth of the cutting you send us from the *Catholic Times*. The safest plan is never to believe what such papers say about "infidels" without the strongest independent evidence.

J. C. W.—Sorry we have not time to hunt up the date you ask for. You ask us to oblige you with our "criterion of Truth." Why puzzle your head with conundrums? Truth is a very simple matter: it is the agreement between a statement and the facts.

D. T. L.—Your letter shall be printed next week, with our comments.

J. G. BARRAM.—Pleased to hear from you again, and to have your opinion that our defence of Paine and Ingersoll entitles us to "the undying gratitude of all lovers of truth."

F. DAVIES.—John Urquhart, the writer of the pious tract that you send us, called *Roger's Reasons*, holds no position, that we are aware of, in the world of science.

C. R.—Theistic extracts are out of place in this journal, except when they are being refuted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

The Glasgow Branch wanted Mr. Foote to open its new winter session, but that was impossible. A good beginning was made with Mr. J. M. Robertson, and we hear that Mr. Cohen had capital meetings last Sunday. Mr. Foote visits Glasgow to-day (Oct. 15) and delivers two lectures in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street. The first lecture, at 12 noon, is likely to draw a good audience; the evening lecture, at 6.30, is likely to draw a crowd, so that "saints" who want to be sure of a seat should be in good time. We presume that Messrs. Turnbull and friends will start a good musical program, as before, at 6 o'clock, after which hour there will probably be few, if any, seats obtainable.

There was another fine audience at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening, rather larger, if anything, than on the previous Sunday. Several of the bandsmen who volunteered their services on the opening night of this course attended again, and delighted the audience with masterly renderings of beautiful music—the violin solo being, indeed, a most exquisite performance. As before many strangers were present and a gratifying number of ladies. Mr. Foote's lecture on "Oscar Wilde and Jesus Christ" was evidently

much enjoyed; of course there was plenty of applause, but the silent appreciation of the quieter parts of the lecture, when you might have heard a pin drop, as the saying is, was perhaps the most flattering tribute. Mr. F. A. Davies, who took the chair again, invited questions and discussion, but this time there was none.

Mr. Cohen occupies the Queen's Hall platform this evening (Oct. 15). Mr. Lloyd takes the following Sunday, and will be followed by Mr. Cohen again. We hope the attendance will be maintained throughout the course. Some of the instrumental artists will attend, and their efforts will be supplemented by vocalists. This evening (Oct. 15) Madame Alice Lovenez and Mr. Richard Stanley will sing. The musical program will begin at 7, and the lecture at 7.45.

The following is the instrumental program for Queen's Hall to-day:—March, "Under Freedom's Flag," Nowowiesky; Valse, "Oestereichs Klänge," Moritz Wurm; 'Cello Solo, "Simple Aeu," Thome; Three Dances from "Henry VIII.," German.

Mr. Lloyd wound up the Stratford Town Hall course of lectures on Sunday evening. He had a fine audience and we hear that he delivered a fine lecture. We are assured that many Christians were present, which we are very glad to hear. There is naturally a financial loss on these lectures, but they are unquestionably profitable from a propagandist point of view.

We regret having missed Major G. O. Warren when he was in London some weeks ago. In a letter we have just received from him he desires us to convey his "heartiest congratulations to Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd on the really splendid articles they have contributed to the *Freethinker* lately." This we have pleasure in doing. "Accept yourself," he adds, "my warmest thanks for your masterly indictment of Torrey and full exposure of his malignity and falsehood." We like the appreciation of a good judge. The man who says he doesn't has what Charles Reade used to call "a prurient modesty."

Mr. E. R. Woodward, of the Camberwell Branch, applied as far back as April, for permission for the *Freethinker* to be laid on the Lambeth Free Libraries table. A reply has at last been received from the Town Clerk, who states that "after full consideration" the Libraries Committee have decided against the application. Lambeth is less liberal than Bermondsey. We hope it will improve in this respect. But, as the case stands, it proves that democratic bodies can be just as stupidly bigoted as the "tyrants" they succeed.

The Sunday trading question has been very much to the front in Fulham lately. There has been a by-election in the Sands-End Ward, due to the resignation of Mr. Dakey, a bitter Sabbatarian, who wanted to get returned again to show his strength. The clergy came to his aid, and the contest became a stand-up fight between Christian and Secularist. Mr. Norman, the Labor candidate, whom the Secularists supported, headed the poll with 969 votes; Mr. Andrews, a Moderate, came next with 313; Mr. Dakey came last with 250. He has our sympathy.

There are special reasons for further delay in stating the facts about the fresh attempt to rob the Birmingham Secularists of their common rights of citizenship. We expect to make a full statement next week. Meanwhile the Midland "saints" are requested to note that Mr. Foote is billed to deliver two lectures next Sunday (Oct. 22) in the Birmingham Town Hall. There is likely to be some excitement arising out of these meetings.

The Newcastle Branch commences its course of lectures to-day in the Louvain Hall. Mr. Lloyd occupies the platform, and his subjects should command a good audience. At 3 o'clock he will lecture on "Do We Need a Religion?" and at 7 on "The Christian Degradation of Morals." Free seats will be provided, but the larger portion of the Hall will be subject to a charge of sixpence. Mr. Cohen and Mr. Foote follow on the succeeding Sundays; and, although the Secular Society, Limited, has generously subscribed towards the expenses, the enterprise is of such a nature as to call for all the support Tyneside Freethinkers can give. If this course of lectures is fairly successful there is every prospect of the winter work of the Newcastle Branch being well maintained.

So many of the older generation of Freethinkers in Plymouth, Devonport, and Stonehenge, have died or removed from the neighborhood that we found it extremely difficult to carry on our campaign there against Dr. Torrey. Fortu-

nately a few of the faithful are left, and they have been distributing our Torrey pamphlets at the preliminary prayer meetings. Some thousands of copies have been disposed of in this way. Now the Plymouth Mission has itself commenced and the work of distribution will go on steadily for a month. At the end of that time a vast number of Christians in the Three Towns will have been made acquainted with the true character of Dr. Torrey's libels on Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. This will be a good work for Freethought indirectly. It will both advertise the movement and set people thinking. Much good has been done in this way since we opened our Anti-Torrey campaign in January. Audiences have improved at Freethought lectures all over the country, and the sale of Freethought literature has considerably improved. The benefit of our exposure of Dr. Torrey and our defence of Paine and Ingersoll is apparent in all directions.

Dr. Torrey's host during his Plymouth mission is Dr. C. A. Hingston. One of the local "saints," Mr. Harry Tucker, who has been distributing our Torrey pamphlets at the preparatory meetings, sent Dr. Hingston a copy of the July number of the *Review of Reviews* containing Mr. W. T. Stead's first article on the Torrey business. Mr. Tucker pointed out that Dr. Torrey had not withdrawn or substantiated his charges against Paine and Ingersoll, and added: "Much as I regret the necessity of it, I must continue the painful distribution of pamphlets during Dr. Torrey's mission in Plymouth." No reply was vouchsafed to the letter. But on the opening night of the mission Dr. Torrey was good enough to say that opposition was given and would be given in Plymouth, but it should be treated with indifference. Such is this man's base and cowardly policy. All the more need, therefore, for the distribution of our Torrey pamphlets, which will open the eyes of the more decent Christians to his peculiar character.

Dr. Torrey stated at the opening of his Plymouth mission that thirty "infidels" were at Albert Hall, in London, distributing "infidel pamphlets." Mr. Tucker wants to know if this is true. Well, we suppose the "infidel" pamphlets were our own pamphlets exposing his libels on Paine and Ingersoll, and stating the real facts about some of his pretended "converts." There were never as many as thirty "infidels" engaged at one time in the distribution, but those who were engaged did the work very effectively. Dr. Torrey has more than once admitted that the pamphlets were distributed "in tens of thousands."

Dr. Torrey's mission at Plymouth will be followed by a mission at Oxford. After that he goes home to America, where we understand our Trans-Atlantic brethren will continue the campaign against him. Our material will be used in exposing him there, and in vindicating the objects of his calumny. Mr. Mangasarian, of Chicago, has promised to give him a bad time in that city; and we dare say he will be made just as comfortable in other great centres of population when he visits them. For the present, of course, we must make it warm for him in England. He should be pursued at Plymouth and then at Oxford. Our Torrey pamphlets ought to be delivered by the myriad in both places. It would really be a pity not to complete this work. We have taken a lot of trouble with our own share of it, and we hope the "saints" will supply us with the means to carry the work right to the very end.

The *Western Daily Mercury*, Plymouth, printed an excellent Freethought letter on "Science and Theology" by J. Hutchens Gartrell, which ought to serve as a counteractant to the Torrey-Alexander mission. We wish Freethinkers would make more use of the local press in this manner.

Under the heading of "English Impressions" *La Raison*, the organ of the International Freethought Federation, summarises the conclusion of Mr. Foote's articles on the Paris Congress. The summary is admirably done, and we fancy by M. Furnémont. The writer, whoever he is, pays a compliment to the "practical sense of our English friends," and quotes our opinion that the International Congress ought not to be held every year. After giving our reasons, he says: "This merits attention." We are also glad to see in *La Raison* an excellent article by E. Tarbouriech on "English Freethought and Philosophy." Some very telling extracts are given from the profound little book on Religion which George Grote, the historian, wrote from the notes of Jeremy Bentham. Bentham was an Atheist, and Grote appears to have been ditto.

To pray is to flatter oneself that one will change the universe with words.—*Voltaire*.

## The Authenticity of the Gospels.

A DISCUSSION has recently been carried on in the columns of the *Daily Mail* on the question, "Should Clergymen Criticise the Bible?" In bringing this correspondence to a close (Sept. 7) the editor claims that the numerous letters which had appeared have "shown clearly that.....the progress of knowledge has merely served to confirm the Church's view of the New Testament.....which for true believers the fullest criticism and discussion have failed even to disturb." Now, from this editorial statement anyone who had not read the correspondence would naturally suppose that, amongst other matters, the authenticity and credibility of the Gospel narratives had been fully discussed. Such, however, was not the case. No evidence, either for or against these fundamental questions, was even touched upon; the majority of the correspondents, who were mostly orthodox clergymen, simply assumed the traditional view to be correct.

Of the many dogmatic statements (and mis-statements) made in the course of this one-sided "discussion," the most noteworthy are, perhaps, those delivered by Dr. Wilberforce, Archdeacon of Westminster. With regard to the writings of the New Testament this dignitary is reported as saying:—

"The four biographical sketches [*i.e.*, the Gospels] have been severely tested in the crucible of scientific criticism, and *have been proved* to be documents of the first century, of a high order of historical accuracy. No one *now* dare commit himself to the statement that they are worthless forgeries of a late date. The authorship of the Gospel of St. Mark, A.D. 65, compiled from the reminiscences of St. Peter, *is absolutely undisputed*; the Gospel of St. John, though its date and authorship are still an open question, contains the proof within itself that God's Spirit gave it for the light and guidance of mankind; the book of the Acts has been proved to be certainly the work of the author of the Third Gospel; and the letters of St. Paul are accepted as genuine by the greatest scholars with practical unanimity." (The italics are mine.)

Here we have a number of such very confident statements that one is tempted to exclaim, with Dominie Sampson, "Prodigious!" Of course, nothing in the shape of proof is given; this was scarcely to be expected. Those who require more than mere assertion can amuse themselves by wading through all the apologetic literature published during the last quarter of a century. What we want, however, is not a statement of the results of orthodox clerical criticism, but the nature of the evidence upon which such conclusions were based.

Now, as a simple matter of fact, it has not yet "been proved" that the four Gospels are "documents of the first century," or that they are "of a high order of historical accuracy." Without going so far as to label them "worthless forgeries of a late date," it may be said that the first three Gospels—the Synoptics—are baseless legends which have grown and taken shape during a long period, and have reached their present stereotyped form about the middle of the second century. The latest editors, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, did not sit down and concoct the narratives they record; they merely made a selection of what they thought most credible from earlier written narratives, whose authors or originators are unknown. The remaining Gospel, that "according to" John, may most certainly be called a forgery, fabricated about the time of Papias, and probably by the presbyter John, who was also the author of the Epistle of John. The Jesus of his Gospel talks and acts more absurdly than his namesake in the Synoptics, and uses words and phrases unknown to the compilers of those Gospels—but found in the epistle ascribed to John the apostle. As to the Acts of the Apostles, this book is admitted by all critics to have been written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke; but it cannot be shown that either of these books was in existence before the middle of the second century. Lastly, only *some* of the epistles attributed to Paul "are accepted as

genuine" by "the greatest scholars." The last-named writings (and the book of Revelation) are, in fact, the only documents dating from the first century.

Let us now look at the statement that the early date assigned to the Gospel of Mark (A.D. 65) "is absolutely undisputed." How does our cocksure Archdeacon arrive at this gratifying conclusion? As already stated, no proofs are vouchsafed; yet, in regard to this matter, some half-a-dozen words accompanying the statement serve to indicate the evidence relied on. These words are: "compiled from the reminiscences of St. Peter." Now we know the line of argument, and it brings us to our old friend Papias, who, about the year 150, records that he was informed by a certain presbyter that "Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatever he remembered" of that apostle's preaching. The Archdeacon might have added that, according to Irenæus, the Gospel of Luke was compiled in the same way, but from the preaching of Paul. The latter statement he, no doubt, considered too incredible for even orthodox believers. Paul knew nothing of the public ministry of Christ; Peter might possibly have known something—that is, if it be true that Jesus really went about preaching and working miracles, as recorded in the Gospels. It is scarcely necessary to say that Papias's statement as to what he was told about Mark does not establish the truth of that statement. Admitting that the presbyter John related to Papias what the latter records, and that Mark's Gospel was then in existence—which is all that Papias's statement proves—we require good, strong evidence proving the early date of that Gospel. Now, if Mark's Gospel was written in the year 65, as Dr. Wilberforce asserts, it is incumbent on that dignitary to explain how it came to pass that not until eighty years after that date did the circumstances connected with the authorship become known: for it is certain that neither Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, nor any of his congregation, could have known anything of the matter until informed of it by the presbyter John.

The next Christian writer (after Irenæus) who refers to the compilation of the Second Gospel is Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200). This credulous Father says:—

"The occasion of writing the Gospel according to Mark was this: Peter, having publicly preached the word at Rome, and having spoken the gospel by the Spirit, many present exhorted Mark to write the things which had been spoken, since he had long accompanied Peter, and remembered what he had said; and that when he had composed the Gospel, he delivered it to them who had asked for it. Which, when Peter knew, he neither forbade nor encouraged it" (Euseb., *Ecl. Hist.*, vi., 14).

Thus, the farther we go from apostolic times, the more circumstantial are the accounts; but they are all founded upon the statement of Papias. The last-named bishop did not happen to mention when the Gospel he referred to was written; so we have Irenæus saying it was composed *after* the death of Peter, and Clement saying it was compiled during Peter's lifetime—the last-named apostle apparently being quite indifferent as to whether the gospel of Christ should be preserved for future generations or not. Now, if either of these statements had been founded on fact, both the Gospel itself and the circumstances under which it was written would have been known to a large number of Christians from the very first, and would in a short time be known throughout the entire Christian world. There would then be no need for the presbyter of a church in Asia Minor to tell the bishop of a neighboring district how Mark came to write a Gospel and what were his qualifications for the work. Yet, as a matter of fact, we find Papias, a second century bishop, recording as a piece of news he had recently heard, the appearance of a new Gospel and how it came to be written—which Gospel we have no evidence he ever saw.

The most probable solution of the problem appears to be something like the following: A Gospel written in Greek had recently appeared which was known to the initiated of the church in which it originated as having been compiled by a presbyter named Mark from pre-existing documents. It was received in that church as a revised and improved edition of the more primitive Gospel narratives then in circulation—many of the most incredible stories being omitted. After the lapse of a decade or so, the presbyters who were in the secret of the authorship sought, when making this Gospel known to other churches, to give it apostolic origin and sanction. There is nothing in the least improbable in such a view, for we know that prior to the time of Papias many lying Gospels had been placed in circulation as the writings of apostles. We also know that Luke compiled his Gospel in precisely the same way (Luke i. 1-4).

But how does our Archdeacon get the year 65 as the date of the composition of Mark's Gospel? Oh, in the simplest manner possible. The statement of Papias's friend the presbyter is assumed to be true. The Gospel was therefore written shortly before or after the death of Peter. The latter event took place, according to second century tradition, towards the close of the reign of Nero, whence we obtain the year 65 or 66.

The unreliable nature of this tradition will be seen by the following "testimony":—

Dionysius of Corinth (A.D. 170) says of Peter and Paul: "These two apostles, indeed, came into our Corinth, and taught us in common, then sailed together towards Italy, to teach there in concert, and to suffer martyrdom about the same time."

Irenaeus (A.D. 185) says: "Matthew issued a written Gospel.....while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome.....After their decease Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing what had been preached by Peter."

Eusebius (A.D. 325) says that the emperor Nero "was led in his fury to slaughter the apostles. Paul is therefore said to have been beheaded at Rome, and Peter to have been crucified under him" (Ecc. Hist., ii., 25).

The foregoing statements are purely conjectural; that of Dionysius is a century after the time of Peter and Paul, and no earlier writer mentions the death of these two apostles. The Pauline epistles prove that Peter and Paul did not travel together and preach in common. Nothing is known of the martyrdom of either. What a farce it is, then, for the Archdeacon of Westminster to declare with such amazing assurance that the compilation of the Gospel of Mark, in the year 65, "is absolutely undisputed." This statement is but another example of the fact that in the arguments of Christian advocates and apologists big assumptions and silly conjectures are made to do duty for evidence.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be concluded.)

O spirit! centuries have set their seal  
On this heart of many wounds, and loaded brain,  
Since the Incarnate came: humbly he came,  
Veiling his horrible Godhead in the shape  
Of man, scorned by the world, his name unheard,  
Save by the rabble of his native town,  
Even as a parish demagogue. He led  
The crowd; he taught them justice, truth, and peace,  
In semblance; but he lit within their souls  
The quenchless flames of zeal, and blest the sword  
He brought on earth to satiate with the blood  
Of truth and freedom his malignant soul.

—Shelley, "Queen Mab."

It surely is far sweeter and more wise  
To water love, than toil to leave anon  
A name whose glory-gleam will but advise  
Invidious minds to quench it with their own,  
And over which the kindest will but stay  
A moment, musing, "He, too, had his day!"

—Thomas Hardy.

## He Saw That It Was Good.

"And God saw everything He had made, and, behold, it was very good."—Genesis i. 31.

Now the Lord God did six days of work  
In the days of auld lang sync,  
And the Lord God viewed it with a smirk,  
For He saw that it was fine.  
For the Lord God's eye could see, begad,  
What the human eye ne'er could:  
So the Lord God gazed on what was bad,  
And He saw that it was good.

Now the Lord God gazed on Adam's form,  
He was only dressed in skin,  
And he soon found out 'twas none too warm,  
For the human hide is thin.  
But the Lord God saw 'twas good we're told  
By a writer "off his dot";  
So the Lord God gazed on what was cold,  
And He saw that it was hot.

Now the Lord God showed an evil mind  
When He gazed on ocean sharks,  
For He knew that many a meal they'd find  
In the men from sinking barques.  
But the Lord God took no thought for man,  
For He knew that sharks must dine;  
So the Lord God planned His devilish plan,  
And He saw it was divine.

Now the Lord God cast a loving eye  
On the typhoid fever germs,  
On the microbes and the bacilli,  
And the tape and other worms:  
On the man-devouring beasts that lurk  
In a dark and lonely wood;  
And He gloated o'er his fiendish work,  
And He saw that it was good.

Now the Lord God cast his eyes on moths.  
And He eyed the fleas and bugs,  
And the Lord God knew they'd spoil our cloths,  
Our blankets and our rugs;  
And the Lord God knew they'd haunt our beds,  
And especially those of wood,  
That they'd make us scratch our limbs and heads—  
And He saw that it was good.

Now the Lord God nailed His guiltless Son  
To a crucifix of wood,  
To atone for deeds He'd never done,  
And He saw that it was good.  
O the Lord God's sight is devilish strong,  
Not at all like human sight,  
For the Lord God sees that right is wrong,  
And He sees that wrong is right!

ESS JAY BEE.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I read with much interest in a recent issue of the *Freethinker* Mr. J. T. Lloyd's review of a book entitled *Doctrine and Theory*, in which the author advocates the casting aside of all our laboriously ascertained knowledge and the use generally of the individual reason, in favor of a blind adherence to the dictates of an illogical and immoral theological dogmatism.

To my mind, if there exists any ascertained experience more indisputable in its general bearings than any other, it is that of the great law of evolution both as regards the physical and the psychical aspect; it is a law we can study, ascertain, and prove; and it upsets the whole Biblical doctrine of the genesis of things and the *raison d'être* for a dogmatic theology. But let us (apart from consideration of the evolutionary law and what it involves in regard to theology), look at the mere moral aspect of the case. We shall find in direct contrast to that high ethical standard which is the ideal, not merely of our modern civilisation, but the ideal also at which the best minds of the world have arrived in all ages, independently of any belief in an alleged supernatural sanction; we shall find, I say, a low order of morality—nay, vindictive savagery—in the acts and dictates of the tribal divinity of the Old Testament, by which his preposterous claims to our love and allegiance stand for ever refuted and condemned. Judged again, in the light of com-

parative religion, all the claims made for Christianity as a supernatural sanction are explained away as the unhealthy, feverish creations of men's minds. There has never been, in short, a God-given revelation; but man has through all the ages created his gods to his own image and likeness—not merely in the strictly anthropomorphic sense, but morally also, as the exigencies of civilisation (or the lack of them) have, at various periods of his development, demanded.

And yet, in spite of these considerations, the majority of people (especially those of the female sex), when appealed to, will be found to be at least nominally religious, even though they seldom open a Bible or enter a church; and this for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, it is "in the blood"; then, again, very few are capable of deep and independent thinking, and very few have read enough. Yet, again, the majority are not capable of a very high ethical standard for its own sake. Finally, very few have the moral courage to range themselves on the unpopular side, which is essentially that of the unbeliever.

IMPARTIAL CRITIC.

### LITERARY GRUNDYISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—While Mr. Hy. Silverstein censures some statements on the cover of Paine's *Age of Reason* as published by the R.P.A., others will cheerfully exonerate the publishers of all blame in the matter, if they do not actually praise the proceeding. In their opinion the impugned statements will stop the mouths of those blatant Christians who seek to damn Paine and his work by dubbing him "infidel" or "Atheist." The aim of the publishers is similar to that of the doctor who gives his pills a coating of sugar. If the R.P.A. succeeds in clearing Paine's name of a supposed stigma, and giving a wider circulation to his masterpiece, we ought to rejoice at their work. Let us not imitate the Christians in their petty wrangles, and cause division in our ranks. If the Rationalists do not conform with our ways at all points, let us not be too ready to criticise, but rather acknowledge them gratefully as fellow-combatants in the great struggle against credulity and superstition.

FRED. BONTÉ.

### THE ALLEGED BOWDLERISED VERSION OF PAINE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent, H. Silverstein, is wrong in alleging that Paine did not write: "I believe in God." On page xiii. of the very "reprint" under notice Mr. J. M. Robertson quotes Paine thus:—

"The people of France are running headlong into atheism, and I had the work translated in their own language, to stop them in that career, and fix them to the first article of every man's creed who has any creed at all—I believe in God."

In this instance it is evident that no outrage has been committed. At least so it appears to

H. J. GIBBS.

[Not wishing to print a long correspondence on what is substantially a matter of fact, we have looked into this dispute ourselves, with a view to ending it. The quotation given by Mr. Robertson is apparently from a letter of Paine's, and is a general statement of the first tenet of those who have any religion at all. Paine's personal profession of belief is made on the first page of the *Age of Reason*, and is as follows: "I believe in one God, and no more." This is a direct challenge to orthodoxy. Which of these statements should be printed as Paine's own, is a question which we leave to the readers' individual judgment.—EDITOR.]

### THE AUTHOR OF "THE GADFLY."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Referring to the article by Mr. G. Scott in your recent issue on *The Gadfly*, I may inform him that the writer of that book is a woman (not a man, as he appears to think), viz., Ethel L. Voynich, daughter of Boule, the German mathematician, and wife of Voynich, the famous London book collector and authority on old tomes and first editions, who is, I believe, by nationality a Pole.

I read the book many years ago, and was at the time much struck by its masculine strength and dramatic force. It was then that I was given the above information by an individual who was acquainted with the authoress.

IMPARTIAL CRITIC.

### "NAME! NAME!"

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The following remarkable statement is made in a paper entitled "A Winter in a German War Harbour," by J. Morin, published in *Chambers' Journal* of the 30th ult.: "One German Protestant cathedral that I know has as its chief pastor or dean a minister who openly doubts the existence of the Deity." Of course, Mr. Morin means that the minister referred to openly avows his doubts as to the existence of God. It would be interesting to know who this sceptical "dean" is; and perhaps some of your readers in Germany can throw some light upon the matter. Mr. Morin, by the way, is writing of the town of Kiel.

(GEORGE STANDRING.)

### A Song of Natural Order.

I'll sing of Jehovah in rippling song—

He created all Natural Order;

Some things are all right because others are wrong,  
Or it wouldn't be Natural Order.

When Earth was started by Jehovah for man,  
To grab all its products fought clan against clan,  
But most people think it a beautiful plan—

They believe in his Natural Order.

Now man when at best is a bit of a fool,

It seems quite his Natural Order;

For he seldom takes trouble to enter the school,  
Which teaches of Natural Order.

From the priests he accepts a peculiar code,  
Which they got long ago from another abode,  
And all through his life he is seeking the road

To that great super-Natural Order.

The priests say that all that is good comes from God,  
Of course, in the Natural Order;

And on those who do evil he'll fall with a rod,  
In some sort of Natural Order.

Though they never have seen the old man nor his kirk,  
They pretend to keep up a most vigorous search,  
Declaring he's waiting—somewhere on his perch,

Till the end of his Natural Order.

His character causes a lot of comment,

As to what is his Natural Order;

And some are agreed that the message he sent  
Is nothing like Natural Order.

His messengers say, his own language they took,  
And wrote all they heard in a very big book;  
And one through a cloud was permitted to look

Near his back—in most Natural Order.

This curious tale, it is getting too plain,

Is such silly un-Natural Order,

That Jehovah must come down from Heaven again,  
And display his true Natural Order;

For a God who exhibits such Billingsgate style,  
Shall see his old documents put on the file,

And his servants on earth overflowing with bile,  
At the change in his Natural Order.

A. S. V.

Fine thoughts and moral dissertations from men who have not worked and suffered may be read, but they will be forgotten. No religion, no ethical philosophy, is worth anything, if the teacher has not lived the "life of an apostle," and been ready to die "the death of a martyr."—George Long.

The best way of avenging thyself is not to become like the wrong doer.—Marcus Aurelius.

A man of strong imagination gets himself followed by some persons of weak imagination. The flock increases; fanaticism begins, fraud finishes. A powerful man comes; he sees a crowd, ready bridled and with a bit in its mouth; he mounts and directs it.—Voltaire.

O love! who to the hearts of wandering men  
Art as the calm to Ocean's weary waves!  
Justice, or truth, or joy! thou only can  
From slavery and religion's labyrinth caves  
Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves.

—Shelley.

## 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, C. Cohen, "The Shadow of the Gods." Instrumental music at 7.

FINSBURY PARK DEBATING SOCIETY (79 Grove-road, Holloway, N.): 7. General Meeting. Open discussion.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "Faith and Finance."

### OUTDOOR.

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, Louis B. Gallagher; Brockwell Park, 3.15, Louis B. Gallagher.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., "The Law of Moses and Modern Research."

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, A. Barber, "A Freethinker's Way of Salvation." Thursday, Oct. 19, Coffee House, Bull Ring, at 8, R. Poole, "What was Christ?"

CARDIFF BRANCH N. S. S. (Maskell's Restaurant, St. Mary-street): Monday, Oct. 16, at 8, Important Business Meeting.

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Fred Morgan, Recital.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): G. W. Foote, 12 noon, "What is the Bible Really Worth?" 6.30, "Why the 'Yellow Monkeys' Won: an Object Lesson in Christianity."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-Street): Monday Oct. 16, Mrs. James T. Hunter, "Women's Suffrage."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mrs. Stanbury, "The National Physique."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, H. Percy Ward, "What Secularism Offers in Place of Christianity"; 7, "What has Become of the Devil." Monday, 8, Rationalist Debating Society: T. W. Gowland, "Individualism a Failure."

LIVERPOOL HOLIDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY: The Second Inaugural Meeting will be held on Sunday afternoon, Oct. 15, at 3 p.m. in the rooms of the Ethical Society (over Sandow's School), 18 Colquitt-Street, Bold-Street. Open to all, both old and young.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, Councillor McLachlan, "What is Wrong?"

MOUNTAIN ASH BRANCH N. S. S. (Workmans' Institute, Lesser Hall): Thursday, Oct. 19, at 7.30, T. Bennett, "Eternal Torments."

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N. S. S. (Louvain Hall, St. Mary's-place): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Do We Need a Religion?" 7, "The Christian Degradation of Morals." Rationalist Debating Society: Thursday, Oct. 19, at 8, R. P. Mitchell, "Our Policy of Free Imports and Production."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, Oct. 19, at 8, R. Mitchell, "Our Policy of Free Imports and Production."

PORTh BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, Mr. Owen Symmons, "In What Sense was Jesus the Light of the World?"

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