

# THE Freethinker

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*All sanitary purification begins by opening the windows wide. Let us open wide all intellects; let us supply souls with air.*—VICTOR HUGO.

## The Blasphemy Laws.

WE have already called upon Freethinkers to press their grievances upon the attention of parliamentary candidates during the elections which will shortly take place all over the kingdom. In our opinion they should refuse to vote for any candidate who is not prepared to grant them the same legal rights that are enjoyed by their Christian fellow citizens. A candidate who tells a man that he ought not to have the common rights of citizenship, and then asks him for his vote, is guilty of consummate impudence.

Some candidates pretend to be ignorant of the Blasphemy Laws; others are really ignorant of them; and in order that the matter may be put fairly and squarely before these gentlemen we pen the following explanation.

Under the old English law the Ecclesiastical Courts tried heresy, blasphemy, schism, and other such offences: and by the writ *de heretico comburendo* atheists, heretics, blasphemers, and schismatics could be burnt to death. This penalty was abolished in 1677 by the Act 29 Charles II., cap. 9, which did not, however, take away the power of the Ecclesiastical Courts to deal with such offenders by "censures not extending to death." But in the course of time the Ecclesiastical Courts lost actual jurisdiction except over clergymen of the Church of England.

As heresy dropped out of sight more attention was paid to blasphemy. A special Act was passed against it in the reign of William III. It was entitled "An Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaness." It declares that

"any person or persons having been educated in, or at any time having made profession of, the Christian religion within this realm who shall, by writing, printing, teaching or advised speaking, deny any one of the persons in the Holy Trinity to be God, or shall assert or maintain that there are more gods than one, or shall deny the Christian doctrine to be true, or the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority"

shall upon conviction be disabled from holding any ecclesiastical, civil, or military employment, and on a second conviction be imprisoned for three years and deprived for ever of all civil rights.

This Act (9 & 10 William III, cap. 32) was drawn so tightly as to defeat its object. No prosecution ever took place under it. But it still disgraces the Statute Book (except so far as the Unitarians were covered by the 53 George III, cap. 160), and both the late Lord Coleridge and the late Sir James Stephen called it "ferocious." Even as late as 1867, it was held by Chief Baron Kelley and Lord Bramwell, in a civil action, that a lecture on "The Character and Teachings of Christ; the former Defective, the latter Misleading," was an offence against this Statute. And it should be noticed that this Statute is levelled against *opinions*; there is not a word about the *language* in which they might be expressed.

All prosecutions for blasphemy have been under the Common Law. Judges felt justified in declaring that Christianity was part and parcel of the law of the land. In Woolston's case (1730) the Court "would not suffer it to be debated whether to write against Christianity in general was not an offence at Common Law." In Carlile's case (1819) the Court "was bound not to hear the truth of the Christian religion questioned." In the case of Hetherington (1841) it was decided by Lord Chief Justice Denman that "an attack upon the Old Testament is clearly indictable." When the late Charles Bradlaugh was illegally arrested at Devonport, in 1861, for *intending* to lecture against the Bible, he brought an action for false imprisonment, and obtained *one farthing* damages; Lord Justice Erle laying it down that, although the policeman acted illegally, he thereby prevented Bradlaugh from illegally disseminating infidel opinions.

Sir James Stephen defined Blasphemy in his *Digest of the Criminal Law* as—"A denial of the truth of Christianity in general, or of the existence of God, whether the terms of such publication are decent or otherwise." This view is borne out by the language of Indictments. The editor of the *Freethinker*, in 1883, was indicted for attempting "to bring the Holy Scriptures and the Christian religion into disbelief and contempt," and doing this "to the great displeasure of Almighty God."

But while the editor of the *Freethinker* was suffering twelve months' imprisonment under that indictment he was brought up again for another trial under a precisely similar one, and Lord Chief Justice Coleridge then delivered an entirely new judgment, declaring that "if the decencies of controversy are observed, even the fundamentals of religion may be attacked without a person being guilty of blasphemous libel."

This statement of the Common Law of Blasphemy, even if it never be reversed, leaves Freethinkers in very much the same danger of imprisonment. They are punishable for not respecting "the decencies of controversy," but Christians are not punishable for the same "offence." Moreover a Freethinker prosecuted for blasphemy would in all probability be tried by a Christian judge and jury, who would really have to decide whether he had been polite enough in attacking *their* opinions. Could anything be more monstrous? Could anything be more absurd?

Charles Bradlaugh introduced a Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, but only forty-seven members of the House of Commons voted for it, and it was lost. But that Bill should be introduced again by some lover of liberty.

Meanwhile every candidate for parliament should be asked these questions: (1) Are you in favor of equal rights and liberties for all forms of belief in matters of religion? (2) Are you prepared to vote for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, under which Freethinkers are liable—as Christians are not—to prosecution, fine, and imprisonment for disseminating their opinions?

Freethinkers in every part of the country should put these questions to the local parliamentary candidates, and respectfully demand straightforward answers. This may be done at public meetings or by correspondence. And we should be glad to hear of the replies.

G. W. FOOTE.



## New Year Reflections.

To look back upon a year's work is generally—almost inevitably—an occasion for both pleasure and regret. So much has been done, but so much remains to be accomplished, that whether the one feeling or the other predominates is almost wholly a question of temperament. Propaganda is, too, of all tasks the most difficult to carry on. It is hard in ordinary matters, but tenfold harder when, as is the case of Freethought propaganda, one is fighting traditions and beliefs that are in one form or another almost as old as human nature itself. In this case, one has to almost create a new language in which to think. It is enough if under such conditions one can point to *some* progress, and to realise that each step forward makes the next one comparatively easier. And there exists ample evidence that during the past year the stream of Freethought has run with greater force than ever. Inside and outside the churches the horizon of thought is widening, and although this growing unbelief is expressed under various guises, its presence is obvious to all who intelligently follow contemporary events.

So far as Freethought is concerned, the outstanding feature of the year that has just closed has been the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese war. The mere fact of an eastern nation having stood up against, and thrashed, a western one, would in itself have been epoch-making. But great and significant as is this fact, other aspects of the conflict are more important still. Hitherto the Christian churches have maintained their idle talk of the superiority of their religion by predominance in numbers, and by the extensive ignorance of the average Christian concerning the lives and habits of the people of non-Christian countries. The war has certainly gone far to destroy this last factor, and in so doing, considerably discounted the first. The Christian is to-day faced by the indisputable fact that a nation that is not, has not been, and, to all appearance, will not be Christian, has raised itself to the front rank, has shown itself the equal of Christian nations in war, and in all that makes for real greatness of character, their superiors.

For it is certain that in no war of modern times has any Christian nation behaved with the level-headedness and magnanimity that the Japanese displayed during and after their recent conflict. To go no further back than our own South African war, the Japanese restraint and general good behavior stands out in striking contrast to the hooliganism, bad taste, and "Mafficking" that ushered in and accompanied the war with the Boers. Nor is it less significant that it is the Christian nations of the world that have made ability to conduct a large and bloody war, the condition of a non-Christian nation being accepted as a "Great Power." The Japanese are no more "civilised" now than they were before the war. The only new thing is that they have shown their military efficiency. And it is the followers of the "Prince of Peace" who have made this the great test of civilisation. Culture without it could not place Japan on a level with other nations. Lack of civilisation with military strength did not detract from Russia's "greatness!"

Now to all the clap-trap concerning the superiority of Christianity, the war has placed at the disposal of Freethinkers an easy and obvious retort. This is simply to point to Japan. A people that can become what the Japanese have made themselves, without Christianity, can have nothing to gain from its acceptance. And that the Japanese can be as they are without Christianity is conclusive evidence that it is not necessary for the development of character or the progress of civilisation. If they can get along without it so may we. The Japanese are willing to learn from us anything we have to teach in science, art, or literature. They see no need for our religion. They see that religion is a mere by-product of civilisation, but is not one of its causes; and although this lesson may take some time to sink into the

average mind, there is no doubt as to its ultimate effect. Greater than the Japanese victory over the Russians, has been their triumph in proving to the followers of the most intolerant of religions that their creed offers nothing but what civilised people can do without, and nothing that is essential to those who are in process of becoming civilised.

Nor should the lesson from Japan be ignored. The Russian people have been intensely Christian for nearly twenty-five generations. If ever a Church moulded a people, then the Russian Church moulded the people of Russia. And there is scarcely a competent authority on Russia who does not drive home the lesson that the chief condition of the long servitude and apathy and degradation of the people, has been the widespread dominance of the Russian Church. Brute force may have brought about enslavement in the first instance, but it was spiritual tyranny that made its perpetuation possible. Christian Russia on the one side, non-Christian Japan on the other! Does the world need a greater or a more vivid contrast? In its monarch, its ruling class, its people, the contrast is complete. It is a picture of what a country may become under Christianity, and what a country can become in its absence.

1906 opens with a general election imminent, and if the Nonconformists have their way, and the Liberal party is returned to power, one of the earliest measures will be an amendment of the Education Acts. Freethinkers would certainly not quarrel with an amendment of these acts, provided it was in the direction of securing justice all round. But as the Nonconformists are as determined as ever in making education the occasion of securing a mere sectarian victory over the Established Church, the only interest of Freethinkers in the situation is in how far it may become the means of expelling religious instruction from the schools altogether. Dr. Clifford has, in his customary manner, just issued what is intended as a manifesto on the subject, in which, with the usual Nonconformist "blather" it is stated, the Free Churches demand "Biblical instruction" in public schools where the majority of people demand it. But what is the difference between biblical instruction at the request of a majority, and definite sectarian instruction at the request of a majority, and from both of which a minority may dissent, Dr. Clifford does not explain. And as Dr. Clifford has been repeatedly asked—and has just as repeatedly run away from the question—to state the difference between the two cases, as it has been pointed out to him over and over again, that the right of giving religious instruction out of public funds is a question that should not be determined by majorities at all, and that where it is given no regulation, ever has or ever will prevent the teacher infusing purely sectarian views into the instruction, the manifesto may be treated as the last of a long tissue of Nonconformist evasions and insincerities.

Bearing this in mind, and also that both Nonconformist and Episcopalian unite in upholding statutory regulations that oppress Freethinkers, and social customs that, perhaps, oppress them still more, it would be certainly well if Freethinkers all over the country were to act upon the advice given in a recent issue of the *Freethinker* and make a stand on their own account for their rights as citizens. It is useless expecting anything from Parliament. Parliament will never do more than outside opinion forces it to do, and pressure will not be brought to bear unless it is seen that the votes of Freethinkers can only be obtained by treating them with decency and honesty. The great increase in the number of Freethinkers makes a policy of this description more than ever desirable. They are too numerous to-day to be suppressed, and are too prominent to be quite shut out from public life. And so the new rule would seem to be for the religious world to overlook the fact of a candidate for public honors being a Freethinker, so long as he keeps his opinions to himself. Two known Freethinkers are at present Cabinet ministers. Whether they would have been in that position had they persisted in an open attack



upon the religious opinions they disagree with, may be fairly questioned.

Promotion in public life may even operate as a bribe to ensure silence. I do not mean that the bribe is offered openly and deliberately. In this form it would be accepted by few. But when silence on religious subjects is made the condition of advancement in public life, the bribe is there nevertheless. It is not as though the game was being played with an even elementary sense of fair play. For while the Freethinker is expected to keep his anti-religious opinions to himself, the Christian is permitted to voice his religious opinions whenever he sees fit. And the curious thing is to find how many of the Freethinkers in the political world sanction this one-sided procedure. Surely it ought to be recognised, even upon the lowest grounds, that if the rule is to be applied at all it should be applied all round. If religion is to be kept out of politics—and nothing could be more desirable—let it be kept out by believer as well as by unbeliever. But for the unbeliever only to be silent, is to allow the religious world to force him to give an object lesson in the worthlessness of his own opinions.

Some stand on this matter ought to be made, and the sooner the better. At least Freethinkers should unite in showing the religious world that they no longer intend to permit their opinions to be treated as though they were of no social or intellectual value, but a mere form of mental dissipation to be put on one side when the serious business of life commences. If Freethought is worth anything at all, its value lies in its application to actual life. And to make silence in this direction the condition of our activity in politics is to undo with one hand whatever good we are doing with the other. If Christianity is inimical to public welfare, to be silent is to help the Churches so far as we may. Next to believing in Christianity, the unbeliever who remains silent is its best friend. It was Kingdon Clifford's advice that those who believed Christianity to be false should declare its falsity from the housetops, and unfortunately the march of events has not yet made the advice old-fashioned.

C. COHEN.

### Christmastide Reflections.

ANOTHER Christmas has come and gone, and our minds are filled with significant reflections. The day is no longer what it used to be. Like the Sabbath, it is being rapidly secularised. The mass of the people look upon it as merely a public holiday. Its religious character is practically forgotten. Very few people, comparatively, observe it as the day on which, so many centuries ago, God became Flesh in order to save a world lost and ruined by the Fall. Indeed, one clergyman, in his Christmas Day sermon, admitted that "there were tens of thousands to whom Christmas meant less than nothing. They knew nothing of its joy and peace, for the incarnation of the Son of God had lost its meaning to them." In point of fact, however, the incarnation of the Son of God is no longer accepted as a reality except by a swiftly diminishing minority. Not many can now say, with the Bishop of London, that in Christ we have "a person whose life and deeds can be proved up to the very hilt of history." Most of the criticism of to-day is doing the very opposite of what the Bishop is so confident he is able to accomplish.

I devoted Christmas Day to a re-perusal of a theological work of high merit, a treatise on the Atonement, by one of the ablest and profoundest divines of the latter half of the nineteenth century. He was a moderate Calvinist, who fifty years ago was regarded as an advanced thinker on orthodox lines. To him Jesus of Nazareth was a Divine Being, the second person in the Holy Trinity. His birth into human nature was the most stupendous miracle in history. It was the birth, not of a human

being, but of a Divine Being, who never was, even for a moment, a human person, but always remained a Divine Person. In his birth of the Virgin He merely assumed humanity, and utilised it as a house or tent in which to dwell while accomplishing the great work of Redemption on behalf of the elect. Such is the orthodox doctrine of the person of Christ as unfolded in the book just mentioned. The author quotes, with approval, the following passage from Hooker:—

"The Flesh and the conjunction of the Flesh with God, began both at one instant; his making, and taking to himself our Flesh, was but one act; so that in Christ there is no Personal subsistence but one, and that from everlasting. By taking only the nature of man He still continueth one Person, and changeth but the manner of his subsisting, which was before in the mere glory of the Son of God, and is now in the habit of our flesh."

Such a doctrine we characterise as irrational and unbelievable; but the orthodox divines describe it as simply *above* reason, and undiscoverable by it, but by no means contrary to it. It could become known only by a revelation from heaven; and that revelation is contained in the New Testament.

Upwards of a hundred years ago a bitter controversy raged fiercely for many years as to whether God can suffer and die. Some argued hotly that He cannot, while others maintained, with equal heat, that He can. The former declared that Christ both suffered and died, and that He did so as God, while the latter insisted that He did so only as man. Now, the orthodox doctrine, just outlined, meets that difficulty by asserting that it was as a Divine Person Christ did everything. As a self-conscious actor must always be a person, and as Jesus was a Divine Person, it follows that in him God was born and suffered and died. That is to say, the Son of God assumed our nature in order that He might do what neither God nor man, as such, could ever do.

But how do the orthodox divines know that this doctrine is true? They do not know, they only believe what they find stated in the Bible. Some of them are honest enough to admit that, apart from the testimony of the infallible and inspired Word of God, the doctrine would be absolutely unbelievable. According to them, the Bible is perfect and complete. Its writers, while composing it, wore the garment of infallibility. They wrote to the dictation of Another. They only gave what they received. Hence the Bible is a thesaurus chocked full of revealed truths, an inexhaustible mine crammed with Gospel gems, and the business of the Church, in all ages, is to work this mine and search in this treasure-house, in order to find and appropriate the precious ore of divine truth. God has deposited the whole of his saving truth in the Bible, and the diligent searcher is rewarded by finding it there. In other words, the Bible is the field in which the pearl of great price lies hidden, which only a Church indwelt by the Holy Spirit can ever discover. This is how the author of the treatise under consideration delivers himself on this point:—

"For some centuries the Church labored to gain clear views on the person of the Lord Jesus, who is the foundation of the whole structure; and then Augustine was raised to bring into light the doctrine of the Bible as to man's lost estate, and to show that his salvation is of sovereign grace. But the scheme of salvation was not brought into clear sight till the time of the Protestant Reformation, when justification by faith was presented in its pre-eminence and proper meaning as the article by which the Church stands or falls. Thus men of no inspiration required fifteen hundred years to bring out of the Bible into the consciousness of the Christian Church the doctrines of the person of Christ, the state of man, and the scheme of salvation, though they were all given to the Church in one age by those who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

We thus see that Protestantism, in its best days, staked everything on the divinity and truth of the Bible, just as Catholicism stakes everything upon the infallibility of the Church, or of the Pope as the Church's head. As long as one can believe in the Bible as a perfect revelation of God it is impossible



not to accept all Protestant doctrines, just as it is impossible to believe in the inerrancy of the Church without being a devout Catholic. But if one can believe neither in the Bible nor in the Church, does it not follow that the only reasonable alternative is to adopt Atheism? Newman has made this perfectly clear to all. We must reverently bow to some external Authority, or be content with the negation of the bier. That is the only logical course to pursue.

And yet the Protestantism of the present day has no external authority of any form to fall back upon. Some of the most learned leaders of Christian thought have thrown both the Church and the Bible overboard. They publicly teach that the Church has ever been notoriously fallible, and that the historicity of the Bible has been largely discredited. What substitute do they suggest? The indwelling Spirit, or the Christian consciousness, as some of them call it. Now, of what evidential value is the indwelling Spirit, or the Christian consciousness? It is of no value whatever. A new born babe is nothing but a bundle of quivering possibilities. It is not even conscious of its own existence. It has no ideas, no knowledge, no sense of right and wrong. It has to acquire everything by graduated experience. It awakes into consciousness of its environments only by degrees. It has no belief in God, no knowledge of Christ, no sense of the spiritual world; it comes into possession of everything as the result of experience and training. Now, suppose that in its infancy it never hears of God and Christ and a Hereafter, and never reads the Bible, will it not grow up in total ignorance of such things? Fortunately thousands of children in our country, many of whom are personally known to me, have had no religious education, and the consequence is that they have no religious sense, no consciousness of God, and no desire that death should not end all. They are Atheists, not by argument, but by nature, as all would be, if nature from the first had its way.

Do you see the point towards which I am working my way? The sense of the indwelling Spirit, or the Christian consciousness, is not an inborn possession. Before I can have any sense of the indwelling Spirit, I must first receive information regarding such a Spirit; I must learn who and what He is, and what work He is supposed to do. That is to say, I must believe that there is a Spirit on the testimony of others. It is the same with the Christian Consciousness. You cannot be conscious of an invisible being in the existence of whom you do not believe. Religious consciousness does not exist in the absence of religious beliefs. But all beliefs of necessity rest on some definite external authority. When the child first believes in Christ he does so purely on the testimony of others. He takes the word of his parents and teachers as authoritative and final. He has confidence that what they tell him is true, and so he believes it, and believes or trusts in Christ on the strength of it. But what do his parents or teachers know about Jesus Christ? Absolutely nothing. They too believe in him in consequence of what they were told about him by their parents and teachers. But if neither the Bible nor the Church has a right to speak with authority, neither have individual Christians. The Christian consciousness is the product of Christian beliefs, and Christian beliefs rest on nothing better than tradition, and tradition has undergone innumerable modifications and transformations in its transit through the ages.

Even the orthodox position is extremely anomalous. We are told that the Bible contains a full and perfect revelation of God and of the way to peace with him through Christ; and yet this revelation, in the plenitude of its glory, was hidden from the Church for sixteen hundred years after it was given. In the New Testament is to be found the doctrine of Christ as a Divine Being in possession of two distinct natures; and yet theologians had to be tossed to and fro on the tempestuous sea of controversy for many centuries, before they could discover it. The utter absurdity of all this will appear the moment it is remembered that the Church is said to be the

body of Christ and the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost. Christians are said to be in their Lord as the branches are in the vine. God indwells every believer, makes him his confidant, whispering his secrets in his ears; and yet, in spite of all this, no believer's consciousness of the Divine indwelling can exceed or outlive his faith in it. This is the strongest of all arguments against the truth of the Christian religion. The realisation of all its experiences is dependent upon faith. Although the Savior of the world is all-powerful, all-wise, all-loving, and all-pervading, He cannot speak a single word or exert the least influence in the absence of faith; and He is powerless to produce this faith in a single man except through the intervention of some third party. He is called the one Mediator between God and man; and yet He cannot approach any man except by means of the mediation of some other man who already believes in him. He has no power to make himself known to unbelievers, which proves that even his existence is a pure hypothesis, or that He is only a phantom of the mind.

The little child lustily sings:—

“Jesus loves me, this I know,  
For the Bible tells me so.”

By and by that child will learn that the story of Jesus and his love is only a legend, or a fairy tale, and that behind it there is very little, if any, real history. When he discovers that the doctrine of the God-man is only an invention of theology, on what ground will he be able then to continue a Christian believer? His early faith will crumble away and he will gradually take refuge and get to feel at home in Secularism. That is how Secularists are made. Happy are they whose disillusionment comes early.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Reformed Drunkard.

A RECENT conference, which I attended, included Freethinkers and orthodox Christians, and was addressed by a Congregational minister, who opened and closed the discussion on Social Service.

Having graphically narrated cases of drunkards—both men and women—who had been, to his personal knowledge, saved by the influence of Christian grace and fellowship from the vice of drunkenness, he turned to us who professed the Secular way, and said:—

“And I ask you Secularists to produce similar proof of the moral power of your doctrines. Where are your reformed drunkards?”

Well, we none of us cited any such cases. And so differently are the Christian and Rationalist minds constituted, that I doubt if we should have cared to give particulars of the saved drunkards, even had we thought of them. In my own reply, I spoke to this effect:—

“Our living testimonies are of a different order. For example, during the last two or three weeks, I have had occasion to visit the homes of two men, who have for a long time remained faithful to their Freethought convictions. One is now suffering from cancer. More than thirty years ago, he felt unable to maintain belief in the teachings of the Baptist Church; he resigned membership, his old colleagues looking coldly on his departure. He attached himself to the Secular Society, and adheres to the principles which he then adopted; and has all the while led a sober and industrious life. The other instance is that of a man, now nearly ninety years of age, who lies ill a few doors from this place of meeting, and whom I will venture to name—William Henry Holyoak—a man whose upright and honorable career is known to many of us here. For much more than half a century, William Holyoak has staunchly held to the teachings known as Secularism; and he has never shown the least inclination to waver in that attachment.”

These examples made no apparent impression on the minister's mind, and neither did his array of reformed drunkards turn any of us from our accustomed modes of thought and feeling. The Christian



advocate, indeed, openly avowed his disappointment at our not producing cases to match his own. I have often reflected on the issue thus contested, and propose to set out here such considerations as have occurred to me.

1. Imagine for a moment that we had given authentic particulars of drunkards reformed by Secular motives, and equal in number and validity to his own. Would the reverend gentleman have at once, or ultimately, surrendered his belief in the creed—God, Bible, miracles, personal immortality—for which his chapel stands? Would he even acknowledge that Secularism had a moral worth equal to that of his “divinely-appointed” Christianity? Would he have announced to his congregation—“My friends, the Secular Society has reformed such and such a number of drunkards; and I therefore abjure my faith in the God-ordained mission of Jesus Christ, and in Christ’s Resurrection and Second Coming?” If that class of evidences swayed his mind, he would already have been deeply influenced by the power of Mohammedanism to prevent drunkenness from becoming a social plague.

2. Would the Christian pleader himself be wholly contented with the result of the converting process? Would he, for instance, live with a perfectly easy mind, in a household of which all the inmates—father, mother, and adult sons and daughters—were reformed drunkards? Would he recommend a young man to marry an ex-drunkard girl, or a maiden to wed a man who had been “rescued” by Christ’s gospel from (say) a five-years’ career of sottishness? If not, why not? Would he perchance harbor a lingering and common-sense doubt lest the “Almighty” grace might not prove reliable?

3. For the sake of argument I will assume (on the supposition that I interpret the reverend gentleman’s sentiments correctly) that the “drink-traffic” is a bad one. Apart from deep-lying social and psychological causes, the means of drunkenness is the sale of alcoholic liquors. Who sells these liquors? Can it be said that drink-sellers are essentially Atheists and Agnostics? Are not a large number of publicans and brewers professed believers in the gospel of Christ? If I am shown an alleged intimate connection between Christianity and reformed drunkards, I ask for an explanation of the intimate connection between a considerable number of drink-selling persons and a belief in the Christian creed. Or if our reverend friend declares that a drink-trader cannot be a Christian, I wonder what the Licensed Victuallers’ Association would say by way of comment? For my own part, I do not see any inherent sin in drink-selling. Drunkenness, in a civilised country, is a very complex product, and has very complex roots. Alcoholic drink meets a social demand, and, for the evils which it brings about, I censure society at large, and not the tradesmen who are mere accidents of the situation. But this is not the view taken by the ordinary Nonconformist minister, and we must face the problem created by a vice stimulated by Christian men and women. Such are the difficulties raised by an absolute ethics, that is, a standard of morality imposed by an imaginary divine will, regardless of the times, and natural and social circumstances. Absolute ethics curtly says, “No drunkard can inherit the Kingdom of God.” Humanist and relative ethics would say, “Before blaming the drunkard we must know the manner of the fault, its degree, its motive, its special causes (physical, intellectual, social), and its effects, so far as ascertainable. And the same care in judgment must extend to all who in any measure contribute to the vice. Avoid wholesale rebuke of the drunkards, and of all who are more or less conscious agents in the drink-traffic.”

4. To what new life is the reformed drunkard introduced? He may figure as a prig who points, with vanity, to his record of misdoings and his subsequent “salvation.” Such a spectacle is truly disgusting. One cannot conceive of a gentleman (and our reverend advocate would, of course, claim that the Gospel made its converts gentlemen in the best sense of the word),—I say, one cannot conceive of a

gentleman offering his past sins for the inspection of the public at street-corners, or at mission-meetings, or even for the inspection of a circle of private friends. And again, the reformed drunkard may be common-place in his ideas, mean in his tastes, and uncharitable in his attitude towards persons who have yielded to other temptations than that of drink. When you have expelled the drink-devil, you have performed an act that may be purely negative. A man is not good because he never had vices, or because he has reformed his bad habits. Goodness consists in specific qualities of the will,—the will to show mercy, the will to respect other people’s individualities, the will to forward the general comfort, and so on. A reformed drunkard is not a person to interest one unless he attracts our sincere esteem by positive efficiencies of character. Morally considered, it might be somewhat puzzling to have to choose between a Philistine reformed drunkard and a liberal-hearted friend who saps his vigor by an unhappy craze for alcohol. A good many people would not hurry to put a cross against the name of the Philistine.

5. The discussion has carried us to the Secular standpoint. To use a broad figure-of-speech, we prefer to set the young soul up in business to restoring the credit of the bankrupt. We prefer education to rescue. We prefer the promotion of healthy activity to the spasmodic wrestle with disease. We believe that normal humanity (the majority of the race) is not vicious. Our effort is therefore concentrated on the training of the nobler affections, which, by their very growth, lessen the strength of the baser instincts. With this moral discipline, we associate intellectual energy. We seek to exercise the critical sense, and establish the scientific habit which accustoms a man to look before and after, to gauge the consequences of his acts, to check his personal desires by his humane sympathies and his social obligations. Such being our principle with respect to individual education, we add the force of political methods. We call upon the strong (a call which is sure, in the long run, to be responded to) to assist the weak, whether by protective law, or the furnishing of facilities for self-improvement, or by the organisation of labor. Our vision passes beyond the bar and the glasses of the saloon. We see beyond into the evils of a selfish capitalism, insanitary and inadequate housing, the perpetual drudgery of women, the starved minds of children (and often enough starved bodies), and a barbaric militarism which takes from the proletariat both bread and blood. By criticism, by political agitation, by attacks on the general conscience, we endeavor to arouse the public soul into shame for these deep causes of physical and moral morbidity. This kind of social service is less striking in superficial results, but its achievements are more profound, more extensive and more permanent than those of a loud piety which rejoices more at the return of one prodigal than at the steady development of ninety-nine souls in the school of citizenship.

F. J. GOULD.

### Mr. Hall Caine’s Neurotics.

MR. HALL CAINE thoroughly well advertised himself (as usual) during his recent visit to America. He is now thoroughly well advertising himself on his native side of the Atlantic. Instead of giving a thousand pounds to the Queen’s Fund for the Unemployed, he gets up a fashionable publication in aid of it; all sorts of writers contributing, and Mr. Caine figuring as the shepherd of the flock. Next he supplies the *Daily Mirror* with a characteristic sample of Christmas gush. That newspaper calls it “Mr. Hall Caine’s Sermon,” and actually prints a facsimile of his letter, as though there were something sacred about his very caligraphy. Being asked the question “Is Christmas dying out?” he replies in the following manner:—

“Christmas can never die out, but the ways of celebrating the festival will change. If Christianity had



given nothing else to the world it would have conferred an incalculable boon in conferring Christmas. That there should be one day in the year sacred to sympathy, to forgiveness, to pity, to charity, to brotherhood, and to love is an everlasting benefit.

That these noblest of human emotions should rally round the person of Christ is an eternal gain. Christmas can only expire when man becomes indifferent to man, to the world, and to God. I rejoice in every effort to perpetuate the days in which the heart of humanity beats in unison, and of all such days Christmas Day is (and always will be) the first and best."

It will be noticed that Mr. Caine begins this precious effusion with a prophecy, which a far greater novelist than himself has called the most gratuitous form of error. Christmas can never die! Mr. Caine says so—and *that's* all right. But carping sceptics (all sceptics are carping) will no doubt sneer at the Manx prophet's vaticination, and remind him of the natural law that everything which begins also ends. In all probability, however, this will make no impression upon such a practised and confident oracle.

After the prophecy comes a statement regarding the past—which is a more dangerous form of indulgence. According to Mr. Caine it was Christianity that gave the world Christmas. Technically, of course, he is right; substantially and practically he is wrong. Christianity did not originate the celebration, but merely gave it a new name. It was the birthday of the Sun-God before it was the birthday of God the Son. The seventeenth century Puritans knew what they were doing when they abolished Christmas. They denounced and rejected it as a Pagan festival. Such indeed it was—hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of years before the Christian era. Everything connected with it shows its Pagan origin. What have roast beef and turkey, plum-pudding and mince-pies, brandy and port-wine, holly and mistletoe, Christmas trees and Yule logs, to do with the history or the doctrine of the Incarnation? All these things are relics of Sun-Worship. The Sun was the Lord of light and heat and life; and the old religionists of nature worshiped him at the first point of his re-ascend from the cave of winter, which the Almanack shows to be the twenty-fifth of December. The eating and drinking, the general jollification, and the decoration of evergreens, were man's "All Hail" to the visible sovereign of his universe, and the outward expression of a well-grounded inner belief that the warmth and fertility of summer would follow the winter's cold and sterility.

So much for Mr. Caine's first statement; and now for his second. He says that Christmas is the "one day in the year sacred to sympathy, to forgiveness, to pity, to charity, to brotherhood, and to love." Now the spirit of the rhapsody is worthy of the elegance of the composition. Fancy having *one* day in the year sacred to these fine feelings—and three hundred and sixty-four (with an extra one every leap year) presumably sacred to feelings of another description! Mr. Caine is simply canting. So are all the well-to-do Christmas rhapsodists. They present as the sublimest virtue what is the lowest vice of our civilisation. Once in twelve months they go into hysterics over the spectacle of the wealthy flinging a little butcher's meat and a few groceries to the poor. What charity! what love! what brotherhood! they cry. Rubbish, gentlemen, sheer rubbish—and you know it. Your rhetoric (like the cheap gifts) is intended to keep the poor quiet, if not grateful. How much more brotherliness there would be if you discussed, and tried to solve, the problem of why there are millions of poor people, who suffer the pangs and misery of destitution, nineteen hundred years after Christ came to save the world. Without adopting vast schemes of social transformation, which are rather for the study than the workaday world, it is perfectly certain that moderate good brains and moderate good heart would suffice to rid human society of its worst evils in the course of two or three generations. Why then are these evils so persistent? This is the question of questions. And our answer to it is that Christianity blocks the way, with its false history, false dogmas, and false

principles, and its eternal chatter about *charity*, when what is needed is *justice*.

Take the case of men who are being driven from the rural districts into the towns, and there swept into the dustbins of social wreckage. They don't want any of Mr. Caine's "noblest emotions." Theirs is a question of plain food, clothes, and shelter. They want access to the land. Place them there, in reasonable conditions, and they will do all the rest for themselves. Bad laws are driving them off the land; good laws should put them back again. The case is one of the utmost simplicity. And the late Charles Bradlaugh—the Atheist—saw it. He introduced one little Bill in the House of Commons, which may yet be regarded as the foregleam of a new day. Of course it came to nothing, but that was because the House of Commons was composed of Christians.

Mr. Caine's talk about "the person of Christ" only shows his ignorance. The Christ of the Four Gospels is not an historical character. Whether there really was a "man Jesus," and what he was like, we cannot tell, and shall probably never know; for the man Jesus, if such a person ever existed, is buried, beyond the possibility of excavation, under a mountain of legend and mythology.

Mr. Caine, being essentially a bit of femininity in trousers (we believe he wears them), naturally adds a postscript to his letter to the *Daily Mirror*—and it runs as follows:—

"The most astounding fact of life is that nearly all the civilised world is now keeping the birthday of the Man Who was born in a stable and died on the gallows."

The birthday of this "man," whose nouns and pronouns must all be spelt with capital letters, was celebrated in Russia with civil war and frightful slaughter; and all the other Christian nations are wondering how long the peace of the rest of Europe is going to be maintained.

"Nearly" all the nations of the civilised world is an excellent bit of Hall-Cainese. Japan, which has taught Christendom ethical lessons, is outside the golden circle. So is China with its beneficent old civilisation; so is India—the land of heathen barbarism, in which women are so down-trodden—but where the Prince of Wales has just gone to see the finest building in the world, reared by a great native ruler in loving memory of his wife. Strange, is it not, after all we have heard from the missionaries!

Let us conclude by giving Mr. Hall Caine a piece of history. Christianity made its way within the limits of the Roman Empire, and it has never made any important conquests since. The Christians in America, Australia, and South Africa, were all imported from Europe. No progress whatever, worth spoiling a sheet of paper to record, has been made by Christianity for a thousand years. When you couple with this fact another one—namely, that Christianity is losing myriads of adherents in Europe, and in Europeanised America, Australia, and South Africa, every year; and when you remember that "the birthday of the Man Who," etc., is demonstrably not his birthday at all; you will be able to see through Mr. Hall Caine's neurotics.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Acid Drops.

Mr. Horatio Bottomley, who has been nursing South Hackney for several years, is not to have the sole running as a Liberal and Radical candidate. He is to be opposed by the Rev. W. Riley, a local Congregational minister, who cannot tolerate the idea of the constituency, which he honors by living in it, being represented at St. Stephen's by a wicked City financier. No doubt this is very virtuous on the reverend gentleman's part. But why is the dead set made against Mr. Bottomley? Does the Liberal and Radical party draw the line at financiers in other constituencies? Is there no member on the Liberal and Radical benches in the House of Commons who lives by watching the money



market, and giving it a twist in his own direction occasionally? It appears to us that Mr. Bottomley's real offence is not making love to the Chapel party in South Hackney. If he made a violent profession of religion, and subscribed liberally to "religious efforts," the Nonconformist Conscience would soon find him "grateful and comforting." Praising the late Charles Bradlaugh, and saying a good word for his relative, George Jacob Holyoake—this is what draws attention to Mr. Bottomley's commercial adventures; in which, by the way, he is just like the overwhelming majority of what are called "City men," only he has been a little cleverer and more successful at the game.

We are not exactly in love with financiers; we are still less in love with hypocrites; and we hope the Freethinkers in South Hackney—whose politics as politics we don't want to interfere with—will not be caught by Nonconformist chaff. We do not know what Mr. Bottomley's attitude is towards the Blasphemy Laws and Secular Education, but if he will vote for the abolition of the former, and in support of the latter, he is preferable (as a member of parliament) to a Nonconformist minister who will do neither. Even if Mr. Bottomley were a perfectly wicked man, and Mr. Riley a perfectly righteous man (two great stretches of fancy!), it would still be an act of common sense to vote for the wicked man and against the righteous man, if the wicked man would vote the right way, and the righteous man the wrong way, in the House of Commons. Parliament is neither a beauty show nor a character show; if it were the nation might find more difficulty in filling it. Parliament is nowadays only a place where we send live registering machines to cast the constituencies' votes on definite and decided questions. And the great thing we have to do is to send a live registering machine who will cast the right vote.

John Ruskin denounced railways, yet he travelled by them. Being asked for an explanation, he said that if the Devil would carry him where he wanted to go he would let the Devil do it. In the same way, if we had a vote in South Hackney, we should give it to Mr. Bottomley, even if we thought him worse than the Devil, provided he undertook to carry our vote into the right division lobby at Westminster. We should certainly not give it to the most virtuous man in the world if we knew he would carry it into the wrong lobby.

The Rev. W. Riley stands, apparently, as the moral candidate. Well, he should do his morals at home—like his washing. He may be righteous—he may be self-righteous; in either case it is entirely personal. What the public have to judge him by as a political candidate is the character of his program, and the likelihood of his sticking to it. For this reason we should vote for Mr. Bottomley if he promised to support the claim of Freethinkers to enjoy equal rights with their Christian fellow citizens. This is what we have to look after now. The morality of candidates is a question that can wait. And judging from the House of Commons as we have known it for over thirty years there is really no hurry.

It was to be expected that the Rev. Dr. Clifford would stand up to assist the Rev. W. Riley. He has sent that gentleman one of his gushing and diffuse epistles, expressing his "delight" at the second Liberal candidature in South Hackney. "You are a politician and social reformer," Dr. Clifford says, "and you hold that politics ought to be, and must be, the Christianity of Jesus Christ applied to the life of the Commonwealth." Language like this may be appropriate in a Christian place of worship; it is out of date and ridiculous in a political election. Dr. Clifford appears to believe that all the electors are Christians. Has he never heard of Jews? Has he never heard of Secularists, Agnostics, Atheists, Rationalists, and Ethicists?

The electors of South Hackney are entitled to ask Dr. Clifford what he means. What do his glib phrases signify? What is the Christianity of Jesus Christ? And why is Dr. Clifford's view of it more authoritative than the view of the Archbishop of Canterbury or that of the Pope of Rome?

Is "Take no thought for the morrow" part of the Christianity of Christ? Is "Blessed be ye poor" part of the Christianity of Christ? If such texts are part of the Christianity of Christ—as they certainly appear to be—the Rev. W. Riley's election address ought to be drawn up accordingly; in which case it would be a document worth framing.

The *Daily News* regards Dr. Clifford's letter as decisive. All Free Churchmen, it says, now know how they ought to

vote. The Free Church Pope has spoken. The question is ended.

*Nomad's Weekly and Belfast Critic* printed a Cartoon lately entitled "A Happy Christmas: the Mockery of it." On one side a pinched-looking working-man, with his still more pinched-looking wife, cursed by "No Work," hold out their hands for some of the big bag of £3,262,086 going abroad for Foreign Missions. A fat man of God is putting more gold into the bag, on the other side of which, and holding it well open to receive the latest contributions, stands a nearly naked grinning savage with a spiked war-club over his shoulder. The fat man of God looks round at the petitioning workers with a look of surprise and indignation on his oily countenance.

George Albert Roscoe, a Leyton postman, who did his round on Christmas Day, and then committed suicide by swallowing prussic acid, left a letter in which he said: "The burden of my sins is too great for me. I go to await the Resurrection." While the poor fellow was waiting for that unlikely event a coroner's jury sat upon his corpse, and brought in a verdict of suicide during temporary insanity.

John Silk, the ex-soldier, who was hanged in Derby Gaol for the horrible murder of his crippled mother at Chesterfield, appears to have made an edifying end. His last fifteen minutes were spent in prayer with a Roman Catholic priest; after which he walked to the scaffold quite firmly. He is presumably now in heaven. Very likely his poor old mother is in the other establishment.

A Belgian priest, landing at Dover, was suspiciously bulky about the waist. Twelve pounds of smuggled goods were found there, and three hundred cigars down the legs of his trousers. He is now a sadder and wiser man. The enterprise cost him £12 besides the loss of the goods.

An "Infidel" writing to us from Montreal begs us by no means to print his name and address. "It would mean my ruin," he says, "and perhaps you can hardly believe it, but I might have my house burnt down, or be arrested on some false charge, with witnesses I have never met before—as is often done here." Our correspondent gives a frightful account of the religious tyranny prevailing there.

Mr. Morrison Davidson is an excellent man, who has written much for poor unpopular causes. He is also a scholar, and in his way a thinker. But when he hears the magic words "Christ" and "Christianity" he suffers intellectual paralysis. This was very obvious in his "seasonable" article in *Reynolds'* on "The Mass of Christ." He actually sneers at "our omniscient scientists" who cannot believe miraculous stories like that of feeding five thousand people on a luncheon for one, or the turning of water into wine. But does Mr. Davidson himself believe these stories? His readers are entitled to a reply. And while he is preparing it we will say a few words about the miracle it appears he does believe in. He says it is "astounding" that a "reputedly unlettered Galilean artisan, hardly turned thirty, should arise in an obscure corner of the world examine its vaunted 'civilisation,' and confidently pronounce their foundations rotten." Now the first answer to this is that the Christ of the Four Gospels is an imaginary character; those books being not history but religious fiction. The second answer is that unlettered persons, in all ages and countries, have been quite equal to denouncing the rottenness of civilisation. Mr. Davidson knows very well that many such have arisen in Russia during the last hundred years.

Old Dowie, the Scotch-Yankee prophet, has broken down again. He believes in faith-healing, but his right side is paralysed. His present resting-place is Jamaica, where he was disappointed at the coldness of his reception. Probably he will have a much warmer one if he ever returns to Zion City. A lioness robbed of her cubs is dreadful, but a Christian fooled out of his money is worse; and Old Dowie will have to meet many such if he goes home again.

Miss Alice Roosevelt is going to get married, and there is talk of making her a national wedding present of 800,000 dollars. Both the givers and the receiver are doubtless Christians. "Blessed be ye poor!"

How these Christians love one another! So said a Pagan a long time ago. John Stuart Mill observed that no one was likely to say it now. But he was mistaken. Just look at the following bit of Scotch news, which we cull from the



*Daily Chronicle*: does it not show that the Christians love each other as well as ever?

"A disgraceful *melee* has taken place in a church at Catheron, an outlying district in Caithness. The church is in the possession of the 'Wee Frees,' and a dispute has arisen as to the retention of the services of the present minister, the Rev. Mr. Strathearn.

The leaders of the church, who are opposed to the minister, decided to close the church last Sunday, and officials were posted at the doors to prevent anyone entering. By a ruse Mr. Strathearn and a number of his supporters succeeded in gaining entrance.

The minister was about to enter the pulpit when he was forcibly handled by two members of the congregation. The minister's adherents went to his assistance, and a creditable struggle ensued. Lamps were extinguished, women fainted, and several persons were injured. Eventually the Strathearn party were ejected, but the minister forced his way to the pulpit. He read a psalm and was about to commence the singing when the opposition left the church in a body and locked the doors, leaving the minister inside a prisoner.

The congregation then proceeded to the hall to hold a service. Mr. Strathearn escaped from the church and went to the hall, but was denied entrance. The rival parties again came into conflict, and a free fight ensued, in which fists, sticks, and umbrellas were freely used."

This sweet quarrel happened during Christmastide!—perhaps on the principle of the better the day the better the fight.

George Eliot wrote *Scenes of Clerical Life* in a house near the railway station at Parkshot. It was pulled down about four years ago, and new offices for the Richmond (Surrey) Guardians were erected on the site. A citizen offered to defray the cost of a memorial tablet recording George Eliot's connection with the place, but one of the guardians objected to this "after the life she lived." Charles Lamb would have asked to "feel the gentleman's bumps."

Heathen Japan had to go to a Christian country to get her first battleship. Naturally. She is now able to build battleships herself. She launched one of her own building the day after Christmas. This was an event of the greatest practical importance. China will build her own battleships too in time, and the game of Christian arrogance will then be a difficult one to play.

The *Daily Mirror* has solved the unemployed problem by raising funds to supply workless men with brooms—to sweep the streets away. This gigantic intellectual effort shows the point the world has reached after two thousand years of Christianity.

The *Daily Chronicle* refers to the late Charles Bradlaugh as "the famous agnostic." Charles Bradlaugh declined to call himself an Agnostic. He called himself an Atheist.

The *Clydebank Leader* has printed some correspondence on religion, and says it has thrown most of the Agnostic letters into the waste-basket on account of their scurrility. From some of the Christian letters which it did print we should say that the editor strained at gnats and swallowed camels. One pious correspondent was permitted to discharge filth over the grave of Voltaire—besides ignorantly referring to him as "the man who first set the ball of Atheism in motion."

The Liverpool police have begun a crusade against street collectors on behalf of suspicious "charities." One of these, the United Church Mission, run by Pastor Housley, had "books" but couldn't produce them, and the female collector, Annie Wilkinson, was fined 40s. and costs. A girl called Alice Wilson was fined 20s. and costs for collecting on behalf of the "Pioneer Christian Mission" run by an expoliceman with several aliases.

Under the will of the late Mr. H. C. Richards, K.C. and M.P., some £20,000—the residue of his estate—will be available for promoting the ordination of young men into Holy Orders of the Church of England. What a chance for "the fools of the family!"

A leading article in the *Daily Telegraph* frankly admits what we have been saying for so many years that "our Christmas holiday is none other than the old Saturnalia which the Christian world took over from Paganism."

Edwin J. Tapley, a negro convicted of wife murder, was executed at New York, and the hangman so bungled the job that the wretched convict was more than seven minutes

in his agony. When he entered the execution yard he was supported by two clergymen, and was cheerfully singing, "Lord Jesus, I am coming." Evidently the Lord Jesus was in no hurry to receive the new emigrant.

We hear of a new Christian denomination called "No Sect, No Home." Its members follow Jesus Christ literally. We suggest that they should follow him to heaven.

"Providence" is afflicting the three northern provinces of Japan with a famine, and nearly three millions of people are in peril of starvation. It is feared that more lives will be lost than were lost in the war with Russia. "He doeth all things well."

Clerical circles throughout Germany are much exercised at the cremation of the body of a Lutheran pastor, Dr. Dreydorf, at Liepzig. Dr. Dreydorf left strict injunctions in his will that his body was to be disposed of in this manner. He is the first clergyman in Germany who has taken this step, which, in orthodox circles, is regarded as being opposed to Christian dogma and at variance with the accepted view of the Resurrection.—*Daily Telegraph*.

Rev. George Denyer, of Christ Church, Blackburn, is a thorough-going Protectionist. He protests against the Town Council giving permission for a Sunday Concert in the Palace Theatre. It was a sacred concert, and was given on behalf of the Lifeboat Institution, but what does that matter? It was a "desecration" all the same. Which means that only Churches should do business on the Lord's Day.

Rev. John Pendred Scott, a Church clergyman, has just died at Norton Fitzwarren (Somerset) at the age of ninety-two. What a long time to keep out of heaven! The reverend gentleman had to be fetched to the beautiful land above.

It is about time that Queen Alexandra ceased acting as a financial agent for autocratic religious organisations. The £2,000 with which she started the Queen's Unemployed Fund was divided, by her orders, between the Church Army and the Salvation Army. She now proposes that collections shall be made for the Fund in all places of worship on January 14, and that the proceeds shall be given to these two Armies again, for the alleviation of distress. We hope it is no "disloyalty" to suggest that this is a very cool proposal.

According to the *War Cry* the year 1905 has witnessed the inauguration of schemes for assisting the poor and blessing the bodies and souls of the people, such as have not been launched before "since the days of Moses." It is natural to go back to Moses for a parallel. Booth is so like him—nose and all.

The Manchester Salvation Army gave a series of living pictures of the Nativity. The Wise Men, Joseph and Mary, and little Jesus (a doll) were all in the show. All that was left out was the private transaction between Mary and the Holy Ghost.

It is reported that a pious Welsh millionaire, who is now singing the Glory Song in the New Jerusalem, has left Evan Roberts five pounds a week for life. This is a great deal better than thirty "bob" a week in the pit. We congratulate the Welsh soul-saver on his luck. Perhaps another pious millionaire will throw in a motor-car, a country residence, and a few acres of ground.

Evan Roberts is at his old game again. He finds it good policy to mystify his audiences. At Carnarvon on Boxing Day he sat motionless for two hours in the midst of a noisy revival meeting. Then he got up and said "a few words." This sort of thing keeps up the excitement.

A deputation has waited on Evan Roberts, asking him to go to Jerusalem. Another deputation might ask him to go to Jericho.

Rev. R. J. Campbell has been talking about the suffering and misery in the world. He says it is all right at bottom, for God looks after it. Mr. Campbell has a big "screw" and rides in a motor-car. See?

The latest story. A Sunday-school teacher asked the class, "What kind of boys go to heaven?" One little fellow yelled out, "Dead boys!"



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

January 21, Glasgow; 28, Manchester.

**To Correspondents.**

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 7, Leicester; 14, Birmingham; 21, Forest Gate; 28, Merthyr Tydvil. February 11, Liverpool. March 25, Glasgow.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for cuttings.

A. S. COLEMAN.—Thanks for the cutting, but we have no more time to waste just now on "Merlin." He was always a sentimentalist, and he seems to be suffering now from Anno Domini.

HAZAEEL THOMAS.—Cuttings received with thanks.

A. A.—Glad you were so pleased with our "Poor Shelley" article, and generally with our articles on "the Napoleons of literature and art." Of course it gives us pleasure, also, to get off the beaten track occasionally. Thanks for all your new year's good wishes.

J. HULL.—We are obliged; see paragraph.

J. G. SHEPHERD.—Shall be sent as requested. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation, which has improved during 1905, and will, we trust, improve still more during 1906. No doubt the *Freethinker* is read, as you say, by a great many more persons than those who buy it. This is well in its way, but we should like more of the readers to become subscribers; for there is a commercial side to every apostolate, however sincere and high-minded it may be. Paper, printing, rent, and other things have to be paid for.

H. ORGAN.—We are older now than we were then, and should not care to declaim Swinburne's poem from the summit of Arthur's Seat again, especially in the "fine frosty weather" which prevailed there when you wrote. Thanks for your new year's good wishes.

CASUAL VISITOR.—Sorry we have not room to print the enclosure with your letter, though we keep it by us in case you should receive a reply.

J. BRYCE.—Yes, 1 Samuel xxi. 5 would be a very pretty text for pious explanation in a Sunday-school. Some things in the Bible are quite "too too"—and calculated to make even Dr. Clifford and Mr. Lloyd-George squirm.

J. C. SYNON.—Glad to hear you look forward so to Friday, when you get the *Freethinker*. Thanks for cuttings and good wishes.

R. S.—Froude's *Short Studies on Great Subjects* is published by Longmans & Co. in 4 vols. at 3s. 6d. each.

DAVID GARLAND.—It is beyond the proper scope of this journal to have a discussion on Socialism, which can be ventilated in so many other publications; otherwise we should have inserted your able and suggestive letter.

C. W. STYRING.—Pleased to know that you enjoy our "Acid Drops." Of course the *Freethinker* paragraphs are intended to be a relief to the set articles, and they appear to serve that purpose to the general satisfaction. Thanks for cuttings.

H. G. CHRISTIE.—Under consideration.

W. H. H.—Misprints occur in all papers. But you are wrong about "quarreled." The l should not be doubled, as the accent is on the first syllable. For the rest, we must refer you to our former answer, which you have read without understanding. You quite mistake what we said about persecution. Whether there is bloodshed or not has nothing to do with the matter. Persecution is done by a creed, for a creed, and in the name of a creed. Your notion that if the insertion of a letter would be a waste of our space, we should insert it in order to show the readers that it would be a waste of our space, is quite charming.

G. B.—Dr. Blake Odgers' reply is only too characteristic. His position is that Unitarians ought not to be punished for ridiculing what Trinitarians hold sacred, but that Freethinkers should be punished for ridiculing what both Trinitarians and Unitarians hold sacred. And if this is not "mean" we should like to know what is. Moreover he is wrong as to the facts of our prosecution. We were not prosecuted solely for cartoons in the *Freethinker*; several passages of letterpress were included in the Indictment.

J. W. E. BENNETT.—Thanks for cuttings.

H. G. F.—Pleased to receive your letter and the one enclosed, which may furnish material for a note or two next week. Thanks for your new year's good wishes.

A. L. (Glasgow).—Those who send us useful cuttings do us, and our readers too, a real service.

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

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

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

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

**Sugar Plums.**

All indications point to a good gathering of "saints" at the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant next Tuesday evening (Jan. 9). Mr. Foote presides at this function, and will be supported by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, Roger, and other well-known Secularists. "Chilperic" will also be present—the contributor whose too rare articles are so highly prized by many of our readers. After the dinner, which is always a good one at the Holborn, there will be a very few brief speeches to toasts, plenty of good vocal and instrumental music, and opportunity for sociable conversation. The tickets (inclusive) are only four shillings each, and those who intend coming should really provide themselves with as many as they want by the date of this issue of the *Freethinker*. A brisk demand for tickets during the last twenty-four hours upsets calculations and causes serious inconvenience. We have only to add that any provincial "saints" who happen to be in London will be heartily welcomed at the dinner if they only take the trouble to make themselves known to the President or the Secretary.

The Liverpool N. S. S. Branch is holding its meetings in the new year at Milton Hall, Daulby-street, not far from its old quarters at the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. Local speakers will occupy the platform this evening (Jan. 7) and the following Sunday evening. Mr. Cohen lectures for the Branch on January 21, and Messrs. Robertson and Lloyd, and Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, have been booked for early dates. Mr. Foote will probably lecture for the Branch early in February.

Harding Chiswell, in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, points out that Sir Oliver Lodge's declaration that "The way to be happy is to try and make others happy" is a quotation from Ingersoll. He also points out that, while it is gratifying to see a Christian like Mr. W. T. Stead boldly rebuking Dr. Torrey for his slanders against Ingersoll, it was a fact that "the source of this splendid action sprang from an Atheist, for had it not been for the timely action of Mr. G. W. Foote the filthy lie would have travelled round the world ere the truth had got its boots on."

The Birmingham Branch held a very successful social gathering on Sunday. About eighty sat down to tea, which was followed by a long program of vocal and instrumental music and dancing. Our correspondent reports that the function was "thoroughly enjoyed by all."

The January number of the *Humane Review* (quarterly) contains some excellent articles. Ernest Bell writes on "Christmas Cruelties," Howard Williams on "The Christian Acedama," and Alexander H. Japp on "Robert Burns as a Humanitarian Poet." These, with other contributions not calling for special mention in our columns, make up a first-rate shilling's worth of progressive literature. We wish this admirable magazine all success.

Some beautiful photographs of the N. S. S. delegation to the Paris Congress, taken in front of the Voltaire statue, have arrived after long waiting. Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, will be happy to post them to purchasers at half-a-crown each. They are mounted ready for framing, and would make a handsome picture—which in the course of time might have an historic interest. We hope all the remaining copies Miss Vance has in hand will soon be purchased from her.

**The Liverpool Trouble.**

I REFERRED to this matter a fortnight ago in the *Freethinker*; and now, after a sufficient lapse of time, I am sorry to say that I have no good news to report.

It will be remembered that I held out the olive branch, and asked all parties to the quarrel to place the whole matter in my hands, as President, or into the hands of the General Executive.

The Branch committee replied with promptitude that they unanimously resolved to place the whole matter (as far as they were concerned) in my hands unreservedly, with a view to arbitration.

The seceders have not thought my offer worth the civility of a reply. They have carried the quarrel



to the bitter extremity. They have also, apparently, decided to treat peacemakers as active enemies.

I am very sorry to see this spirit prevailing, especially amongst men from whom I expected better things.

Objection seems to have been taken to my reference to 'Mr. Ward and his associates.' I regret that I could not, in my ignorance, think of any politer expression. I was obliged to mention Mr. Ward's name, but I explained that I did not wish to mention any other names at that stage. This was meant to be considerate. If it has failed to be so, the result must be attributed to my unfortunate want of command over the subtleties of the English language.

This defect of mine, however, must not be saddled with too much responsibility. The seceders had evidently made up their minds to pursue the path on which they had entered.

Messrs. Ross and Hammond are the principal persons acting with Mr. Ward; or rather, if the truth must be told, with whom he is acting. There is a third person, who lies low and says nothing, but who appears to be (as far as I can trace events) very near the bottom of all the trouble.

What the original quarrel was about is one of those things which, as the French say, do not permit themselves to be recorded. It turned upon mere personal scandal. I certainly shall not fill the *Freethinker* with the details of such a miserable dispute. I am amazed at its being allowed to convulse and split the Freethought movement in Liverpool.

It seems to me that a real leader of men in the Branch would have kept such an insane quarrel from coming to a head. I have already said that there were faults on both sides. What was wanted was the modifying influence of a sane and vigorous personality.

Since the seceders took the wrong road they have naturally committed plenty of mistakes. Their first fatal mistake was declining to wait one little week until I could come to Liverpool and try to act as a peacemaker. The very men who sang my praises so at their last Annual Dinner refused me that poor request. They would fight—and they were badly defeated.

The second fatal mistake was this. Messrs. Ross and Hammond, being on the Hall Company's directorate, used their accidental powers (as far as the quarrel was concerned) to jockey the Branch out of its use of the Alexandra Hall. I have so much belief in their radical soundness of nature that I am confident they will live to regret this wretched stratagem. They were also legal trustees for the small sum standing to the Branch's credit at the bank, and I am informed that they would not sign a cheque drawn by the Treasurer towards payment for the rent of another meeting-place. This is bad—shockingly bad. Nothing can justify it; nothing can excuse it.

War itself must be waged according to certain rules. But I regret to say that Mr. Ward himself forgot this in severing his connection with the Branch. He should have carried out his contract punctually. One must respect one's engagements—even if they happen to be a little irksome.

Mr. Ward is lecturing in the Alexandra Hall for the Liverpool Secular Society, after helping to turn the N. S. S. Branch (of which he was Lecturer and Organiser) off the premises. That is the practical situation. What an absurd thing it was, then, to invite Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, and myself to lecture for the new Society in the Hall from which the Branch was being expelled in that extraordinary manner. A moment's reflection would have shown all concerned that I and my colleagues had no alternative but to stand by the Branch. Common honor, common decency, require this of us. Individual quarrels are not our concern. We stand by the Branch as a Branch; and we shall support it to the full extent of our power; but hoping, all the time, that most of the seceders will yet reconsider their position.

G. W. FOOTE.

## My Christmas Ghost.

IT was Christmas Eve, and I was seated comfortably enough by the fireside, albeit musing somewhat sadly over might-have-beens (never a very profitable occupation) and moralising over the tangled web of life, when, in the gathering twilight, I suddenly became conscious of a ghostly presence in the room. Although I had never previously seen a ghost I had no hesitation in concluding that my present visitant was not a dweller on our gross material plane from the fact that neither door nor window had been opened to give him admission, and also from the proverbially ghostlike fashion in which he had made his presence felt, not heard. There was further a distinct lowering of the temperature of the room. I experienced at once a sensation of chill and dampness which suggested the proximity of something vaporous; and a peculiar odor diffused itself throughout the apartment, an odor which I could associate with nothing mundane save that it irresistably recalled the atmosphere generated by the imagination when perusing Christmas fiction.

I was not so startled as I otherwise might have been, for my acquaintance with Christmas literature of the orthodox type had apprised me of the fact that this was the time of year when any spirit interested in sublunary affairs might be expected to manifest the same. I know my Dickens well and have not read Christmas stories to no purpose. The identity, however, of my visitant puzzled me. I am not sanctimonious enough to be visited by an angel, nor, I trust, wicked enough to be sought out by any of Satan's emissaries; and my visitor was obviously neither seraph nor devil. He (for my ghost was of the masculine gender, judging from his upper lip and chin) was attired in semi-priestly garments somewhat after the pattern of those worn by Roman Catholic ecclesiastics in the performance of their ceremonial duties. But there was a curious old-world flavor about the whole apparition that precluded the supposition I was regarding the spirit of any latter-day churchman. I felt I was gazing upon the shade of some old-time saint or father of the Church who was probably anxious about my estrangement from the one true fold, and had come to rescue me from the gloomy pit of scepticism.

While I was taking in the external appearance of my visitor he remained silent and motionless, contemplating me with a fixed and earnest look. Then it occurred to me I had read that many ghosts are unable to address a mortal unless the latter make the first approach to conversation. This consideration, together with my desire to ascertain the object of the visit now paid me, helped me to find my tongue.

"Good evening," I said to the phantom, "I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, but I presume you have some definite purpose in calling on me so unceremoniously. May I ask you to explain what it is, and if I can be of service to you in any matter? And would you mind taking a seat? I believe that ghosts can accommodate themselves to earthly furniture. They do so in all the accounts of them I remember, and you will find that armchair fairly comfortable."

My ghostly visitor glided noiselessly to the seat indicated, and quietly ensconced himself with a courtly inclination of the head. "You are very good," he said, "and I am glad my abrupt break in upon your meditations has not perturbed you. I had expected you would have displayed some astonishment—if not fear—on realising my presence in the room." "Not at all, my dear sir, not at all," I replied. "You see, I do not believe in ghosts, and therefore have no reason to fear them. Only those who believe in ghosts are afraid of them. But as a pronounced sceptic in matters ghostly I am rather surprised you should have chosen to visit me. So far as I have been able to gather it is only those who believe in ghosts who are favored with their attentions." "You



are quite right," my visitor answered, "and as a matter of fact, in the heavenly courts from which I am just come, we are beginning to discover that we have been proceeding on wrong lines all along in respect of this visitation of mortals by disembodied spirits. It was only the other day I was putting the matter very strongly to the Holy Ghost—the Holy Ghost you understand, because I am one myself. I pointed out how absurd it was that we inhabitants of the spirit world should only be empowered to reveal ourselves to those who required no revelation, who were already ardent and devoted believers in the supernatural. I urged that it was sheer waste of time for us to visit hysterical servant girls and superstitious, ignorant peasants. Such individuals required no supernatural manifestations to persuade them of the reality of the spirit world. They were already thoroughly convinced of its actuality. The same criticism applied to the visits paid to monks and nuns by departed saints and virgins. Monks like St. Bernard and nuns like St. Teresa need no heavenly visions to confirm them in their faith. I put these considerations to the Holy Ghost, and I also ventured to suggest that much better results might have accrued, if instead of showing herself to a faithful believer like Bernadotte at Lourdes the Blessed Virgin had paid a visit to an unbeliever like Voltaire at Ferney, or even to one of her own sex like your George Eliot, if she had any qualms about visiting a man. The testimony of a Voltaire, or a Darwin, on the matter of celestial apparitions would have been so much more conclusive than any evidence we have as yet been able to place before the public. Think what a lift up it would give the Roman Catholic Church if our Blessed Lady could effect the conversion of Haeckel, or Professor Ray Lankaster, or John M. Robertson by appearing to one of them some fine night! Why it would be worth all the miraculous visitations since the days of Adam—I beg pardon, since the days of the Borneo missing link."

"These are reflections that have frequently occurred to Freethinkers," I remarked, "but I should not have thought you could have dared to ventilate such opinions in heaven, especially in view of Lucifer's fate. How did the Holy Ghost take it?" "Well," returned my visitor, "I must admit his dove-like plumage was a little bit ruffled. But the members of the Trinity are getting almost quite used to free speech in heaven. The prevalent intellectual atmosphere has vastly improved since the old days when Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, was ejected for contumaciousness. Why even Michael the Archangel questions—on the quiet—whether God the Father really knows so much as he always pretends to do. Even the latter has of late years grown quite suspicious of Joseph and the Virgin Mary, as if he had some doubts respecting that story of the Virgin Birth."

"How do you account," I asked, "for this altered mental atmosphere in the celestial halls?" "Oh! that is quite simple," was the reply. "You, who were formerly a Roman Catholic, are aware that, as the church teaches, the saints and angels know what passes on earth. Let me assure you we are quite cognizant of all the discoveries and theories of your great scientists and your investigators in astronomy, biology, geology, comparative anatomy, comparative mythology, and all other of the sciences. We are also familiar with the results of your researches into the historical records of the past. God the Father has been seen furtively dipping into *Pagan Christs* and *Bible Romances*, which accounts for his gathering doubts respecting the parthenogenetic origin of God the Son. The labors and writings of your Huxleys and Spencers and Buchners, your Paines and Bradlaughs and Ingersolls, have made an impression even on the heavenly hosts, who are actually coming to know something. At the period when I lived and died we knew very little about the facts of the universe, and when I got into heaven I found the ignorance there colossal, but we are, as I say, progressing. We are imbibing the new ideas. You cannot keep ideas even out of heaven, though poor

St. Peter does his best. To such an extent has modern thought permeated the citizens of the New Jerusalem that the very Trinity has become apprehensive for the stability of its long-sustained dominance. So much so that it has been deemed advisable to start a branch of the Catholic Truth Society in heaven. Under its auspices and the general supervision of the Holy Ghost, lectures are given at intervals by such eminent theological authorities as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, as well as by legions of eloquent Jesuits. This with a view to counteracting the pernicious ideas and theories that have percolated through the pearly portals of paradise during the last two hundred years. A few of us have endeavored to secure the permission of questions and discussion after these lectures, but the members of the Trinity are, of course, all Roman Catholics, and you know Roman Catholicism does not favor free discussion. But we live in hope. You will yet hear of the overthrow of theocracy in heaven and the establishment of a free republic. Luckily, the soul is immortal and we have all eternity in which to effect our purposes."

"You surprise me very much," I interjected. "I had no notion the condition of affairs in heaven was such as you convey." "Tut! Tut!" was the reply, "What would you expect? How can you think the human soul can progress in a future life on any other lines than those it has been following from all eternity? The people in the next world are just the people who were here. And it is just the same God. Don't you think there will soon be enough Atheists and Freethinkers on my side of the grave to give God Almighty what your modern Yankee would call a pretty tough time? As I have remarked, we live in hope, and we can afford to wait. We are not pressed for time."

"But surely you are singularly incautious in your utterances," I returned. "Are you not laying yourself open to a tremendous wiggling from the Deity by the remarks you have made to me this evening. God must be aware of everything you have said. He is the Great Telepathist and knows all that we think as well as what we speak." "Ah!" said my spectral visitor, "There I have the pull of God. Some of us in heaven have discovered and perfected a system whereby we can at will balk the attempt of anyone—even God—to read our thoughts. Not only so, but we can make our speech inaudible to the Almighty. Necessity, as you know, is the mother of invention, and it became an absolute necessity that we should devise some means of concealing our thoughts. It is all very well to live with God for all eternity, but there are times when, in the words of your Scottish poet, you desire to keep 'a wee thing tae yersel.' You can understand how intolerable it would be to live with anyone to whom the innermost thoughts of your mind were as legible as print. Some fervid lovers might enjoy that state of things, but no one else would."

Just as I was on the point of inquiring into the nature of the process whereby, it might be, the thoughts, speech, and conduct of we human beings might also be concealed from the jealous scrutiny of the Most High, I observed with regret that the visible shape of my companion was rapidly fading away into nothingness, and—

Confound it! I must have been asleep. Here's the fire black out, and what a miserable night it is outside. I had better ask the landlady to bring in some tea. How unlucky it is that I omitted to ascertain the identity of my Christmas Eve visitor.

G. SCOTT.

## The Book of the Acts.—VI.

ITS UNAUTHENTIC AND UNHISTORICAL CHARACTER.

(Continued from p. 813.)

SETTING aside for the present the theory I have suggested as to the origin and source of the narra-



tives recorded in the Acts, we come now to matters of evidence which incontestably prove the unhistorical character of the book. The first of these has reference to the relations between Paul and the Apostolic party at Jerusalem. The picture which Luke has drawn of Paul and the early church in the Acts of the Apostles is in direct contradiction to that revealed in the four Pauline epistles, which (notwithstanding the theory of Van Manen) may reasonably be regarded as authentic. In the Acts' account Paul works in perfect harmony with the apostles, and is in every way completely subordinate to the Jewish church at Jerusalem. Immediately after his conversion "he was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus," and in that city he "preached Jesus." His life being in danger, he came to Judæa, and, after being introduced to the apostles, was "with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord." This continued until his life was again threatened, whereupon he was sent away by the apostles to Tarsus. After spending a year at Antioch, he and a colleague named Barnabas went up to Jerusalem with money collected for the Christians of Judæa, and stayed some time there with the apostolic party, after which he set out on his first apostolic journey, and returning to Antioch he "tarried no little time with the disciples." Next, we are told, "Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them" went to Jerusalem to consult the apostles respecting the circumcision of Gentile converts. "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church and the apostles and the elders," and shortly afterwards a council was held which passed a decree admitting Gentiles into the church without circumcision. After this Paul made two long missionary journeys, the second of which ended at Jerusalem. Here he was received and welcomed by the apostolic party, with whom he remained until arrested and sent to Cæsarea, and thence to Rome. Throughout this so-called history there is at all times complete harmony and unanimity between Paul and the apostles, both parties being actuated by the same motives, and working cordially together towards the same end.

If we turn now to Paul's authentic epistles, we find that a totally different state of affairs existed. According to these documents—which beyond all question are of far higher authority than the legendary narratives in the Acts—Paul stood alone, one man against a host of adversaries, those adversaries being the twelve apostles and the other members of the apostolic party, who, so far from assisting him in his propagation of the gospel, did all in their power to render his missionary labors fruitless. We find, for example, that Paul had established some small Gentile churches in Galatia, which fact becoming known to the apostles, the latter sent certain of their number into that province to counteract Paul's teaching. Paul, they said, was not an apostle, and had no authority to preach; the gospel as taught by him was not the right gospel; all Gentile converts must be circumcised and conform to the ritual of the Mosaic law. When this came to the ears of Paul that apostle wrote an epistle to the churches of Galatia in vindication of his authority and teaching, in which amongst other matters he said:—

"I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ.....There are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel contrary to that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema.....For I make known to you brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it; but it came to me through revelation from Jesus Christ.....But when it was the good pleasure of God .....to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me; but I went away into Arabia.....Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas.....But other of the apostles saw

I none, save James the Lord's brother.....Then I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still *unknown by face unto the churches of Judæa* which were in Christ.....Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me.....But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.....But from those who were reputed to be somewhat—whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me; God accepteth not man's person—they, I say, who were of repute, imparted nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision.....and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision.....But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face," etc. (Gal. i. 6—ii. 11).

Now, assuming these statements to be correct—and Paul says "Behold, before God, I lie not"—that teacher of the Gentiles was never an auxiliary of the apostles, "with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord." He had been from the very first a teacher on his own account, teaching independently of them, and preaching a totally different gospel—no circumcision, no law of Moses, nothing but simple belief in the divinity of Christ and in his alleged resurrection—all evolved out of his own head, and preached on his own and sole authority. It was not until he had been teaching nearly twenty years and had made for himself a name, that the apostles, constrained to recognise his power and position, gave him their left hands, and admitted his right to preach to Gentiles, whose salvation in no way concerned them. The narratives in the Acts will thus be seen to be contradicted in almost every particular. Paul did not join himself to the disciples at Damascus immediately after his conversion, and did not preach Jesus there, neither did he go up to Jerusalem and preach in concert with the twelve apostles. There was no decree passed by the apostolic party at Jerusalem for the admission of Gentiles into the church without undergoing circumcision; this is proved by the mission of the Jewish teachers to Paul's converts. Paul knew nothing of any such decree. Peter's speech at that mythical council respecting his vision of unclean animals and his preaching to Cornelius and other Gentiles is shown to be a fiction by his conduct (or that of Cephas) at Antioch. When Cephas came to this city he at first ate and associated with Paul's uncircumcised converts, but when some of the apostolic party arrived from Jerusalem, he withdrew and held no further intercourse with them, "fearing them that they were of the circumcision." It was then that Paul "resisted him to the face" and rebuked him "before them all" (Gal. ii. 11-14). It was this circumstance that caused the parting of Paul and Barnabas as co-workers in the ministry, not that recorded in Acts xv. 36-39. Barnabas, being a Jew, espoused the side of Cephas (Gal. ii. 13).

To take another example, we learn that Paul had founded a Christian church at Corinth, and that some time after his departure from that city a number of Judaising teachers from the apostles at Jerusalem visited this church with the twofold object of bringing Paul's converts under the Mosaic law and subverting Paul's authority as a Christian teacher. When this became known to Paul, that apostle wrote an epistle to the Corinthians, in which among other matters he referred to the underhand work mentioned. The following are two short extracts:—

"Was any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Hath any been called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God.....Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord? *If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you*" (1 Cor. vii. 18-19; ix. 1-2).



Later on, some members of the apostolic party paid another visit to the church at Corinth, and, after hearing Paul's epistle read, said that the writer was not an apostle and had no authority to preach, and though what he wrote sounded weighty enough, he himself was insignificant, and his speech contemptible. When this action became known to Paul, that teacher wrote a second epistle to the Corinthians, in which he says that though he is forbearing with them, he counts to be bold with those who had traduced him; that as he appears in his letters when absent from them, so will he be when present; that self-commendation was not God's commendation, and that he did not intermeddle with churches founded by other teachers, as his calumniators had done (2 Cor. x. 10-18). Further on, in his epistle, Paul plainly states his opinion of the twelve pretentious apostles. He says:—

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ. For if he that cometh preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or if ye receive a different spirit, which ye did not receive, or a different gospel which ye did not accept, ye do well to bear with [such annoyances]. For I reckon that I am not a whit behind those over-much apostles.....For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light.....Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they of the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ?.....I more; in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly," etc. (2 Cor. xi. 3-5, 13-15, 22, 23).

"I am become foolish: ye compelled me; for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing was I behind those over-much apostles, though I am nothing.....For what is there wherein ye were made inferior to the rest of the churches, except it be that I myself was not a burden to you" (2 Cor. xii. 11, 13).

The system of Christianity formulated by Paul eventually carried the day; that of the twelve apostles died a natural death. In the days of Irenæus the members of the Apostolic party (the Ebionites and Nazarenes) were regarded as heretics who had fallen away from the church planted by Jesus. Yet it must be obvious to any one who gives the subject a moment's consideration that if the last named personage ever devised a plan of salvation, it was the one taught by the apostles, and not that preached by Paul.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

## Correspondence.

### INFIDELITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A notice on the gate of Dr. Clifford's Church attracted me to-day. A Mr. Russell-Smith would lecture at 3 o'clock to men only on "Infidelity." I did not know whether to take this as a compliment to my sex or otherwise, but I decided to hear him. Mr. Smith's voice and manner are not uninteresting, but if his be the kind of trumpet that is to level the walls of Freethought, the date of completion will baffle old Baxter himself. From first to last it was only vague harangue and appeal. There was no attempt to remove the difficulties which abound in every book of the Bible; and there was instead the hackneyed suggestion that doubters are all doubtful characters concealing their other vices behind a veil of unbelief.

These gentlemen are not very generous with their platform. No opportunity was given at the close for questions or discussion. To make up for this, I have just sent to the President of the said P.S.A. the impressions of one poor deluded hearer, in the hope that some further and better effort may come later. I enclose a copy of the letter.

A CASUAL VISITOR.

Bruno was the first real martyr—neither frightened by Hell, nor bribed by Heaven. The first of all the world, who died for truth without the expectation of reward.—*Ingersoll.*

The men of God pilot us to Heaven, but they are very loth to go there themselves. Heaven is their "home," but they prefer exile, even in this miserable vale of tears. When they fall ill, they do not welcome it as a call from the Father. They do not sing "Nearer my God to thee." We do not find them going about saying "I shall be home shortly." Oh no! They indulge freely in self-pity. Like a limpet to a rock do they cling to this wretched, sinful world. Congregations are asked if they cannot "do something," a subscription is got up, and the man of God rushes off to the seaside, where prayer, in co-operation with oxygen and ozone, restore him to health, enable him to dodge "going home," and qualify him for another term of penal servitude on earth.

The very Churches are getting ashamed of their theological hell. They are becoming more and more secularised. They call on the disciples of Christ to remedy the evils of this life, and respond to the cry of the poor for a better share of the happiness of this world. Their methods are generally childish, for they overlook the causes of social evil, but it is gratifying to see them drifting from the old moorings, and little by little abandoning the old dogmas. Some of the clergy, like the late Dr. Farrar, go to the length of saying that "hell is not a place." Precisely so, and that is the teaching of Secularism.

Freethought is the real Savior. When we make a man a Freethinker, we need not trouble greatly about his politics. He is sure to go right in the main. He may mistake here or falter there, but his tendency will always be sound. Thus it is that Freethinkers always vote, work and fight for the popular cause. They have discarded the principle of authority in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, and left it to the Conservative party, to which all religionists belong precisely in proportion to the orthodoxy of their faith. Freethought goes to the root. It reaches the intellect and the conscience, and does not merely work at haphazard on the surface of our material interests and party struggles. It aims at the destruction of all tyranny and injustice by the sure methods of investigation and discussion, and the free play of mind on every subject. It loves Truth and Freedom. It turns away from the false and sterile ideas of the Kingdom of God and faces the true and fruitful idea of the Republic of Man.

### HIS REASON FOR SCATTERING THEM.

A Georgia ducky, charged with bigamy, said to the Judge: "Hit's true I got mo' than one wife, suh, but dey's scattered." "Scattered?" "Yes, suh; some's in Alabama, some's in Tennessee, en only one in Georgia—whar I live at. De only way ter have peace, judge, wuz ter make a scatteration!"—*Atlanta Constitution.*

### ALL HIS GOODS.

It was a fashionable wedding in Savannah. The bridegroom had no visible means of support save his father, who was rich; but when he reached that part of the service he repeated boldly:

"With all my worldly goods I thee endow!"

Whereupon the father said in a stage whisper that could be heard all over the church:

"Good Lord, there goes his bicycle!"—*Everybody's Magazine.*

### WICKED, ANYHOW.

A boy of straight Puritan extraction was called one day by his mother from the yard where he was playing with some other boys. In a tone of mingled sadness and severity, she said: "Noble, my son I never thought to hear you use a swear word." "Why mother," said the boy, "I didn't use any swear word. I only said the devil. Nobody thinks that's swearing." "I don't care," cried the mother, quickly; "it's making light of sacred things."

### TED'S BEGINNING.

The new assistant rector was trying to impress upon the mind of his young son the difference between his own position and that of his superior. "Now, Ted," he ended, "I want you to remember to be very polite to the rector. We are strangers, and I am only the assistant; it becomes us to be extremely courteous. Some day, perhaps, I shall be rector myself."

The next day the boy was walking with his father when they met the dignified rector.

"Hello!" promptly began Ted. "Pop's been tellin' me 'bout you—how you're the real thing, an' he's just the hired man an' we got to knuckle under. But some day he may be It himself, an' then you'll see!"



**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.**

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, L. B. Gallagher, "Charles Darwin on Agnosticism."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Insanity of Jesus."

**COUNTRY.**

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Home Service.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): 12 (noon), A Paul, "Popular Rhymes on Revelation"; 6.30, G. Scott, "The Roman Catholic Method in Controversy."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Islington-square): 3, A. E. Killip, "Christianity and Science"; 7, "Religion and Reform."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, Harold Elliot, "Jesus: an Atheist's Appreciation."

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, Jas. B. Grant, "A Few More Words with John Jones."

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