

THE Freethinker

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It is at all times the individual, and not the age, that preaches the truth. It was the age that gave Socrates his hemlock. It was the age that burnt Huss. The age is always the same.—GOETHE.

THE RIGHTS OF SECULARISTS.

An Open Letter

TO THE

Right Honorable the Lord Mayor of
Birmingham.

SIR,—

I venture to address you in this public manner on a subject of public importance; and in doing so I speak in behalf of a number of residents in Birmingham as well as in behalf of myself, who am only an occasional visitor to the great city over whose Council you have the honor to preside.

It is far from my intention to say anything disrespectful to one occupying your eminent position. But I desire to be plain and honest, and I trust that this will not be taken as discourtesy.

Permit me to introduce myself. I happen to be President of the National Secular Society, an office which I have held for nearly sixteen years, in succession to the late Charles Bradlaugh. There is a Branch of the Society in Birmingham, and I have lectured for it many times during the past twenty-five years. I am engaged to lecture for it again on Sunday, October 22, in the Town Hall, and under very unpleasant conditions.

This unpleasantness has been caused by the action of your predecessor, which is endorsed by yourself; although it appears that the Estates Committee is primarily responsible. The late Lord Mayor, whose untimely death my Birmingham friends deplored, being applied to in the usual way by the N. S. S. Branch for the use of the Town Hall this year, granted the application, but with the new and astonishing condition that no literature was to be sold or distributed. The Branch intended to appeal to him to withdraw this condition, but were prevented from doing so by his sudden decease. They were thus obliged to appeal to you. They pointed out that this condition was not applicable to any other section of the community, and they wished to know why they were selected for such invidious treatment. The reply they received was that the question had been fully considered, and that you regretted that you were unable to vary the conditions imposed by your predecessor. The Branch then begged you to receive a deputation, in order that they might be apprised of the nature of the objections taken to the sale of their literature, and have an opportunity of answering them. To this you returned a civil but decisive reply, enclosing a resolution of the

Estates Committee, and stating that the condition complained of did not rest upon any opinion, either of yourself or of your predecessor, but upon "the fact that such distribution is highly offensive to a large section of the community."

Let me appeal to you, Sir, to reconsider this charge of offensiveness against the Birmingham Secularists. In a certain sense every minority is offensive to the majority, but this is in the nature of things, and does not justify repressive measures, unless we are to unlearn the first principle of modern civilisation. Judging from the religious press, it appears that Catholics, Churchmen, and Nonconformists find each other very offensive; and judging from the newspapers, the same may be said of Conservatives, Liberals, and Socialists; but is this a reason why they should put a stop to each other's propaganda wherever they have the opportunity? And if the Secularists are "offensive" in any other sense, is it right to condemn them unheard, without even the pretence of a trial?

The resolution of the Estates Committee ran as follows:—

"That literature of the class submitted being in the opinion of this Committee offensive to the vast majority of the citizens, no literature of such a nature be permitted in future to be distributed at the Town Hall."

No details were given, but I have been able to obtain a copy of the Committee's minute, and I find, after some very absurd statements about "detectives" (as if there were anything secret or surreptitious about a public meeting and an open bookstall), a long list of "offensive" publications thus "submitted," and thus summarily condemned. That it includes the *Freethinker* and my *Bible Romances* might go without saying. But it also includes Paine's *Age of Reason*, Ingersoll's *Lectures*, and Blatchford's *God and My Neighbor*. Really the Estates Committee is magnificently impartial. It finds *every* school of Freethought "offensive" and damns me in most excellent company.

The Estates Committee has simply given itself away. The whole thing is so absurd that I fancy there is an ulterior reason for the Committee's action, and I think it is easily discoverable.

The same policy was practised upon the Birmingham Secularists some years ago. Having crowded meetings in the Bristol-street Board School, they became duly "offensive," and complaints (by anonymous persons) were raised about their literature. They were forbidden to sell any more, and they refused the hall under such humiliating conditions. When the Church party gained the majority on the Board it was decided that the use of the schoolrooms should not be granted to the Secularists on any conditions whatever. Which clearly shows what was the real motive and object of those who found Secular literature so "offensive."

Apparently the same party are now acting through the Estates Committee. They struck at the Secularists when their meetings became highly successful, and therefore dangerous; and the same policy is being pursued now. Year after year the Town Hall meetings have increased in size and importance; the time arrived when they also were too dangerous; and hence the present attempt at suppression. The Secularists, in short, are to be punished for their persuasive appeal to their fellow townsmen. They are to be answered, not by reason, but by brute force.

Oppression always hates publicity. The Estates Committee would not even allow the Branch to distribute a leaflet at the Town Hall meetings, setting forth in calm deliberate language why the sale of literature was impossible on this occasion. In view of a fact like this one wonders how far the public life of England is going to be Russianised. Is it with the Czar or the Mikado that this country has contracted an alliance?

Being troubled by the Branch with further correspondence, the Estates Committee has expressed its unwillingness to interfere with the sale of works by Spencer, Tyndall, Huxley, and Haeckel. But this only makes the matter worse. It is setting up a censorship to which only serfs would ever submit. The Branch has resolved, and in my opinion rightly, to sell all its literature or to sell none.

Let me beg of you, sir, to look at the real character of this censorship. It is the popular authors, those who write Freethought for the masses, that are aimed at. The writers of Freethought for the classes are unmolested. Freethought becomes "offensive" when it addresses itself to the multitude. Why? Because it is then that Freethought becomes dangerous. I submit, sir, that this campaign against the Birmingham Secularists, who are as good and honest citizens as any in the town, is simply a movement in the war of bigotry. I submit that it is a calculated attack by Christians upon Freethinkers. And I submit, sir, that the machinery of local government ought not to be abused in this fashion.

The bigots drove the Secularists out of the Board Schools. They are now trying to drive them out of the Town Hall. I appeal to you, sir, as the first citizen of Birmingham, to set your face against this shameful policy, and to maintain the honorable traditions of the great metropolis of the Midlands. It was an admirable saying of Burke's that statesmen are set on a height in order that they may command a wider horizon. From the height on which you stand I trust that you will look far beyond the petty and passing stratagems of local factions. Be you, sir, by virtue of your office, and by reason of its dignity, the faithful guardian of its noblest memories and its loftiest interests. Representative of no sect, but of the whole community, you will be just and impartial to all; you will remember that principle is the only durable expediency; you will turn from the interested clamors of those who would sacrifice principle to passion, and listen to the still small voice of the conscience that should govern the course of civic affairs; you will respect the lessons of the past, and be true to the welfare of the future.

I have the honor to remain

Yours respectfully,

G. W. FOOTE.

Christ and Cant.

"WHEN in doubt play trumps" is, I believe, an accepted maxim in the game of whist. The theological analogue of this would be "When in doubt about what to speak on, fall back on Jesus." It is a tolerably safe card to play to a Christian audience, and even to an audience that has been partly de-Christianised. All sections of the Christian world will heartily endorse what is said—provided one does not fall into the error of saying anything definite in the shape of what is meant by phrases such as "getting back to Christ," "living up to the Christ ideal," etc., etc. Then it will be found that no two Christian bodies are agreed as to what Jesus did, or what he meant when he did it, or just what the Christ ideal is. All sections, from the extreme Catholic to the Christian Socialist, will agree that to follow Jesus is the world's greatest need; but no two of them will agree as to how this is to be done. They agree together as a lion and a lamb might dwell in peace in a fog—because one could not see the other. There is harmony in obscurity, but a theological Donnybrook resulting from every attempt at clarity.

In truth this talk of falling back upon Jesus is sheer cant, and not always honest cant. Many preachers use the phrase because it is part of their verbal stock-in-trade, and because their profession is one that neither demands nor encourages clear thinking. And audiences, in the main, applaud what they have been in the habit of applauding, with the result that to them the old phrases, merely because they are old, find great favor. The same feature may also explain the fondness of many for the name of Jesus who are outside the official Churches. These have been so long in the habit of associating their ideals with Jesus that even a rejection of orthodox religion does not always break this connection. And as with this class the historic sense, or what one may call the evolutionary sense, is deplorably weak, the maintenance of the association is all the easier. But, apart from these, there is a third class, of whom it is impossible not to believe that they use the name of Jesus with conscious dishonesty, as a mere bait to catch the attention of a popular audience. It is a mistaken policy, even when followed with the best of intentions. The Labor leader or would-be social reformer who fails to realise that this clinging to the formulæ of a worn-out religion is one of the conditions of social stagnation is contributing to his own failure. The historic relation of Christianity to Labor presents very few pleasant features and a great many ugly ones; and those who fail to read aright the obvious lesson of such age-long experience are hardly likely to possess ability adequate to grapple successfully with contemporary problems.

It might also be said with considerable force that this constant reference to what Jesus said and did, as though the historic existence of the New Testament character was beyond doubt, and his actual utterances as authentic as a Hansard report, in itself shows a mental twist of a very grave description. To an unbiassed mind it is a tolerable certainty that the miraculously-conceived, miracle-working, resurrected Jesus of the four Gospels is no more an historical character than is the old woman who lived in a shoe. Such a character is a practical impossibility; and this is shown by the attempts of believers to cut down this aspect of the Gospel character as small as is possible. The uncertainty as to the existence of the Gospel Jesus is admitted by many; the uncertainty as to what he actually said by many more; yet nothing is more common than to find these same people expatiating on what "our Lord" said, and drawing pictures of the scenes amid which he said it, as though such doubts had no existence outside of a lunatic asylum. If this procedure so often escape the charge of dishonesty, it is only because its frequency makes it a normal characteristic of the Christian temperament. One may safely say that an essay on the life and teachings of

Jesus that takes for granted his actual existence is worth neither the trouble of writing nor reading.

But it is not Jesus as an historical character, say many of the more sentimental, but as an ideal, that is preached. Maybe, although it is observable that while the defence often rests upon this ground, it is a system that depends upon Jesus as a historic character that is being supported. Christianity does not rest upon an ideal character, but upon a series of statements concerning an alleged historic character. And it must either stand or fall with the historicity of the New Testament Jesus. And the ideal is, substantially, as false as the alleged reality is impossible. For not one of these ideal Jesus' of the social reformers is true to the New Testament character. Certain teachings are either ignored, or modified, or interpreted in such a way as to harmonize them with modern conceptions. Or the divinity of Jesus is dropped altogether on the plea that it is Jesus the man in whom they are interested. But not one of them is content to take the character of Jesus as it is depicted in the gospels and hold that up as an ideal. The absurdity would then be too glaring, the extravagance too apparent. Each reads into the gospels exactly the meaning he wishes to discover; a procedure made all the easier by the nebulous character of many of the teachings. It is in this way that the authority of Jesus is claimed for all sorts of schemes, good, bad, and indifferent. Anarchists, socialists, conservatives, land nationalisers, free lovers, and scores of others find in Jesus the authority for their several nostrums. And one sees the curious sight of a militant socialist taking as his ideal figure a celibate teaching the blessings of poverty, the comfort of misery and the glory of non-resistance.

Unhelped by a sense of humor, and deficient in a sense of historic continuity, these people see nothing absurd in the picture of an ignorant Jewish peasant of 2,000 years ago being adequate to grapple with modern problems. They have resolved it is so, and therefore contrive to find proofs, of a kind, to that end. And the method is beautifully simple. If Jesus did not protest against specific evils, as in the case of slavery, credit is due to him for leaving this and attending to the larger issues of life. If it is then pointed out that in taking a broad and comprehensive view of life Jesus was surpassed by many non-Christian writers, we are told that his greatness is shown by the manner in which he entered into the life of the people and his freedom from philosophical abstractions. If we point out that his teaching concerning the function of riches—as in the case of Dives—is absurd, the reply is that he was aiming at the abuse of riches, although there is no hint in the story to that effect. If we say that his teaching concerning the relations of the State and the individual, or the payment of labor are vague and unsatisfactory, and may be accepted by all parties without affecting the conduct of any, the answer is that he was content to lay down broad principles and leave these to work their influence in reforming things. If we argue that Jesus, as God, should have known better than to encourage such a belief as that of demoniacal possession, the retort is that he was also man and treated these beliefs from the then human point of view. But if we say that his cursing the fig tree for not bearing fruit out of season, showed folly or spleen, the theory of his divinity is fallen back upon and we are told God had a right to do as he pleased with his own. If it is argued that the teachings concerning non-resistance are so impracticable, that no people have ever even attempted to put them into practice, we are informed that we have misunderstood these texts, they are merely a warning against revenge. And if we ask for proof the reply is, that any other interpretation would make the text absurd! In short, it matters little what text one seizes on, the result is the same. With people who are resolved on finding in Jesus all that the wisest thought teaches, and all that the experience of the ages enforce, argument is so much waste of time. A wall of prejudice is interposed between them and attack, and the artillery has yet to be cast that can break down a prejudice of

this description. After all, there is no prejudice so hopeless as one that rests on a foundation of mis-directed education.

People suffering from this Christo-mania are fond of telling us that the world has suffered from the corruption of Christ's teachings by the churches. Corruption! Of course the churches have corrupted his teaching. What on earth can be done with an impossible doctrine but corrupt it? How could any society live that practised taking no thought for the morrow, that turned one cheek when the other smitten, that trusted in faith to cure diseases or prayers to move mountains, fasting to cure insanity, or seriously accepted a celibate as the ideal human character? The logic of facts is always ultimately stronger than the logic of faith. In self-defence society was bound to interpret the teachings of the four gospels so that they did not seriously threaten its existence. These so-called corruptions were really improvements. It is the same species of corruption that the animal frame has undergone in its transition from the simian to the human form. It is corruption from the standpoint of the old, but it is improvement from that of the new. The pity is that this is not more often realised. Pity it is not realised that the true use of the past is the lesson of its experience, and not to attempt a continuance of its life. Pity that our popular leaders will not face the fact that each generation has its own special problems that must be solved in terms of its own knowledge, but rather prefers to sacrifice ultimate good for a passing popularity and the worthless applause of the crowd.

C. COHEN.

The Eternal Christ.

IT will be a startling discovery to many a man to find that he is God. Yet such is the discovery we are all bound to make some day, according to the teaching of some of the most popular of present-day theologians. They say to every human being within their reach, "You are God, and God is you." One can understand Pantheism, pure and simple, such as that conceived by the great philosopher, Spinoza; but Christian Pantheism is utterly incomprehensible. If I am God, and if everybody else is God, does it not necessarily follow, either that each human being is the whole of God, or else that God is a whole composed of innumerable parts? In neither case could God be a self-conscious person. Pantheism, in any of its forms, is a denial of the Christian conception of a loving Heavenly Father. The other evening, a well known divine, in answer to a question, defined punishment as "Heaven to the rescue." "Sooner or later," he went on, "man knows that the God who punishes sin is *himself*. He is his own judge and executioner." What this means Heaven only knows. To characterise it as "a luminous dictum" would be a deplorable misuse of terms. The Bible says that "God loved the world"—is that equivalent to saying that the world loved itself? If God is the sum total of existence, the conclusion is inevitable that He cannot be a self-conscious and independent Being, such as the Bible and Evangelicalism proclaim him to be.

Christian Pantheism is self-contradictory and self-destructive. It is a common saying of divines that God fills and transcends the Universe, but clearly, a Being who fills and transcends the Universe cannot be identical with it. A house and its occupier are in no sense one. A garment and its wearer are radically distinct the one from the other. And yet the very theologians who tell us that God is all that also assure us that the Universe is only a *manifestation* of the Deity. Nothing can be plainer than that each of these two statements contradicts and destroys the other. Another statement is that, although man is God, yet God in man is self limited. You ask: "Is everything in this world exactly as God intended it to be?" and the answer you receive is that "the key to the mystery is the self-limitation of God in what

we call creation. God's action is contingent upon the creation of a mind which is still himself, but over which He has not full control while his self-limitation continues. While we are bound ultimately to realise the purpose of God, the self-limitation of God gives us the power, as it were, to shut the gate on God." Let us examine this strange teaching. Time was when the Universe did not exist, and when God was absolutely supreme; but the moment He produced the Universe his supremacy came to an end; so that now even man is more powerful than He, and can shut the gate on him; still the purpose of God is to regain his original supremacy; and therefore the time must come when the Universe shall be in complete subjection to him, and when He shall be all in all again. Is not this irrationality glorified? If the Universe has dethroned the Deity that made it, how can He and it be "absolutely one?"

Such is the Christian Pantheism of to-day. But in order to see its absurdity at its climax we must follow it a few steps farther. If "moral perfection, when it is attained, will simply be the discovery of our absolute oneness with God," the only natural inference is that "our absolute oneness with God" is a fact at this moment, only that, owing to our moral imperfection, we have not discovered it. Humanity has always been, is now, and ever shall be in a state of "absolute oneness with God," redemption consisting in the *discovery* of that great fact. Well, but what about *Jesus*? The Church has always maintained that Jesus was more than man; but how could He be more than man if man is God? An unsophisticated inquirer wonders whether the difference between Jesus and the rest of humanity is one of kind or of degree; and to him our modern pantheistic divine speaks thus:—

"According to the state of humanity when Jesus came, it was a difference of kind. No one had had before an experience like that of Jesus; therefore it was unique. But, so far as humanity since Jesus lived is concerned, it is a difference of degree. For Jesus came to call us into that very experience. He means us to live so that we with him can say, 'I and my Father are one.'"

Look at that reasoning for a second. If man is by nature in a state of "absolute oneness with God," only in his present sinful or morally imperfect condition he is not aware of it, how could there be, at any time, a difference *in kind* between Jesus and the rest of humanity? All the controversies about the divinity of Jesus Christ, that have ever taken place, were really meaningless, because there can be no difference of kind in the whole Universe, if All that is, is God.

But let us move on. According to Christian Pantheism the only conceivable difference between Jesus and the rest of mankind lay in the fact that He was *conscious* of his "absolute oneness with God," while they were not. He came to lead them into that very consciousness. And yet we have just been told that the difference between Jesus and the rest of humanity was at first one of kind, but afterwards became one of degree only. That is logically absurd. A difference of kind cannot be reduced in that fashion, into one of degree. We are next informed that Jesus was "the focal manifestation of the Eternal Christ in the world." Who and what is this Eternal Christ? Jesus "knew that He was the earthly expression of the Eternal Christ. He also knew that He was that *in esse* and not *in posse*. He was essentially the Eternal Christ, but yet in human relations He could not demonstrate that; He could only live the perfect moral life. Jesus knew that He was the perfect presentation of the Eternal Christ; He also knew that mankind was to be lifted into that region and live that experience by becoming part of his life, the life of the Eternal Christ." There is an air of infallibility about that language; the speaker is evidently one who knows; but whence came his authority? Where and how did the preacher obtain his knowledge? He knows that in the first three Gospels there is no reference whatever to the Eternal Christ. The Jesus of these documents knew nothing

about such a being, not even that He existed. This Jesus was a man who lived and spoke in God's name. He went about doing good, but never even hinted at any connection between himself and the Eternal Christ. In the fourth Gospel we meet with an entirely different Jesus, who talks a totally new language, and who is fond of discussing deep metaphysical points with his contemporaries. This Jesus was a philosopher; but even He is not reported to have once mentioned the Eternal Christ. It is the modern theologian who has the audacity to claim intimate knowledge of the Eternal Christ, and of the exact relation in which Jesus stood to him.

If a historical Jesus, who was a wonderful teacher and a more wonderful philanthropist, ever existed, and if it were possible for him to reappear to-day in Christendom, He would not be able to recognise himself. If He visited our churches and listened to scholarly discourses on the Ideal Christ, the Eternal Christ, or the Divinity of Christ, He would be completely bewildered and tempted to ask, "Who was He of whom these men are thus talking? Where and when did He live? I never heard of him before; by what means have they gathered all this curious information concerning him?" If He went up to our great preachers and catechised them on the sources of their alleged knowledge, they would show him the door, and denounce him as an impostor. In a sermon recently preached at the City Temple, Mr. Campbell said:—

"Let faith exercise itself upon the spiritual, reigning, the eternal, the ideal Christ. The local and the temporary Christ of the days of Galilee, existed simply to show us the eternal Christ, the ideal life. Jesus was sent, and Jesus came that He might manifest to us that ideal life which is at once God's life and man's life, and He wanted to show us that the abiding quality of God's life is one with the ideal in man's life. They are not separate entities, and they need no metaphysical combination; they are already one. When you have reached to what God intended you to be you have reached to what God is."

Where is this Eternal Christ? Everywhere. He is man, and yet He is not man; He is God, and yet He is not God; He is God-man, and yet He is not God-man, being simply an ideal floating invisibly through all space; He is the spark of good in every human heart requiring to be fanned into a flame, or the germ of virtue yearning for growth and development. In a word, the Eternal Christ is anything the preacher may choose to think a man ought to be. Mr. Campbell found a very touching illustration in a lady missionary who was nursing a plague-stricken child. "The loathsome aspect of the little one's features repelled her; she felt it impossible to caress her; it was, as it were, with averted face she ministered healing, but gave not herself with the gift. The nurse fell asleep and dreamed that the Christ had come to her, and she had not known him, for He came as a leper child. When she awoke, in the impulse of the moment, with the memory of the dream fresh upon her, she bent over the child and kissed the poor suffering face. And there came over those loathsome lineaments a look not of earth but of heaven, a look of gratitude and love mingled with surprise. For what had the ministering angel discovered? That the Christ was there. That kiss had summoned the soul, and it looked out of the suffering eyes. The Christ is the ideal humanity, and you may find him under the most forbidding and unwelcome conditions." That is a most pathetic anecdote; but what does it prove? Nothing more than that the said nurse was beautifully sympathetic and under the impulse of a dream gave a specific expression to her sympathy. A Freethinking nurse, similarly endowed by Nature, would have behaved in a like manner. Pity, sympathy, and love are by no means a monopoly of Christian people, and their active presence in the hearts and lives of some people is the most natural thing in the world.

Now, if we believe in an Eternal Christ, must we not also believe in an Eternal Devil? If all the good that is in us comes from the Eternal Christ, does it not follow that all the evil is a curse from the

Eternal Devil? If a man is not the author of good, how can he be the originator of evil? Followed to its only logical conclusion, Mr. Campbell's teaching reduces man to a mere plaything of two supernatural persons of opposite characters. The Eternal Devil is bent on dragging us down to hottest hell, while the Eternal Christ endeavors to draw us up to highest heaven; and judging by appearances, the Eternal Devil is by far the most successful of the two. But the Christian conception of man is fundamentally false, and the Christian doctrine of redemption is morally degrading. Every man is the slave of his own nature, and the quality of his nature is determined alone by heredity and environment. No one has ever risen above himself. We are strong or weak, good or bad, according as Nature has made us. We cannot cheat Nature. We cannot snap her bonds. Whatever we may do we can never give her laws the slip. We can only cultivate and make the most of her gifts; and it is in this cultivation that our one solitary hope of improvement lies.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Failure of Christianity.

I SEE nothing to cackle over in the decline and fall of a splendid historic religion like Christianity. But, apart from this feeling—which is only common generosity—there is another motive that should influence us of the Secular movement. When the Conservative Government goes out of office, as it will before long, what will the Opposition have to do? They will have to form a government of their own. When Christianity goes, the opposition must form a government. Are we ready? Is Freethought ready with its ministry? Has it mapped out a policy? Has it a program? Can it drive the chariot of the sun? Or will it, like Phaeton in the old story, fail and die in the attempt to govern?

What do I mean by Christianity? I will not be put off with the suggestion that Christianity simply means the Sermon on the Mount. My definition is this:—"Christianity is a system of belief and life with the following articles: God is the creator and providence of the world; Christ is the savior of men and their best example of conduct; the Bible is the word of God; the Church is the instrument of God's discipline; prayer is the means of communion with God, whether directly or through the Virgin Mary and angels; and immortality is the hope of the good and the terror of the wicked."

I am going to give reasons for thinking that Christianity is a failure, but I do not say that it has been a failure all along. Indeed, I am prepared to assert that, in some respects, it has been a noble and useful force in the world's evolution. I believe that Christianity developed the spirit of pity and tenderness. I have read the story of Christian religious wars and persecutions, but it does not shake my belief that, in Christian history, there appears a new spirit which I do not find in the older times. Three types of character may be cited as illustrations, two Catholic and one Protestant, namely, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint Francis of Assisi, and John Howard. I believe that Christianity has helped millions of quiet natures by its message of consolation for the interior life; such a message as is conveyed by the *Imitation of Christ*, written by a mediæval monk and still read by a widespread Christian public. I believe that Christianity in its best days (the twelfth and thirteenth centuries especially) did a grand work in setting up the moral power of the Church to check the brutality of the feudal and material power. I believe also that Christianity assisted the transformation of the ancient slavery into serfdom, and of serfdom into the partially-emancipated proletariat of the modern age.*

Nevertheless, to my mind, the failure of Christianity is evident, ever-deepening, and irredeemable. As sure as the sun sets each evening, so sure is it that Christianity will never conquer the world: so sure is it that Christianity will lose its hold on civilisation. It has failed, and is failing, in three ways.

The first is an intellectual failure. To speak personally, I have no hesitation in saying that, of the intelligent men and women I have met during the last twenty-five years, the most acute in thought and the broadest in sympathy were not Christians. The authorities of the Church of England are crying out that they cannot persuade the brightest and cleverest young men to take holy orders. Preaching itself has declined. There are no such preachers today as Wesley, Spurgeon, Farrar, Robert Hall, or Chalmers. In the *Encyclopædia Biblica* occur hundreds of articles on the Bible, and the whole drift of the four volumes is against the historical accuracy of the Bible story. For example, it is obvious from Professor Schmiedel's essay on the Resurrection that he does not believe that Christ rose. Take samples of the leading thinkers of the nineteenth century—Spencer, Comte, Emerson, Mazzini, Goethe, Darwin; these were not Christians. And how many even before Darwin had been treated as foes to the Christian religion! It was the supreme mistake of the Christian Church that it did not receive the truths of science with joy. It sang hymns when kings won battles. It never rang a single peal of bells when Copernicus discovered the true constitution of the solar system. This foolish jealousy of new ideas started the decay of Christianity five hundred years ago.

The second failure is civic; by that I mean the failure to satisfy our political needs and intelligently deal with social problems. I am well aware of the long line of Christian philanthropists who have, as it were, gone down into the caves and dens of the earth, seeking to save the lost; such were Elizabeth Fry, Lord Shaftesbury, and the late Dr. Barnardo. They make no difference to my view. The plain, cruel, and repulsive fact in modern life is, that an immense mass of the working class live in conditions that are defective as to wages, food, clothes, housing, leisure, and education. The French Revolution was a necessary protest against the scandal of building society on so rotten a foundation as a degraded working-class. The thunder of its protest echoed through the nineteenth century in Radicalism, Robert Owen's Socialism, Chartism, the Trades Union movement, the Socialism of Karl Marx, Bebel, Jaurès, Hyndman, Morris, in Bradlaugh's Republicanism, and in the Labor Movement. This vast agitation since the Revolution has been essentially independent of Christianity and promises to remain so. The Church has driven the working-class on to secular ground; and the failure of Christianity may be read in the eagerness of the proletariat to capture Parliament, Town Councils, Boards of Guardians, and Schools. Mr. Richard Heath has lately issued a book on *The Captive City of God*, which, in the name of Christianity, denounces the disloyalty of the Churches to their original democratic ideal. It is a book of lamentations, written by a Christian Jeremiah. All round Christendom he looks and everywhere detects the same signs. Even the young revolt. "Mother," said a boy of 15 or 16 (this is Mr. Heath's own anecdote), "I'll clean for you, work for you, do almost anything for you; but if you talk to me of going to church, I'll enlist!" A lurid chapter on the "Approaching Eclipse of the Churches" cites a large array of figures proving a marked fall in church and chapel attendance all over Protestant Christendom. Just to take a sample, he quotes a United States minister as stating that at least twenty-five million people in America did not go to church. Mr. Heath's remedy is quite touchingly feeble. He counsels all good Christians, regardless of the churches which worship riches and commercialism, to fall back on "the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Early Fathers." The proposal is

* It may be as well to state that when I delivered the lecture, of which this article is a condensation, to a friendly audience at the Leicester Secular Hall, these appreciative remarks with respect to Christianity were not unanimously accepted.

as weak as that of the Rev. F. B. Meyer, who advocates the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon movement as the new and practical basis of liberty, equality, and fraternity!

Can anybody honestly say that, during the recent anxious debates on the question of the Unemployed, Christianity—as represented by the Archbishop of Canterbury or the general body of the Christian clergy—has been of any material assistance? Or take another profound civic question, that of education. Apart from the mere administration of its denominational schools, what is Christianity doing in this sphere? What new ideas does it bring to us? What new enthusiasm does it breathe into us? None. Simply to take one instance; Miss Margaret MacMillan's recent work on the child's Imagination has helped modern education more than all the Bishops and the Free Church Councils put together; and Miss MacMillan does not stand for Christianity.

Lastly, there is a third field in which Christianity is a failure,—the field of international relations. Look at the Hague tribunal for arbitration,—one of the noblest products of the nineteenth century. It is an entirely secular institution. The churches have no part in it. Christianity has no control over its deliberations. Nor had Christianity a word to say in the conclusion of peace between Russia and Japan. The mediator (to whom be all honor) was a secular ruler, the President of the United States. There is a still larger problem than that of peace; I mean that of the religious lordship over the mind of the world. Christianity claims to lead. It hopes (or rather, it used to hope) to clear all other creeds from the earth. In the October number of the *Hibbert Journal*—the foremost religious periodical in this country—the editor gravely asks the question, "Is the Moral Supremacy of Christendom in Danger?" He concludes that it is; he confesses that Japan can turn out good men; and the creation of good men is the supremest test. He sees no likelihood of Christianity annexing the five hundred millions of Buddhists. So he trusts that there may be an amalgamation of the two creeds. There may, or there may not; in any case, Christianity, as such, will fail to establish its claims.

Simply as a Freethinker, I am satisfied with the decline of Christianity. But, as a citizen, I am more concerned with the birth of the new order than the death of the old. We have to raise aloft some other rallying sign in place of the gilt cross. While we gather together to rejoice at the end of theology, there is a footfall at the threshold. The spirit of the new time, solemn with many a troubled thought, and burdened with many a political and moral problem, knocks at the door.

F. J. GOULD.

Acid Drops

We accidentally overlooked a speech delivered at the recent Church Congress by General Owen Hay. This pious warrior solemnly informed his hearers that "none but God-fearing men would be fit to fight the battles of the future." We are quite aware that God-fearing men are prone to fighting, but we did not suppose that they were going to monopolise it. If what General Hay says is true all round, we shall raise no objection. If the God-fearing men of this planet do all the fighting, and kill each other off, and exterminate their own variety, it would doubtless be a sad spectacle—but it would have its compensations. This does not appear, however, to be exactly the General's meaning, for he went on to say this:—"Nothing but the pervading influence of the Holy Spirit would empower men to fight in comparative isolation, as in the future they must, and no other influence was adequate to inspire them with the needed sense of duty and patriotism." That is all General Hay has learnt from the war in the East! Rip Van Winkle was nothing to him. The old sleeper of the Catskill Mountains did wake up at last.

General Owen Hay appears to be unaware of the fact that the Japanese soldiers, who certainly did not lack a

sense of duty and patriotism, took absolutely no stock in his Holy Spirit. They had not a bottle of it throughout the campaign. Yet it is very fortunate for Great Britain that its General Hay and Holy Spirit army had not to fight these Japanese—at least on land; for they would have walked through the said army with the greatest ease—even if the Church Congress had resolved itself into a perpetual prayer-meeting for a British victory.

"After all," Mr. Frederic Harrison says in the *Positivist Review*, "the true lesson of this war will be the religious warning it will ultimately enforce. It is a knock-down blow to the national professions of Christianity. The Churches and their political allies are for ever telling us that nothing but their prayers and incantations can inspire courage, duty, virtue, and honor in nations. The Gospel of Peace has much to answer for in allowing itself to become the watchword and battle-cry of tyrants, pirates, and slave-drivers. Even a hundred years ago our national hero was taught to believe that his duty towards his God was 'to hate a Frenchman as he would the Devil!' And the morbid fanatic who involved us in the Soudan believed himself to hold private intercourse with his Maker, and had from him personal missions unknown to the Governments he served. History can show no contrast more flagrant than that of the brutal bigotry of Russia, with its ferocious fetichism like that of a Dahomey savage, its blasphemous mummeries, and its horrid execrations, as compared with the human and social religion of patriotism and family that animates Japan. No God, no Heaven, no sacraments, no priests led the Japanese soldier to battle. To him the intricate machinery of Theology is alike irrational and absurd. He fights and dies for his Mikado, his ancestors, for Bushido, for Japan."

Bishop Awdry's recent letter to the *Times*, warning his countrymen against forming too high an estimate of Japanese character, provoked a rousing article in the *Liverpool Daily Post*, which wound up as follows:—

"By all means let us be careful not to attribute to the Japanese virtues they do not possess, but let us be even more careful not to attribute to ourselves virtues that do not belong to us. If we feel elated because, as the bishop says, a Japanese commercial man would rather trust an Englishman's word than his fellow-countryman's bond, let us correct our self-satisfaction by remembering that Englishmen do not, as a rule, exhibit great alacrity in trusting one another without legal bonds. Surely, even a bishop can hardly suppose that altruism is the motive force of English commerce. The greatest commercial man of the last generation in Liverpool, at the very beginning of his career, chartered a ship from a hard-fisted Scotchman. Presently the Scotchman began to try to wriggle out of his bargain. The two met to discuss the matter, and the elder, finding the younger inexorable, at last put his finger on a clause in the charter-party, and said: 'I meant to strike out that clause; if I had noticed my omission you would never have got the ship.' 'Precisely,' said the future millionaire, and if you had struck out the clause I never would have taken the ship.' He held the Scotchman to his bargain, and made what was probably the first great profit of a life during which many a haul was secured from the carelessness and ignorance of rivals. Yet this great man is held up continually as a model of spotless commercial honor which only persons of extraordinary strength of mind and character can hope to imitate. No! the Japanese will not learn altruism in business from the English."

This would have been considered unpatriotic, and almost blasphemous, in the *Freethinker*.

Mr. H. R. Clifton, seeing some other "advanced" papers in the Croydon Public Libraries, tried to get the *Freethinker* admitted, but his offer to supply a copy was declined with thanks on the ground of the "congested state of the News Room." Of course the place is "full up" when the *Freethinker* comes along.

The Woolwich Free Library declines the offer of a copy of the *Freethinker* by Mr. H. G. Farmer on the ground that there is a standing resolution against accepting "sectarian papers." That is good. We suppose the Woolwich authorities keep a special list of "sectarian" publications. According to our own ideas, the vast majority of papers are "sectarian." All the Christian papers are sectarian, to begin with; and nine out of every ten newspapers are sectarian, for most of them are Conservative, Liberal, Radical, Socialist, or something else. It seems to us that the Woolwich reason is about on a level with the Croydon reason. We fancy we understand the gentlemen—the farcical Progressives as well as the pantomime Moderates.

The *Sunday Chronicle*, recently published an article "In the Wake of the Great Welsh Wave" by Asley Lane. This

writer was very outspoken in his condemnation of the Welsh "revival"; indeed, his article might very well have appeared in our own columns. Interviewing the Chief of Police in an affected district, he was told: "None of our regular customers were converted. Some, I believe, were affected and went to the penitent bench. But the force of habit was too strong, and one 'convert,' at least, was caught picking pockets in the crush out. Prayers and hymns may move a criminal for a time, but they don't change his nature." A local doctor said that the revival brought about an increase of lunacy. "I doubt," he added, "if public morality has been benefited."

The gaiety of the world might be increased, and we venture to offer a suggestion to that end. We see that the Licensed Victuallers' Defence Association at Peterborough has complained of "the attitude of the Bishops towards the trade." This idea was elaborated by Alderman Morrall, Mayor of Bridgenorth, who appealed to the Bible as his authority. He pointed out that the High Priests, in the Old Testament, had to pour out strong drink as an offering and oblation from the people; and if this strong drink could be poured out as an oblation before the Lord, he wanted to know how it could be the evil it was depicted. This worthy Alderman-Mayor's speech led the assembled publicans to act as follows:—

"A resolution was passed regretting that certain clergy of the Established Church and Nonconformist ministers should, in their utter disregard of the Divine precept, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' set a bad example of intemperance of language, of religious intolerance and bigotry, and of personal enmity against everyone engaged in a legitimate trade, which was altogether contrary to the sublime teaching of the Founder of the Christian faith."

Here is the place for our suggestion. We submit that the Licensed Victuallers should start a True Christian Church, and raise aloft the banner of New Testament teaching. It is perfectly certain that Jesus Christ was not a teetotaler—or anything like it. He drank what he could lay hands on, and he is reported (by his only biographers) to have supplied a huge quantity of good strong wine to keep up a certain marriage feast after the stock of liquor laid in for the function was exhausted. Of course the clergy shirk this now-a-days; but an honest Christian, with no axe to grind, like the late John Ruskin, had to recognise it. In the twelfth letter of *Time and Tide*, while admitting the evils of drunkenness, he considered that all restrictions on drinking were "temporary and provisional." "Nor," he added, "while there is the record of the miracle at Cana (not to speak of the sacrament) can I conceive it possible, without (logically) the denial of the entire truth of the New Testament, to reprobate the use of wine as a stimulus to the powers of life." Teetotalism is a plain denial of the words and deeds of the Founder of Christianity. The Licensed Victuallers, therefore, should call upon the Christian Churches, in the name of Christ, to support the legitimate liquor trade; and, if the Churches decline to follow their Lord and Master, the Licensed Victuallers should forthwith start the True Church of Christ that we have recommended.

The True Church of Christ should consist of persons willing to drink as Christ did. Credentials for admission might consist of (paid) wine-merchants' bills, or certificates from gentlemen in "the trade" that the holder was a regular customer, who drank according to his means and opportunities. This True Church of Christ would not be short of members if every eligible person joined it. And it will soon come into existence if the Licensed Victuallers understand the art of warfare. To stand perpetually on the defensive is to make sure of defeat. Let "the trade" take the offensive, and carry the war into the enemy's territory. We wish they would.

Dr. P. T. Forsyth, Chairman of the Congregational Union, has just referred to Theology as "the Queen of Culture." There is nothing like giving your "pals" fine names. It is so pleasant—and so cheap.

A meeting in connection with the annual assembly of the Congregational Union was held in support of the Passive Resistance movement. Some of the speakers belched out fire and slaughter against the Liberal party if it should come into power and refuse to carry out the Nonconformist policy in Education. That young man with the swollen head, the Rev. Silvester Horne, after stating that he was going to speak at two Liberal meetings that very night, made the following declaration:—

"Let the Liberal leaders go back on their word in regard to the Act, and I for one will be the first in the new revolt. And if we leave the ship because she has turned back on her course, and is pursuing a traitorous course, we will fire the torpedo which will blow the Liberal party sky-high."

Mr. Horne's imagery is a bit mixed, but his meaning is clear enough, and it seems to have been greeted with wild applause. Rev. J. H. Jowett followed in the same vein, although with more careful expression:—

"I associate myself with Mr. Horne if, when the Liberals come into power, they do not lay hold of these great issues with moral strength and determined will, if they allow the lukewarm amongst the members to determine their policy, if they sink great issues into small and ignoble compromise, then ordinary party lines will be effaced, and we shall have to look to new attachments and new combinations for reform."

This was also loudly applauded. And it means, we take it, that the Passive Resisters begin to feel that they will not run the next Liberal government.

The Sunday Question was discussed by the Congregational Union Assembly at Leeds. Rev. Henry Varley opened the debate, and pointed out that Sunday was declining as a day of public worship. He drew attention to the Metropolitan Church Census taken by the *Daily News*, which showed that between 1886 and 1893, although the population had increased 500,000, the worshippers had decreased 150,000. He strongly condemned motoring, cycling, and golf as Sunday amusements, and said that if they could not stop the golf of the Premier, they might at all events stop his Premiership. How Mr. Balfour must tremble! Would it not be a short way out of the difficulty if the Prime Minister were appointed by the Free Churches?

Dr. Forsyth, the President, also declared that Sunday rest was an absolute necessity. It is not reported that he included the clergy in the program. Sunday is at present their busiest day in the week. And when they are active they like to see other people idle—probably on the principle that there must be spectators as well as performers.

Dr. Forsyth took up the Passive Resistance movement again, and made a pointed appeal to the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England. The Archbishop of Canterbury, in particular, had called the Rev. Dr. Horton his "friend," and that very week "his 'friend's' goods had been distrained on in the interest of his Grace's Church." Shocking! But will Dr. Forsyth honestly answer the following question? Suppose the Church and Chapel parties make up their quarrel and come to a common working agreement; suppose they arrange to spend the taxpayers' and ratepayers' money on Christian education in the nation's elementary schools; suppose some of the Non-Christians refuse to be a party to this, and decline to pay for religious teaching which they regard as false and pernicious; would Dr. Forsyth and his Passive Resistance friends see anything wrong in these Non-Christians being made to pay, even by distraining on their goods or sending them to prison? A plain answer to this plain question would show how much principle there is in Dr. Forsyth's attitude.

We do not suppose for a moment that Dr. Forsyth will reply. We have put this question to Dr. Clifford; we have put it to many other Passive Resisters; but not one of them has been candid enough to answer it; and there is only one explanation of their silence.

The old Puritans who taught that those who were saved in heaven would be perfectly happy in looking down on the torments of the damned in hell—even if the lost ones were their own fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives or children—have a counterpart in the bedridden old lady of seventy-six, whom Miss Loane speaks of in her newly published book entitled *The Queen's Poor*. "You tell me," Miss Loane said to her, "that your mother was good to you, and that you loved her; you tell me that you are 'saved,' and she was not. What happiness, then, can there be for you in heaven." The old lady's answer was colossal. "Oh, nurse," she said, "when I'm in heaven I shall be so purr-fected I shan't care where she is."

Mr. Hell Caine's preachee-preachee *Prodigal Son* was witnessed the other day at Drury Lane Theatre by six hundred men of God, who formed part of an audience of three thousand. These professional soul-savers had all been invited by the management. It cost them nothing except bus fares, and we dare say a lot of them would go to "the Devil's house" weekly on the same terms. According to the report, they thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Caine's play. It was just what they are used to—with the scenery thrown in.

Canon Horsley was present at this performance. Being interviewed by a newspaper representative, he condescended to say that Christians might go to "good plays." What he

considers "good plays" is not stated. Probably he means preachee-preachee.

Are angels all masculine, or are some of them feminine? This question has been discussed in the newspapers. The "masculine" party seem to be in the ascendant. But there has been no pretence of acquaintance with living specimens. One journalist seriously asks how a female angel could have seized and carried a prophet by the hair, or wrestled all night with a young patriarch, or threatened Adam with a sword. But would not a female angel be equal to the last performance? On the whole this writer reminds us of the worthy gentlemen who proved that there were no women in the beautiful land above, by quoting the text that "There was silence in heaven for the space or half an hour."

The Sunday (we beg pardon, Sabbath) question has been considered by the United Free Synod of Glasgow. Regret was expressed at the Sunday opening of the local Art Galleries, but comfort was found in two other facts; first, that the godly voted strongly against it; second, that the Galleries were not extensively patronised. Reference was made to the Sunday steamers on the Clyde, but here again there was consolation in the fact that "Sunday passengers were the least desirable." Thus the United Frees went doddering on.

The United Free Synod deplored the falling off in funds. The Sustentation Fund had dropped £14,000 in one year. Then is doomsday near?

It was pathetically stated that ministers had to pinch themselves in order to "buy fresh literature to keep abreast of modern thought." Fancy the "saxpences" they have to expend on cheap reprints! And fancy the average Scotch minister striving to keep abreast of modern thought! We did not think his congregation was so exacting.

At a recent Worcester inquest, after a number of witnesses' evidence had been taken, it was discovered that everybody had been sworn on a Prayer Book instead of a New Testament. No doubt there would be just as much truth told over one volume as over the other; nevertheless the jury was resworn and the evidence repeated. The man who found out the mistake wasted a lot of time.

Archdeacon Colley was not allowed to address the Church Congress on Spiritualism, but he delivered a lecture in another building and had a crowded audience. He told them of wonderful things he had seen—as far back as 1876, which is rather a musty date. He saw some muslin "fade away, disappear, and melt like vapor." Prodigious! But we have seen heavier things than muslin melt away. Cash, for instance. Archdeacon Colley is not even a good joker.

Bishop Welldon, preaching lately at Yarmouth, said in effect that England was a Christian country because there were so few Christians in it. If there were none at all, we suppose, it would be more Christian still.

At another Yarmouth meeting, that of the East Anglian Union of the National British Women's Temperance Association (we must stop to take breath), Mrs. Locker Lampson said that "all true temperance work must rest on Christ." Someone should present this lady with a copy of the New Testament. Either she does not possess a copy or it is a long time since she read it. We advise her to start with the first ten verses of the second chapter of John.

We have lately read, with undisguised indignation, an interview with M. Ferdinand Brunetière, the editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in which that gentleman repeats the old insinuation of a venomous orthodoxy—viz., that *a priori* it is fair to assume, until the contrary is demonstrated, that a free-thinker or heretic is morally undesirable. He is good enough not to deny absolutely that there may be some among them who cannot be so stigmatised; "but these" he observes with superb discernment "keep quiet"—a self-revealing statement if ever there was one made. The "eminent Catholic philosopher," as he is termed, professes to be amazed at the inconsistency of those who attack the dogmas they deny: "if it is nothing, why assail it?" That on the same grounds it would always be irrational to wage war against any and every form of error, does not seem to have crossed the mind of this singular advocate of "the faith which has made the French soul" and which the French soul so thoroughly appreciates, to judge by recent legislation—this egregious "moralist" who was among the

bitterest opponents of justice being done to the martyred Dreyfus, the victim of race hatred and priestcraft.—*The Message*, October: edited by Revs. Hugh C. Wallace and Dr. J. Warschauer.

Rev. Silvester Horne, at the Congregational Conference, recommended billiards as a capital adjunct to Christianity. This means that it takes a lot of coaxing nowadays to get men to come and listen to the "old, old story." We are glad to hear it. It proves that Freethought propaganda is successful.

"Christian Science."

CHRISTIAN apologists always protest that the Bible was never intended to teach science. And they are right. Biblical "science" has no pretensions to enact knowledge. Biblical mathematics would disgrace a schoolboy. Biblical geology is stupid. Biblical history is largely imaginary, and Biblical zoology is too funny for words. In natural history not the very tyro could confound the hare with the ruminants. Yet the Bible tells us that the Creator of Darwin blundered about the hare chewing the cud. In the Bible the animals are nearly all "freaks." Where else can we find a talking snake, a lodging-house whale, or a pigeon co-responder? Where else are the fiery serpents, the dragons, the cockatrices, and the worm that never dies? Where else are the bedevilled pigs, the four-legged fowls, the unicorns, the cherubim, and the talking donkey? Where else is the bloater with a savings bank in his inside? And where else shall we find the wonderful menagerie of the Apocalypse? If the Bible teaches science, Cuvier, Buffon, Lamarck, and Darwin were as ignorant as Gold Coast niggers.

MIMNERMUS.

MORE LIGHT!

The last words of Leopardi were: I see here still less—open that window—let me see the light! (*Ci vedo più poco—apri quella finestra—fammi veder la luce!*); almost the same as those of Goethe, in which cheap philosophy has found noble intellectual suggestions, but which in truth proclaim simply the anxious and childlike desire of the darkening bodily eyes for the homely and cheerful earthly light.

—James Thomson ("B. V.")

The philosopher Bion said pleasantly of the king, who by handfals pulled his hair off his head for sorrow, "Does this man think that baldness is a remedy for grief?"—*Montaigne*.

OVER-CHEAPNESS.

We cannot generally get our dinner without working for it, and that gives us appetite for it; we cannot get our holiday without waiting for it, and that gives us zest for it; and we ought not to get our picture without paying for it, and that gives us a mind to look at it. Nay, I will even go so far as to say that we ought not to get books too cheaply. No book, I believe, is ever worth half so much to its reader as one that has been coveted for a year on a bookstall, and bought out of saved halfpence; and perhaps a day or two's fasting. That's the way to get at the cream of a book.

—*Ruskin*.

BULLET HOLE BIBLES.

In the curio dealer's private office lay a half dozen shabby pocket Bibles, each pierced two-thirds through with a round hole, like a bullet hole.

"They are bullet holes," said the dealer. "I know they are, because I made them myself."

He gave a loud laugh.

"A good many of my rich patrons," he said, "like to have among their heirlooms Bibles that have saved some soldier ancestor's life."

He winked.

"If you are a Son of the Revolution," he said, "what a nice thing it is to take down one of these perforated Bibles from a shelf in the library and hand it to your guest, saying:—

"This Bible saved the life of my maternal sixty-third cousin, Col. Adoniram McGill, in the night attack upon the British, led by Gen. Jones at Bear Creek, on the 3d day of August, and so forth, and so on."

"Yes," said the dealer, "I sell a good many of these Bibles to people with ancestors. To own such things is one of the fads and fancies of the smart set."

—*Louisville Courier-Journal*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 22, Town Hall, Birmingham; 3, "Why the 'Yellow Monkeys' Won: an Object Lesson to Christians"; 7, "The Beautiful Land Above."

October 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.—22, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 29, Queen's Hall, London. November 5, Birmingham; 26, Manchester. December 3, Birmingham.

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

J. A. MCCORRIE.—Thanks for a sight of your friend's interesting letter. The books you refer to are good for your purpose, but get hold if you can (say in a Glasgow Free Library) of Herbert Spencer's *Sociology* and Dr. Tylor's *Primitive Culture*.

E. V. S.—Cuttings are welcome.

C. W. STYRING.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. MCCARTHY.—Sent as requested. Glad to hear your friends were pleased with the Freethought lectures you took them to at Manchester.

PENDLETON.—We had already written a paragraph on the matter, but thanks for cutting all the same. Pleased to hear you are going to bring some of your friends to our next lectures at Manchester, and hope they will experience the "treat" you have promised them.

W. B. CLEVELAND.—Readers do us, and indirectly each other, a real service by sending us useful cuttings.

"MINNEMUS" writes that the sixpenny edition of Dumas that he referred to recently is published by Methuen.

"CHILPERIC," in sending us another welcome article, writes:—"I am glad to see you have settled the hash of the Torrey-Alexander Mission. Who shall say now that Secularism is powerless?"

HENRY SPENCE, secretary, writes:—"The West Ham Branch has voted another 10s. to the Paris Congress Fund. At the quarterly meeting on Thursday, the Committee passed a resolution of thanks and compliment to you and your colleagues with respect to your protest in Paris."

D. T. L.—Must stand over for another week, owing to our being so busy with other matters.

G. R. J.—Thanks for your trouble, but we cannot reply to sheer drivel. The reverend gentleman must have a wonderfully soft head—which, by the way, goes quite well with a hard heart.

A. G. LYE.—Glad to hear that Freethought propaganda will go on at Coventry.

G. B.—Too late for this week; in our next.

H. SILVERSTEIN.—We meant our editorial footnote to close the correspondence; besides, all the points in your rejoinder were clearly stated in your protest.

AMICUS.—We have not published anything on the subject you mention.

E. J. R. (Plymouth).—Pleased to hear that the distribution of our Torrey pamphlets is doing so much good.

H. R. CLIFTON.—Thanks; see paragraph. Glad you had a good time in Paris. It was an odd mistake for the Pantheon guide to make about the *Rights of Man*.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your very useful cuttings.

J. S. L.—Ingersoll would have degraded himself by taking the least notice of a wretched gutter liar like Clark Braden, for whom no church or religious organisation in America would stand sponsor. The publication in England of that adventurer's pamphlet on Ingersoll was worthy of the late John Kensit.

L. NIKOLA.—Sorry it is not possible at present.

PARIS CONGRESS FUND.—George Taylor £1, West Ham Branch 10s.

R. E. HOLDING.—Will deal with it next week.

ANTI-TORREY MISSION FUND.—W. Francis 2s., Unknown 2s. 6d.

W. FRANCIS.—Torrey pamphlets sent. Glad to hear there is a good prospect of the pamphlets being distributed when the new Ananias reaches Oxford.

T. H. P. (Devon).—Pleased to hear from you as one of our readers since 1885, and glad to have your good words and good wishes. The Plymouth "saints" are attending to Dr. Torrey.

F. J. C.—You should study the question; otherwise your questions will be only conundrums. Read, for instance, Dr. Wallace's *Darwinism*; you will then understand what "adaptation" really is.

J. W. E. BENNETT.—Thanks.

UNKNOWN.—Your "fifth mite" is duly acknowledged. Thanks.

E. V. STERRY.—Yes, we print on Wednesday, but the paper is off our hands on Tuesday night. Sorry you missed us, and that we missed you.

HARRY TUCKER.—We dealt with it in last week's "Sugar Plums." Accept our thanks for your efforts to draw Dr. Torrey into the daylight.

J. MACKINNON.—Of course we cannot write a paragraph on every cutting sent us. Sometimes the sender sees an opening where we do not. Thanks for your trouble. The present cuttings are too late for this week, but may be useful next week. Glad to know that you "devour" the *Freethinker*.

J. BARLOW (Devonport) writes: "We are busy here distributing the Torrey pamphlets, and I believe they are making an impression."

W. BINDON.—The last words uttered by Sir Henry Irving on the stage were in the play, and had no personal significance. But newspapers always catch at what will please their sentimental public.

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.

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (Oct. 22), afternoon and evening, in the Birmingham Town Hall. No doubt there will be a big rally of the local and district "saints," as well as a large attendance of the liberal-minded public. Our readers will see from Mr. Foote's article on the front page of this week's *Freethinker* that the circumstances are somewhat exciting. The harrying of the Birmingham Secularists by the Christian bigots of the city is reaching its climax.

Mr. Foote paid a highly successful visit to Glasgow on Sunday. His morning audience was a capital one, and the hall was densely crowded in the evening. The people were packed like sardines, every inch of standing room was occupied, and a considerable number of later comers were turned away from the doors. Mr. Scott presided at the morning meeting, and Mr. Turnbull at the evening's. Naturally the committee were radiant with pleasure. The evening assembly was a record one in point of attendance, and full of enthusiasm from beginning to end. Altogether it was a remarkably commentary on the hackneyed text about the "decay of Secularism."

Mr. Cohen had a good audience at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening in view of the terrible downpour of rain, which was bound to thin down a meeting gathered from various parts of London. We hear that his lecture was a very good one and highly appreciated. The music program was also greatly enjoyed. Five of the instrumental artists attended and played beautifully as before; and Madame Alice Lovenez and Mr. Richard Stanley delighted the audience with their very fine singing.

Mr. Lloyd occupies the Queen's Hall platform this evening (Oct. 22), and it is to be hoped that the weather will be more propitious on this occasion. There will be another first-rate musical program before the lecture.

The following is the instrumental music program for Queen's Hall this evening (Oct. 22):—March, "Maitre d'Armes," Gauwin; Idyll, "Liebe," Macbeth; Trio for Piano, Violin, and Cello, Bache; Violin Solo, "Hajre Katri," Hubay.

After his recent Sunday lectures at Glasgow a visit was paid by Mr. Cohen to Falkirk. We hear that his lecture was very successful, the hall being full, and the audience including a number of enthusiastic young men.

Mr. Lloyd successfully opened the Course of Lectures for the Newcastle Branch in the Lovaine Hall, and his addresses were very well received. Unfortunately a very severe rain storm considerably affected the evening audience. Some opposition was forthcoming at both lectures, and a question put to him in the evening as to how he accounted for the Welsh Revival was very effectively disposed of. Mr. Weatherburn who presided at the evening lecture, very properly reminded his hearers of their duty as Secular Missionaries, to regularly support such Lectures themselves at the same time to endeavor to bring others to listen to the same. Mr. Cohen, who is popular on Tyneside, will lecture to-day (Oct. 22) at 3 and 7, and it is hoped that he will have excellent audiences.

The *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* is one of the few journals in this country that is uniformly liberal in its treatment of

Freethought lectures. We are pleased to note again in its columns excellent and lengthy reports of both Mr. Lloyd's lectures.

Some excellent outspoken articles on religious questions have appeared lately in the *Independent Review*, a half-crown monthly published by Mr. T. Fisher Unwin. We turned with considerable expectation to one in the October number on "The Religion of All Good Men" by H. W. Garrod. On the whole, however, we were rather disappointed. Mr. Garrod admits that a growing number of intelligent and moral people find Christianity unsatisfying, but he holds that some form of religion (and apparently the very worst is better than none) must be found for them, and he believes that there is "some religion of good men" that can exist quite "independently of the creeds." But unfortunately he does not state what this religion is. Most of his article is devoted to finding fault, on very poor grounds, with the Religion of Humanity, with Auguste Comte, and with John Stuart Mill. He complains that the word "Duty" has "no warmth, color, inspiration, or adventure in it," forgetting not only Wordsworth's great ode but also Nelson's signal to his fleet on entering the battle of Trafalgar. As far as we follow him, he thinks that "Religion" possesses all that "Duty" lacks, that it deals with the unknown and the mysterious, and that men can only worship what they do not understand. In that case, we submit, the Catholic Church will supply them, in this part of the world, with all they require. And this is what Mr. Garrod seems to be drifting towards, for he deliberately advocates teaching children what we do not believe ourselves, apparently on the principle that passing through error is the only way to arrive at truth—which may be true in fact while false as a policy. We fancy Mr. Garrod is capable of writing a much better article, if he would only clear his mind and think consecutively. His title is a good one, and we hope he will yet do it better justice. Meanwhile his present article is valuable because of its frank admissions as to the increasing weakness of orthodox Christianity.

The October number of the *Hibbert Journal* contains a very able article by J. Ellis M'Taggart, Litt.D., Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, on "The Inadequacy of Certain Common Grounds of Belief." It is a most searching criticism—we might almost say a most scornful refutation—of the general run of arguments that are made use of by defenders of the faith. The author starts off boldly, giving a rapid sketch of his object, in the following words: "In this paper I shall consider some grounds of belief, other than direct argument, which are sometimes put forward as valid ground for belief in various dogmas of religion. In the first place, we must consider that belief which claims to dispense with argument altogether, and to rest itself on the intuitive convictions of the believer. And secondly, we must inquire into those grounds of belief which involve argument indeed, but indirect argument; which prove that the dogma in question is supported by certain authority, or that its truth is essential for our happiness, or for the moral value of the universe; and which then argue that a dogma must be true which is supported by such authority or whose truth is essential for such interests. I shall endeavor to show that none of these grounds of belief are valid. The consequence which I shall draw from their invalidity is, that the only valid ground of belief in a dogma of religion is to be found in a demonstration such as would be admissible in the case of any other metaphysical proposition."

One after another the orthodox jugglings, called arguments, are held up by Mr. M'Taggart, who shakes them out, shows there is nothing in them, and drops them to the ground as done with for ever. It is quite a treat to witness his disposal of the argument that "believers" are like good-sighted persons while "unbelievers" are like blind men. He points out that blind men have *touch*, by which they can very largely check the statements made to them by those who speak from *sight*. If a table is six feet in front of a blind man, he can walk up to it and find it there. No less vigorous and effective is Mr. Taggart's treatment of the argument from the "universality of belief." There is no really universal religious belief, and when you come to general beliefs you have to weigh the unbelievers as well as count them. The argument from "desire," the argument from the "awful consequences" of scepticism, the argument from the "benevolence of God," the argument from the frailty of our faculties; all these are riddled in masterly fashion. The whole article calls for some reply from the champions of faith. We hope one of them will have the courage to tackle the job.

Freethinkers at Oxford, especially those who would take part in distributing our Torrey pamphlets at the approaching Torrey-Alexander mission in that city, are requested to communicate with Mr. W. Francis, 52 Observatory-street.

The Authenticity of the Gospels.—II.

(Concluded from p. 668.)

WHILE the correspondence was going on in the *Daily Mail* on Clergymen and the Bible, the great gun, the Rev. Canon Wilson, undertook to demonstrate to the good people of Rochdale the correctness of the traditional view of the Gospels. According to the report of the lecture in the *Rochdale Observer*, the Canon commenced by referring to the theory of Baur, which had engaged the attention of scholars about the year 1860, since which date many clerical scholars, including such eminent names as Lightfoot, Westcott, Hort, Sanday, Harnack, and Blass, had expended much time in re-examination of "the evidence of the genuineness of the early dates of the Gospels and their authenticity"—the result of this forty years' labor being "a complete vindication of tradition."

"The result of modern research," continued the lecturer, "showed that the Gospels were written somewhere between the years 60 and 95. St. Mark's Gospel was usually assigned now to about the year 65; St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospels to some time between 65 and 80; and St. John's to about the year 90, or at the latest 95." Here, again, we have Mark's Gospel placed at the early date of 65. Destructive critics will, no doubt, be glad to learn the nature of the discoveries which have produced such a reversal of popular opinion. Well, in this case—wonderful to relate—Canon Wilson is quite ready to enlighten them.

These discoveries, we are told, fall under three heads. In the first place, "within the last thirty years there had been a very remarkable discovery of ancient books, such as the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, the *Apology of Aristides*, part of the *Second Epistle of Clement*, the *Oxyrhynchus papyri*; and chief of all the *Diatessaron of Tatian*, which was a harmony of the four Gospels, compiled between A.D. 150 and 170." The second kind of evidence is found in "the significance of certain differences in the Gospels, of insertions or omissions." The third and last kind of evidence is derived from "the exploration and discovery of inscriptions in Asia Minor, Egypt, and Greece," the result being "to vindicate St. Luke as a historian."

After reading this formidable array of newly discovered evidence, what Rationalist or sceptic will have the temerity to deny that Mark's Gospel was written as early as A.D. 65? That anyone should venture to do so is almost too much to expect. Still, as I have undertaken to examine the grounds upon which the foregoing conclusions are based, I will try and summon courage to offer a few pertinent remarks on the new evidence mentioned. And the first comment I feel called upon to make is that not one of the three classes of evidence named can in any way affect the dates assigned to the Gospels. Thus "the result of modern research" during the last forty years has produced no fresh evidence of the alleged early dates of the Gospels.

I will now notice each of these new "evidences" as fully as space will allow, and will commence with the recovered ancient writings.

The *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* is first named by Eusebius (A.D. 325), and contains internal evidence of having been drawn up between A.D. 160 and 200. It does not name any of the four Gospels.

The *Apology of Aristides* is also first mentioned by Eusebius, who states that it was "addressed to Hadrian." In the most reliable of the newly discovered documents the *Apology* is addressed to "the Emperor Cæsar Titus Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius" (A.D. 138-161). The writer does not name any of the canonical Gospels. He says: "Take now their *writings* and read in them.....as I have read in their *writings*." Judging by the internal evidence, the "writings" referred to were two of the Pauline Epistles and an early apocryphal Gospel—the "Preaching of Peter."

The *Second Epistle of Clement* is of uncertain date (A.D. 160 seems most probable). It does not name any of the four Gospels. The recovered portion proves the existence of an uncanonical Gospel which, from a quotation by Clement of Alexandria, appears to have been the "Gospel according to the Egyptians."

The *Oxyrhynchus papyri*, of unknown date, contain a number of sayings ascribed to Jesus, which are not found in the canonical Gospels. According to Dr. Lock, Professor of Exegesis, Oxford, "They are either real sayings of His or sayings put into His mouth by some Christian teachers in Egypt in the second century." They contain no reference to any of the four Gospels.

The *Diatessaron of Tatian* is a purely mythical document. The recovered Harmony cannot be shown to have any connection with Tatian. This completes the list of recovered ancient writings, and not one of them sheds the smallest light upon the dates of the compilation of the canonical Gospels.

We come now to the second kind of evidence—variations in the text of the Gospels, as recorded by scholars who have collated the most ancient and important of the MSS. extant. Under this head Canon Wilson adduces as examples Luke xxiii. 34 and John v. 4, which are found in some MSS., and omitted in others. The Canon then tells us how these variations arose: "There had been an interpolated text alongside of texts which were not interpolated, and some of the copies were made by those men who had had these verses from the MSS. in which they were inserted, while there were other men who made copies for those in which they had not been inserted. This shows that behind these interpolated and non-interpolated texts there must have been annotated texts." This is doubtless very interesting; but I really cannot see how it affects the dates at which the Gospels were written. We know that the variations in the New Testament manuscripts which have been collated number several tens of thousands; but we also know that these are nearly all due to errors of copyists. There are, of course, scores of omissions and different readings which cannot be assigned to this cause—among which are the two examples cited. But since fresh copies of the Gospels could only be obtained by copying from existing MSS., it is not surprising that any omissions or interpolations contained in early manuscripts should be found in later copies. In order, however, to get at the true reason for omissions, etc., I will take as an example one of those adduced by Canon Wilson—John v. 4. This verse is omitted by the two oldest codices, the Sinaitic and Vatican, both assigned to the fourth century, and by many later MSS. It is found in the Alexandrian Codex of the fourth or fifth century, in about a dozen Uncials, and in many later MSS. In this dilemma we have recourse to quotations of the Fathers, and find the verse referred to by Tertullian (A.D. 200). It was therefore in the text of his copy, and probably in every other copy in his day. But our oldest MSS. go back only to the fourth century; it was therefore omitted in some copies between the days of Tertullian and the date of our oldest MSS. Now, why was this verse purposely omitted after Tertullian's time? Simply because the passage was believed by a new generation of more intelligent Christian churchmen to be unhistorical and an outrage on common sense. Here are the words omitted:—

"waiting for the moving of the water: for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole, with whatsoever disease he was holden."

In the English Revised Version this passage is struck out of the text and placed in the Margin; but it is not got rid of, for the omitted verse is implied in the narrative which remains. In verse 7 the sick man says to Jesus: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming another steppeth down before me." It is thus quite clear that the suppressed passage formed part of the original Gospel narrative. The same reason

for excision applies to the omission of Mark xvi. 9-20 in many ancient MSS. It is not true that "them that believe" receive power to cast out demons, to speak with new tongues, to take up serpents and drink poison unharmed, and to heal the sick by laying hands on them (verses 17-18). This paragraph, however, formed part of the text in the time of Irenæus (A.D. 185).

We now come to the question, How do the countless variations in the text of the New Testament MSS. from the fourth century downwards prove that the Gospels were written in the first century, and between the years 65 and 90? I pause for a reply—and I am likely to pause till doomsday. The variations referred to carry the Gospels no farther back than the days of Irenæus, or by inference some twenty or thirty years earlier; that is to say, to about the middle of the second century—and there I will leave them until something in the shape of evidence is forthcoming to prove them to be older.

We come, next, to the evidence derived from inscriptions which, we are told, "vindicate St. Luke as a historian." The nature of this evidence is not stated; it is therefore unnecessary here to notice it. I may say, however, in passing, that it has reference only to some names of places and to titles of Roman governors incidentally mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and does not affect the dates assigned to the Gospels.

The last matter to be noticed in Canon Wilson's lecture is the following remarkable statement:—

"There is evidence that St. John at Ephesus had a school of those who studied and collected the Gospels, and that his Gospel was written with the aid of these. This is not only tradition, but it is in writing that his Gospel was written with the knowledge of the other three, and was written in some cases to supplement, and in others to correct, what had been an error of memory. Therefore that carries the four Gospels back to the time of St. John at Ephesus."

Before replying to this luminous statement let us look at the evidence upon which it is based. Irenæus says: "Afterwards.....John did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus." Tertullian says that John was plunged unharmed into a cauldron of boiling oil, and "thence remitted to his island home" (Prescription 36). Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200) says: "After the death of the tyrant, John returned to Ephesus from the Isle of Patmos." Eusebius (A.D. 325) says that the first three Gospels having been handed to the apostle John, "they say that he admitted them, giving his testimony to their truth," but remarked that many important matters had been omitted. To supply these deficiencies "*it is said*" that John "wrote the account of the time not recorded by the other evangelists, and the deeds done by the Savior which they had passed over" (Eccl. Hist., iii., 24). It is quite true that we have these statements "in writing"; but what are they all worth? Absolutely nothing. They are not evidence; they are silly conjectures that arose more than a century after the time of the apostles, when nothing was known respecting the origin of the Gospels. It has already been shown that Irenæus, who first names these veracious histories, knew nothing about them—or their reputed writers. The same applies to all later Fathers.

There remains but to notice a choice sample of apologetic reasoning. It is seriously argued that *because* someone (who lived nearly two centuries after apostolic times) originated a story of the disciple John having seen the first three Gospels before writing his own, "*therefore* that carries the four Gospels back to the time of St. John at Ephesus." We know now why it is "absolutely undisputed" that Mark's Gospel was written in the year 65, and why the other three Gospels are first century documents "of a high order of historical accuracy." And this inimitable method of reasoning is one of the results of forty years' careful study of Christian evidences. Furthermore, as to Canon Wilson's other statement, we have no evidence that the apostle John "had a school of those who studied and collected the Gospels,

and that his Gospel was written with the aid of these." This, again, is a late story, invented to explain the following mysterious statement at the end of the Fourth Gospel:—

"This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: *and we know* that his witness is true."

The "we" was conjectured to be some of the other apostles, and we find this stated "in writing" in the Muratorian Fragment—a document that must be dated A.D. 180 to 200. This completes the "evidence" advanced by Canon Wilson, and it will be seen that it is made up of a number of unwarranted assumptions, propounded with the clerical assurance which usually accompanies a complete ignorance of what constitutes evidence.

ABRACADABRA.

A Vision of Hell.

Of Hell's dread Emperor, with pomp supreme,
And Godlike imitated state.

—MILTON.

Thro' the air
I seemed to soar on eagle wings,
Borne upward thro' the widening deep,
Beyond where Saturn whirls and swings
His luminous shade. With circling sweep
Above the high Olympian steep,
In furthest space; and strange to tell,
I reached the shining gate of Hell.
A massive gate, which towering high
Stood graven in gold against a sky
Of roseate flame. Orion hung
A mighty orb amid the belt
Of flashing suns.

I entered in. Before my sight
A city, wonderful and vast
Uprose, of beauty and delight;
Column on column, over-wrought
With rarest sculpture, richly cast;
Many hued marble, which had caught
From some great Master of the Past,
The semblance of enduring thought.

I paused awhile! With courtly grace
My guide, who hitherto had led
My eager steps as on we went
Showed me the beauties of the place;
Beauty is only truth, he said.
Weird and sublime, for all things lent
A strange enchanting ravishment
Unto the sense; nothing concealed,
But all of beauty stood revealed.
There I beheld with mine own eyes
The glories of Hell's paradise!

At length, I reached with steps elate
The palace, where enthroned in state
Imperial Satan reigns supreme
High chief of that immortal race
Of lesser gods and powers, that gave
To Michael, Heaven's revolted slave—
As told in Milton's wond'rous theme—
Thunders and lightnings and fierce hate,
When driven forth from Heaven's gate
He dared the Almighty to His face,
And took his swift icarian flight
Thro' chaos, and the realms of night,
To found new empires, where the gleam
Of far off suns shed clearer light
And flood the depths of life's dull stream.

Within that palace, no rude flame
Nor baleful fires their smoked consumed.
A golden glow suffused full clear
All shapes and objects moving there,
And thro' the radiant atmosphere
A mightier sun than ours, illumed
That wond'rous city everywhere.
Wide portals opening on the dawn,
And, drawing nigher, one could hear
The fountain floods, which rose and sank
In showers upon a velvet lawn,
Nigh to a valley green and dank—
And one but wondered whence they came.

Then, for a moment, spake the voice
Of him, my sole appointed guide;
Whilst world on world in boundless space

Fulfil their doom, in ordered state;
While throne and altar tumble down
And empires crumble into dust,
And sword and warbolt slowly rust
In *yon* far planet of thy birth,
Known as the madden'd whirling earth;
Whose children are the sport of fate
And of that God, whom we despise,
And yet, whom they, His creatures own,
Before whose presence they but kneel
As bond slaves bound upon the wheel.

Look thou, with more than mortal eyes,
A million stars amid the void
And this, is Hell. Do thou rejoice!
Within this realm all men are free,
Here, no one dreads a tyrant's frown
Nor iron rule of bloody kings,
Whose sceptre, orb, and hollow crown
Are but the emblems of that rule
Which some belated minstrel sings,
Gilding the forehead of the fool.
For here, sits Reason, unalloyed
In quiet calm and sweet content,
And thought, assigned her rightful place
Is free to choose her element.
And here, are some, the nobly great,
And these are spirits who made choice
Of wisdom, from which virtue springs,
And goodness, over-topping hate,
And truth, which probes the root of things.
And in this palace high and wide
Is one, his country's joy and pride,
Whom mortals have desired to see
But hath not seen. Freedom hath won
For thee, an earth-born mortal here,
A path beyond the moon and sun:
For thee, Hell's secret doors unfold
Which thou art privileged to behold;
Therefore, stand firm, and do not fear
To greet our Chief of high renown,
Him who did wield the lightning's spear,
That first great leader of revolt
Lord of the levin thunderbolt.

Ere that strange voice had died away
I looked, and saw the face of him
Who erstwhile fought with cherubim;
An ample robe inwove with gold
Hung o'er his shoulders, fold on fold,
And blown aside at times, would show
His supple limbs; while o'er a brow
Grown pale with thought, black tresses lay.
Majestic was his mien, and grand,
Like one who heralds in the day
Of some new era, in a land
Newly discovered, yet remote.
There was about him that which smote
The soul with wonder, and did fill
The sense with pleasure undefined;
For his, the imperial type of mind
That knows not failure nor defeat,
And the unconquerable will
Shone in his look. A perfume sweet
Seemed to distil in that wide hall
From flowers and fruits ambrosial,
And shed its fragrance at his feet;
While round about the gorgeous seat
Of that high royal throne, which held
This deity unparalleled,*
The stalwarts of the sons of men
Who fought the battles of our race
Whilst here on earth, with voice and pen,
Gathered together in that place
And told their conquests o'er again.
Such was my dream, what time the brain
Is drowsed by sleep, and weaves in vain
Those idle fancies light as air,
When sometimes one may catch a gleam
Of something strange, and rich and rare;
And yet dreams are not what they seem
But trifles that come unawares
To vex the dreamer.

WILLIAM EMSLEY.

* See Milton's "Arcades."

In this restless earth, the only true happiness is to be found in acts of affection and benevolence, and in the development of our faculties.—Goethe.

Correspondence.

FLOGGING AT ETON COLLEGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A few days ago, at the beginning of school, the headmaster of Eton was presented with a birch by the head boy. On acknowledging the gift, the Rev. the Hon. E. Lyttelton is reported to have said that "he felt he could not have flogged a boy before this official presentation." Without stating at length what these words imply, it is needless to say that they indicate to some extent that the new headmaster has somewhat succumbed to his new environment.

Ridiculous as such a presentation would appear to the minds of hundreds of gifted and enlightened teachers engaged in training youths of a similar age without resort to beating, it refinedly embodies the survival of one of the cruel and savage practices of the past. The pernicious influence and example of flogging at Eton permeate all ranks of society, and are responsible for the public tone of mind which yet resists (though not so much as a few years ago) the onward march against the abolition of cruel and disgusting corporal punishments.

The degrading effect of the practice at Eton and other public schools is well known. There can be little doubt that it is accountable for the laws which allow flogging, for the sentences of those judges and magistrates who order flogging, for the "ragging" in the Army and Navy, and for the rowdyism which is not unknown to university life. Dr. Maguire, the aristocratic army "coach," has pointed out with reference to Eton that "the hooliganism in the army is not to be wondered at, when it is recognised that the officers have been flogged at school up to the age of seventeen." He significantly adds: "This degrading tradition is brought straight from the schools into the barracks." Doubtless these words apply with equal force to the navy "ragging" incident of a few months ago. If the flogging at public schools such as Eton has a degrading effect upon the Army and Navy officers recruited from these schools, is it not likely that a similar contamination will debase other channels of national activity, the agents of which have been recruited from the same and like sources.

LLEWELLYN W. WILLIAMS, B.Sc.,

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THE RAVAGE OF WAR.

Fancy what we should have had around us now, if, instead of quarreling and fighting over their work, the nations had aided each other in their work, or if even in their conquests, instead of effacing the memorials of those they succeeded and subdued, they had guarded the spoils of their victories. Fancy what Europe would be now, if the delicate statues and temples of the Greeks—if the broad roads and massy walls of the Romans—if the noble and pathetic architecture of the middle ages, had not been ground to dust by mere human rage. You talk of the scythe of Time, and the tooth of Time: I tell you Time is scytheless and toothless; it is we who gnaw like the worm—we who smite like the scythe. It is ourselves who abolish—ourselves who consume: we are the mildew, and the flame; and the soul of man is to its own work as the moth that frets when it cannot fly, and as the hidden flame that blasts where it cannot illuminate. All these lost treasures of human intellect have been wholly destroyed by human industry of destruction; the marble would have stood its two thousand years as well in the polished statue as in the Parian cliff; but we men have ground it to powder, and mixed it with our own ashes.—*Ruskin.*

HELL.

Bellarmin makes sweating and crowding one of the chief torments of hell, which Lessius (no doubt after an actual and careful survey) affirms to be exactly a Dutch mile (about a league and a half English) in diameter. But Ribera, grounding his map on deductions from the Apocalypse, makes it two hundred Italian miles. Lessius, it may be presumed, was a Protestant, for whom, of course, a smaller hell would suffice.—*Coleridge.*

A BETTER BIBLE.

While the principles of Epictetus and Antoninus are essentially the same, the tone of the one so far differs from that of the other that the two seem, as it were, to have changed characters, or at least situations: the Slave is insistent and imperious, the Emperor gentle and resigned.

The former, addressing pupils, presses them with the most searching questions, and unrelentingly submits them to the most vigorous and rigorous practical discipline; the latter, jotting down private notes, often gives way to musing, and shows more of ideality, his thoughts floating in reverie over vast æons, till the present and the whole lifetime become but as vanishing points. But the two are equally noble, brave, sincere, and magnanimous; each an honor to the human race. High as are the names in Bohn's Classical Series, were my choice thereof limited to two volumes, I think I would take these rugged notes of the Emperor and of the oral teaching of the ex-Slave. With these for moral philosophy, and Plutarch for biography, all who want sacred writings without dreams and fictions of the supernatural have a sufficient Bible, an adequate manual of heroic and generous culture. In them may be read what Shelley had in his thought when he wrote:—

"So taught the kings of old philosophy,
Who reigned before religion made men blind."

—James Thomson ("B.V.")

A FLIGHT OF COLORED FANCY.

When I gets t' Heaven—Ah 's dat contrary—
Ah wants tuh wu'k—en de Commissary!
Tas'in' de boolyongs, seasonin' stew—
Twangin' dem ha'pstrings jes' suit you!

Dar sh'll be spring chickens, yaller as gol',
Wif watahmillions bofe ripe an' col',
Wif new potatoes, an' 'possum meat,
Swimmin' in graby, pow'ful sweet!

Um-yum! niggeh, don' dat soun' good?—

Ain' dat de fines' ob-a Angel food?

Wif fricasseeed veal, an' sugah-cyohed ham—

Po'teh-house—musheroons—green peas—lamb!

Turrahpin—oystehs—tu'tle-soup!

T' rouse yo' sperrits w'en dey droop!

Oh, fo' a mennoo, jes' lak' dat,

Wouldn't yo' gib yo' high silk hat?

Skimmin' de cream f'm de Milky Way,

Fuh de riches' kin' ob a new glahssay!

Sprinklin' stahs on de Birfday cakes!—

Shinin' dem saffiah sugah-shakes!

An' t'umpin' dem golden dinneh-gongs,

While you'se a-singin' dem angel-songs!

Eben de choiah gals leabes dey seat—

"Bress dat niggeh! hit's time tuh eat!"

—W. Alburn Crowell, in "Life."

There is something more or less wrong with us old European nations. The conditions of our existence are far too artificial and complicated, our food and mode of living are not really natural, and our social intercourse is not loving and benevolent. Everyone is polished and courteous enough, but no one has the courage to be cordial or sincere; so that the lot of an honest man whose inclinations and ideas are unsophisticated is by no means enviable. One cannot help often wishing that one had been born a so-called savage on some South Sea island, that one might have enjoyed a thoroughly unalloyed human existence.—*Goethe.*

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so wisely—they are thrust

Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

Myself when young did eagerly frequent

Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument

About it and about: but evermore

Came out by the same door where in I went.

—Omar Khayyam (*Fitzgerald's*).

TRUE MORALITY.

But what does it matter, some will ask, whether man do the thing that is just because he thinks God is watching; because he believes in a kind of justice that pervades the universe; or for the simple reason that to his conscience this thing seems just? It matters above all. We have there three different men. The first, whom God is watching, will do much that is not just, for every god whom man has hitherto worshiped has decreed many unjust things. And the second will not always act in the same way as the third, who is indeed the true man to whom the moralist will turn, for he will survive both the others; and to foretell how man will conduct himself in truth, which is his natural element, is more interesting to the moralist than to watch his behavior when enmeshed in falsehood.—*Maeterlinck.*

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, J. Lloyd, "The Christian Degradation of Morals." Instrumental music at 7.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Early Christianity."

OUTDOOR.

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies; Brockwell Park, 3.15, F. A. Davies. Wednesday, Oct. 23, corner of Rushcroft-road, Brixton, Louis B. Gallagher.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall): G. W. Foote, 3, "Why the 'Yellow Monkeys' Won: an Object Lesson for Christians"; 7, "The Beautiful Land Above." Tea provided at the Town Hall, 5 o'clock.

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Rooms, Broadgate; entrance between Maypole and Melia's shops): Thursday, Oct. 26, at 8, A. G. Lye, "Does the Working Man Need Christ?"

FAIRSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Mossley Clarion Choir.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class: D. Ross, "Freewill"; 6.30, Social Meeting.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-Street): Monday Oct. 23, Wm. Fay McMaster, "Bag o' Belief."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Rev. S. D. Headlam, "The Schools, the Bible, and the Church."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, H. Percy Ward, "The Doom of Priestcraft in 'Infidel France';" "The Virgin-Mother and Ghost-Father of Jesus." Monday, 8, Rationalist Debating Society: Thomas Bannister, "Shams and Humbugs."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. C. Schwizer, "Roman Civilisation Before Christ, and What We Owe to It."

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N. S. S. (Louvain Hall, St. Mary's-place): C. Cohen, 3, "The Shadow of the Gods"; 7, "The Non-Religion of the Future."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, Oct. 26, at 8, J. Charter, "Scott's Novels."

PORTh BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, S. Holman, "The Practice of Prayer."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Business Meeting.

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S. (Old Court Hall, King-street): Sunday, Oct. 29, H. Percy Ward, 11, "Was Man Made in the Image of God, or in the Image of the Ape?" 3, "Theism Confuted and Atheism Vindicated"; 7, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Exist?"

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