

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
Burns, Shelley, were with us—they watch from their  
graves!*

—ROBERT BROWNING.

## Secularists and the Elections.

OUR last week's article on the Blasphemy Laws ended with two questions for parliamentary candidates. We venture to print these again, so that they may not be lost sight of:—

- (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?

These questions should be put to all parliamentary candidates in every part of the kingdom; and if any of them want enlightenment on the subject our last week's article—cut out of the *Freethinker* or left in it—will supply what is required.

We now turn to the question of Secular Education on which we shall do a little plain speaking.

Our readers will recollect that we have always looked upon the Education controversy as a quarrel between Churchites and Chapelites; or rather between Church parsons and Nonconformist ministers; for we deny that the people at large, if left to themselves, care twopence about the matter. The Church parson wants to teach the religion that suits *him* in what are facetiously called "voluntary" schools. The Nonconformist minister wants all "voluntary" schools to be abolished, and to have the religion that suits *him* taught in what Dr. Clifford is now calling "the Common Schools" of the nation. That is what the two opposite parties mean. All that they say which looks different is blarney, shuffling, and evasion.

Now the Conservative party, in the main, is the political champion of the Churchites; and the Liberal party, in the main, is the political champion of the Chapelites.

The Socialists, of course, are in favor of Secular Education; and the same may be said of the Labor candidates, if they stand by the clear resolution of the Trade Union Congress.

What we have been asserting all along is now admitted by the *Christian World*. Our contemporary confesses that what the Free Church candidates demand is "equality of treatment for all branches of the Christian Church." This means equality of privilege for all Christian denominations, at the expense of Jews, Secularists, Freethinkers, Rationalists, and all other Non-Christians.

But this equality of treatment (or privilege) is more easily talked about than realised. There is not the slightest sign that the Churchites will fall into the arms of the Chapelites, or that the Chapelites will fall into the arms of the Churchites. They are as bitter and irreconcilable as ever.

Mr. Augustine Birrell, the new President of the Board of Education, evidently realises the difficulty of the job he will have to tackle. He is bound to satisfy the Nonconformists if he can; but he cannot

very well do that without making the Church party desperate, and rallying the Catholics to their assistance; and then there are all the Non-Christians—who are more numerous than is generally believed—ready to throw their weight in whichever side of the scale may best serve the interests of Secular Education. Mr. Birrell is therefore "kite-flying." He throws out a number of hints, to find out which will "catch on." And behind all is the threat of Secular Education, which he says he personally desires.

The immediate future of this struggle is bound to be of great interest to Freethinkers; and, incidentally, it is likely to provide them with some amusement.

Meanwhile it should be noted that the *Christian World* and the *Daily Chronicle* take totally different views of what it is that Mr. Birrell is driving at. They cannot both be right, and they may both be wrong. But the very fact that they differ so widely shows that Mr. Birrell is not quite so simple as they imagine.

We shall have more to say on this subject next week. At present we wish to lay before our readers a correspondence we have had with Mr. Rowland Whitehead, the Liberal candidate for South-East Essex—where we reside when we are at home. This correspondence may help some of our readers in dealing with their own candidates.

Mr. Whitehead's address contained the usual vague, see-saw paragraph about Education, on which we ventured to send him the following letter:—

January 4, 1906.

"DEAR SIR,—

Your election address, with an invitation to me to vote for you, has been delivered at my residence.

With regard to Education, I have read the paragraph you devote to it, without gaining any definite enlightenment—except that you are opposed to the Church party and in favor of the Chapel party. I am opposed to both. It is, in my opinion, wrong to teach religion at all through State servants in State buildings; and it is certainly *as* wrong to teach religion which is approved by Nonconformists as to teach religion which is approved by Churchmen. What I desire to know is whether your vague language contains any principle. You say that you 'desire the continuance of religious instruction,' but you cannot sanction the 'use of public funds for the endowment of any particular creed.' You also say that you are against 'sectarian tests.' Now will you kindly tell me when and where religion was ever taught without sectarianism, and how you imagine such a thing to be possible at present in this country? What I presume you mean is that all *Christian* denominations should have an equal advantage. But as the public schools are supported by *Non-Christians* too, I should be glad to know where the latter stand in your suggested arrangement.

For my part, I cannot conceive the possibility of *any* subject being taught by paid teachers without 'tests' being applied; for, if the tests are not applied openly, it is perfectly certain that they *must* be applied tacitly. Objection would surely be raised against a Jewish teacher expounding the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ—or a Freethinking teacher expounding any Christian doctrine whatever. I have myself known Freethinking teachers who have been obliged to quit the scholastic profession in consequence of the arrangement which you seem to regard as so equitable.

Now as Freethinkers are citizens, and their votes are solicited as such, it cannot be expected that they will not take the usual means to defend their own rights. Before I can feel at liberty to vote for you, therefore, I shall deem it necessary to be informed a little more

particularly as to the real nature of your program in regard to 'Education.'

Yours truly,

Rowland Whitehead Esq.

G. W. FOOTE."

To this letter we received the following reply:—

"G. W. FOOTE, Esq.

January 6, 1906.

DEAR SIR,—

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of Jan. 4, in which you ask certain questions with regard to the education matter.

Shortly, my position is this. I have frequently stated on the public platform and elsewhere that the only logical solution of the Education controversy, and the only one that is based upon any abstract principle, is that the public authorities should not provide any religious instruction at the public expense. However, the English nation, I believe, desire to have religious instruction in public schools, and if this is to be achieved, it can, I believe, only be done, as indicated in my address, by an agreement in which reasonable facilities are given for all concerned in the matter, to have or to give the religious instruction which they desire. An agreement of this kind, which can only be in the nature of a compromise, is not based on any principle. If such an agreement is not feasible, I think that secular education is the only logical outcome of the difficulties. I am entirely in favor of the non-Christians having the same facilities for giving instruction to members of their own sects, at their own expense, in their own creeds, as are given to any Christian denomination.

Yours faithfully,

ROWLAND WHITEHEAD."

Mr. Whitehead's reply was not very satisfactory, and we were minded to let the matter drop as apparently hopeless; but on second thoughts we decided to write a rejoinder:—

"DEAR SIR,—

January 8, 1906.

I beg to thank you for yours of the 6th inst., in reply to mine of the 4th.

I cannot say, however, that you reply to my questions which were based upon your election address. Certainly you do not inform me how religion can be taught in the public schools without 'sectarian tests' being applied in some form or other to the teachers.

I must note, also, that there is a very serious discrepancy between your election address and your letter. In the latter you refer to Secular Education as the only logical policy; in the former you say that you 'personally desire the continuance of religious instruction.'

It is something, however, that you do perceive the logic of Secular Education. In this you are like all the leading men in the present Liberal government. But you are also like them in giving your intellectual adhesion to one thing and your practical support to another. The truth being, I take it, that you, in common with other Liberals, feel that you must have Nonconformist support, and see the necessity of paying the price exacted for it.

When you say that 'the English nation desire to have religious instruction in public schools' you are merely speculating. My own belief is that the demand for religious education in the public schools is really the work of the Church clergy on the one side, and the Nonconformist ministers on the other; and that, as Dr. Macnamara and others have said, the great mass of the people are indifferent to the whole matter, except when they are under the direct stimulus of the professional zealots.

I think you will find, if you think the question out, that no policy of religious education in the public schools is wise or just, or calculated to bring about peace between the quarreling sects.

You may rely upon this, in the meantime, that Non-Christians will never take part in any 'compromise,' such as you suggest, which is a violation of their cardinal principles. Religion is either a public or a personal matter. If it be the former, the State should teach what it regards as the true religion, in spite of all sectional opposition. If it be the latter, the State should leave it absolutely to the individual conscience of the citizens.

Yours truly,

Rowland Whitehead, Esq.

G. W. FOOTE."

We hardly imagine that Mr. Whitehead will reply again. Should he do so, however, his letter may interest our readers.

G. W. FOOTE.

## A Misreading of Evolution.

*The Unit of Strife.* By E. K. GARROD. Longmans, Green & Co.

MR. GARROD has written what is at many points a very suggestive little work, and what might easily have been a wholly useful one, had it not been marred by one fatal flaw. He has chosen to follow Mr. Benjamin Kidd in his unscientific exposition of the nature of religious belief and its function in social progress, and in so doing has placed himself among those pseudo-scientific writers on whose efforts the late Professor Huxley poured well earned scorn. And, indeed, a conception of evolution that pictures human instincts as diametrically and fundamentally opposed to human reason, both of them being products of the same evolutionary process, and only kept in order by religious belief is sufficiently absurd to obviate the necessity of disproof, if only accurate thinking was a common characteristic of the average mind. But it is not, and with this fact lies the need for refutation.

What Mr. Garrod means by the "Unit of Strife" is the nature of the unit that determines survival in the struggle for existence. He rightly points out that the nature of this unit undergoes continuous modification, but which may, for convenience, be divided into a few broad classes. Biologically the earliest may be taken as the cell. Each cell lives and fights for itself. In the next stage we have the multicellular organisms, where a differentiation of function makes its appearance, and wherein the individual cell is subordinated, in function, to the whole, the whole in turn subserving the interests of each part. A further stage is reached when this differentiation of function in the case of cells becomes paralleled by a division of labor, or difference of function, with animals living in groups. And this stage—far more operative in the sub-human world than Mr. Garrod allows for—may be said to cover the whole of human, as well as the major part of animal evolution.

The Unit of strife undergoes a further development among human beings by what may be called an expansion of the individual. By this process the interest of the individual expands from the tribe to the nation, and from the nation to its ultimate stage of the race. Or, to put the matter in another way, whereas the earliest form of the struggle known—and possibly the earliest that has existed so far as human beings are concerned—is the contest of tribe with tribe, the unit being the tribe, and individual fitness being determined by serviceability to the body politic; history records the gradual growth of the unit of strife, until we glimpse as an ultimate stage a combination of humankind as a whole against its inevitable enemies, the quality of the individual being measured by this ultimate purpose.

Had Mr. Garrod continued along these lines, pointing out how this process is affected by the development of mind, and to what extent current tendencies are to be utilised or opposed, he would have performed a useful service, and his book would have deserved nothing but praise. But instead of treating mind as based upon earlier instinct, from which it springs and of which it is an elaborated expression, he prefers to treat it as more or less of a disruptive and anti-social force, needing to be checked by a "sanction," which he finds, like Mr. Kidd, in religion, and like Mr. Kidd without seeing how suicidal is his position. The development of the new force, he says, which came into play with the consciousness of law introduced the necessity for a new function in human communities. "Man finds himself consciously at enmity with an inherited instinct within himself, which perpetually prompts him to seek the needs of his own existence only, regardless of the fact that as a member of a community, or of communities, his own existence can only profit as he seeks the welfare of those larger communities themselves." And the conclusion is that the only adequate controlling force is to be found in religion, which imposes upon man the conception of a force outside superior to himself,

and so induces submission and obedience to law that makes for the restraint of this inherited instinct. This, he says, has been the function of religion in the past, and is the function of religion in the present. And to clinch the matter there is a chapter devoted to a review of historic races and nations in order to prove that those communities possessed of religious systems that represent the need of self-restraint in obedience to the decrees of a higher power, must be the communities which best succeed.

It would be hard to say which is the most unsatisfactory in the above statement—the statements concerning man or those concerning the function of religion. One can only feel certain that neither would have been made had there not been a desire to find some useful and permanent function for religion. To begin with, it is not accurate to say that the awakening of a consciousness of natural law finds man at enmity with inherited instincts—at least it is not true when stated in this bald manner. And it is surprising that so thoroughgoing an evolutionist as Mr. Garrod seems to be does not perceive that the evolution of an instinct that is fundamentally opposed to human welfare is, on the evolutionary hypothesis, a simple impossibility. Want of complete adaptation due to an ever-changing environment, there may be, but this is all. And the rectification is brought about, not by the suppression of instincts, but by their education, or, as I have put it above, by their expansion. Let anyone try and think of an instinct that is fundamentally bad, and it will be at once seen how far from the fact is Mr. Garrod's position. Robbery, for example, is the irregular or illegitimate gratification of a desire that is under other conditions perfectly legitimate; lust of an instinct the existence of which is vital; and so on through the entire list. The true function of reason in this direction is to indicate how, under changed conditions, these instincts may more certainly fulfil their primary use.

In the next place, the distinction between religion and reason is quite false. Religion does not come into existence as something opposed to reason, and has never, save in spasmodic apologies, justified itself on this ground. Religion in its origin is based upon reasoning as exact as the circumstances admit. It becomes unreasonable only in view of the development of more accurate reasoning against which it sets itself. There is a grain of truth in Mr. Garrod's contention that religion does act, under certain conditions, as a binding force; but stated as Mr. Garrod states it, it is robbed of all its value. Mr. Walter Bagehot, in his profoundly suggestive book, *Physics and Politics*, pointed out that one use of early religions was to break in man to the social yoke.\* But he was acute enough to point out further that once the yoke was formed, the next necessary step was to break it; and that this was even a more difficult step than the first. Mr. Garrod on the contrary, asserts that those communities strongest in the sense of obedience to this religious force have shown themselves the fittest to survive.

One would be surprised at such a statement if one were not well used to the religionist's lordly contempt for facts. And one of these facts is that it is just this "submission and obedience" to what man conceives to be the will of his Deity that is responsible for by far the larger portion of the evils that stain the history of religion. However debatable it may be that bad men have been made good by religious belief, there is simply no rational questioning the statement good men have acted badly, and bad ones worse than they would otherwise have done, as a result of their religious beliefs. It may be said they were mistaken in their judgment of their divine will. Maybe; but this does not alter the fact that they acted as they did because they believed as they did. Had they not been submissive and obedient to the "divine will" the history of heresy would have

been different to what it is, and the story of Christian witch-hunting would never have been written.

The inaccuracy is the greater when Mr. Garrod makes this belief one of the conditions of the "fitness" of communities. He speaks of the advantage of the ruler who led his troops infused with a high ideal and the conviction that their special deity favored their cause alone. But as the opposing army would in all probability have exactly the same conviction, it is difficult to see what advantage either side derived therefrom. Mr. Garrod follows Mr. Kidd in pointing out that Greece began to decline in power when at its greatest point intellectually, and when its religious belief began to give way before encroaching culture. But Greece went down before even a less religious people than themselves, the decisive factor being neither religion nor mental culture, but military supremacy. Moreover the whole lesson of history is actually the reverse of that taught by Mr. Garrod. If ever there existed a religious people it was the ancient Egyptians. Yet they went down before invader after invader. The Romans were a people whose religion was mainly of a civic character—a people who identified themselves with the State instead of with some extra-cosmic force. Yet they defeated religious races wherever they encountered them, and above all, the Jews, whom Christians believe to have been the most truly religious of all. And when Rome became really religious—became, that is, Christian—she went down before the less religious Barbarians. Even in our own country, in its various invasions, there is the same lesson; while certainly the Elizabethan period, that saw so much of the foundations of England's greatness laid, was not the most religious period of our history. And one need only just remind readers, that the greater religious fervor of the Boers did not secure them victory, nor did the greater religious belief of the Russians enable the Czar's army to enter Tokio—except as prisoners.

Even the plea that man gains strength from the conviction that he is fighting with an extra-cosmic force will not stand examination. After all, the only forces we can know are natural forces. And as we have to believe that any other assumed force is working through these, our relation is to natural forces first and last. We may assume for a time that this is not so, but in the long run facts win, because they alone are permanently insistent. We may even continue for a while longer to pretend to believe as true what we know to be false; but this too loses strength sooner or later. And it is only religious advocates who would inoculate the people with hypocrisy in the name of morality and intellectual integrity.

C. COHEN.

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### Minorities.

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MINORITIES are always persecuted. They never get justice. The invariable tendency of the strong is to crush the weak. When the Christians were few and feeble their lot was hard and cruel; but no sooner did they become numerous and powerful than they took up the rôle of persecutors. When the Puritans were a minority in England they were most atrociously treated, but the moment they got hold of the reins of power they began to mete to others the very treatment to which they themselves had so acutely suffered. This is a rule to which there are no known exceptions. At the present time, avowed Secularists are a small minority in Great Britain, with the result that they are looked down upon and despised. In the management of national affairs their very existence is systematically ignored. They are never referred to except in terms of denunciation and scorn. In the present educational controversy neither Church nor Dissent gives them a moment's consideration. They do not count. When they lift up their voice in solemn protest, when they call aloud for nothing but fair-play or mere justice,

\* Even this would have to be discounted somewhat, as Mr. Bagehot hardly allowed enough for the fact of man's gregarious animal ancestry.

they are rewarded with contemptuous silence. If they attempt to argue out their case they are met with sophistical evasions and virulent abuse.

A little while ago, a prominent Christian lady was vehemently denouncing a woman-writer, through whose first and greatest book there runs a thick vein of scepticism. "She is a thoroughly bad woman," shouted this gentle representative of the meek and mild Redeemer of the world. "Madam, have you evidence in your possession to substantiate such an assertion?" was humbly demanded. "No evidence is required," she answered, "only a wicked woman could have written such an ungodly book." Guy Thorne, the Christian novelist who is so tremendously boomed just now, assumes the same attitude to unbelievers. According to him, in his Christmas article in the *Christian Commonwealth*, no honest man can be an Atheist, Atheism being only a sop administered to a guilty conscience. Secularism is simply adopted to allow wicked people to wallow unrebuked in the worst forms of moral filth. Mr. Thorne does not inform us in which place Renan has his abode just now; but he has no hesitation in affirming that the illustrious French writer *knows* now that Jesus is God as well as man. The majority are infallible; they know everything; their wildest assertions must be true; and only the most abandoned characters would ever dream of challenging the accuracy of their statements. Such an attitude is abominably unjust; but that does not matter in the least, the only thing that matters being the undoubted omniscience of the majority.

Does it never occur to Christian apologists that mud-throwing has no argumentative value? You may vilipend Haeckel to any extent you please; but that does not disprove Haeckelism. You may abuse Thomas Paine to your heart's content, calling him "a dirty little Atheist"; but your diabolical besmirching of the man does not touch the arguments of the *Age of Reason*. You may blacken the character of the late Colonel Ingersoll till not a single white spot is left; but that is no answer to his powerful attacks upon Supernaturalism. Professor Haeckel is held in the highest esteem by all who know him, and it has been proved to the hilt that the vile charges levelled at the heads of Paine and Ingersoll are utterly false. My present object, however, is to point out that base aspersions are not arguments. They who deal in malicious personalities only betray the weakness of their case. They are guilty of hitting below the belt. And yet we find that personal abuse is a weapon resorted to by nearly all Christian apologists in answering their opponents. But it is a detestable weapon, utterly unworthy of any true cause.

Is it not the duty of minorities to fall into line and keep step with the rest of the world? Yes, doubtless, in unessential matters, where no vital principle is involved. But when we have to do with religious and non-religious opinions and convictions, it must be admitted that every man has a perfect right both to cherish and advocate his own; and history assures us that minorities have often been proved to be right. Galileo was right, though the whole Church was against and bitterly denounced him. Bruno was right, though the majority put him to death. And the fact that Freethinkers are to-day in the minority is no sign whatever that they are in error. Indeed, one presumptive proof that their views are true is to be found in the undeniable fact that the Church is slowly travelling in the direction of their position. Bit by bit Supernaturalism is slowly disappearing. Uncompromising theological conservatives are now few and far between, while the ranks of Freethought are fuller and stronger than ever.

Avowed Freethinkers are still a minority; but they are not on that account dismayed and depressed. Confident that they possess the truth they are filled with sublime courage and hope. They rejoice to learn that not a few Christian apologists are practically on their side, the difference between them being one of words rather than of thoughts. Sir Oliver Lodge,

for example, in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal* refers to the Virgin Birth and the bodily Resurrection as *legends*. Just think of it, the resurrection of Christ, the corner stone of the Christian religion, only a legend! If the body did not rise, there was nothing else to rise, for the soul or spirit cannot die. The Christian Church is founded on a lie. Such admissions coming from advocates of the Faith are of the utmost value, and Freethinkers cannot make too much of them. Sir Oliver Lodge is our very best ally, and we congratulate him on the excellent service he is rendering to our cause. We heartily welcome him; and his being welcomed by the other side shows conclusively how very near to each other, after all, the two sides really are.

In view of such strange admissions we are told by some of the more orthodox divines that it was a huge mistake to make the resurrection the *foundation* of the Christian religion, the only sure foundation being Jesus Christ himself. But what is Jesus Christ himself apart from the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection? Paul did not agree with such divines. He says that Jesus Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead" (Romans i. 4). Again he says: "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 17). All the doctors of the Church, in all ages, faithfully followed Paul's lead. Apart from his resurrection Jesus Christ himself is a most unsafe foundation on which to build one's house of faith. Thus we see that the advanced theologians of to-day are giving up, one by one, the "essential contents of the Christian Faith," and so playing into the hands of their opponents. We have every reason, therefore, to greet the future with a cheer, and to devote ourselves with confidence to the work of the present.

We have just entered upon another year in our work for Freethought, and the question naturally arises: How can we improve on the service of the past? How can we best facilitate the triumph of our cause? How can we most effectively help to convert a minority into a majority? By keeping out of the Slough of Despond, by cherishing an optimistic spirit, by cultivating faith in the essential merits of the cause, and particularly by never falling from the high state of good nature which it is our privilege to maintain. Most people do occasionally get becalmed in the cold sea of pessimism when, do what they may, they are powerless to make any genuine progress. Everything then presents an aspect of despair, and the fires of life burn low. Let us all endeavor so to steer our vessels as always to catch the invigorating breezes of hope. Superstition is doomed, in the eye of reason all forms of supernaturalism are finally discredited, and just over the edge of the horizon yonder we can see the dawn of the reign of Secularism. All the gods are passing away, and all religions are on the wane, and their places are being taken by the verified conclusions of Science and the plain facts of life. Surely there is here a sufficient encouragement to prevent us from slipping into the dismal swamp of dejection, and to induce us to toil with might and main to make our mission a complete success.

We have no new arguments, the old being as applicable and convincing now as ever. In our relation to the supernatural we merely plead entire ignorance. To those who believe in it we only say: "Adduce some proof, present some evidence, offer us some form of demonstration that what you believe in is an objective reality. The supernatural does not appeal to us, we know nothing at all about it, but we are prepared to consider evidences, to weigh proofs, and to heed verifications. We are waiting for some substantiation of your belief." In response to our repeal they can only repeat their confession of faith. No proof, no evidence, no verification is practicable. Then we rejoin: "In the absence of what you cannot give us are we not justified in concentrating our thought and interest on the only sphere known to us? We do not resist God, we only state that God has positively no dealings with

us. When some of us lost our faith in him He also completely lost his hold upon us, and ever since we have been total strangers to each other." That is precisely the position we occupy. We have no new arguments because we do not need any. It is the believers who need to be reinforced with fresh arguments. All the old ones are now deserted as useless, and no new ones have been minted.

We have no new arguments; but we are perpetually restating and reconstructing the old. We are sometimes taunted with the antiquity of our arguments; but however ancient they may be they have never once been fairly met and answered. They have not been answered because they are unanswerable; and they are unanswerable because the supernatural objects of belief are both unknown and unknowable. I may believe that there is a city of six million inhabitants on the southern hemisphere of the moon. My belief in that city may minister perpetual joy to me. I picture the buildings in my mind; I meditate upon the inhabitants, wondering what they are like and how they spend their time. Are they worried by the same puzzling problems as trouble us? Have they too a religion and are their lives made miserable by theological hair-splittings and interminable controversies? This moon-city may be a source of much comfort and pleasure to me; but if asked to prove that such a city exists I would be hopelessly dumb. The same thing is true of the belief in God and the heavenly city. No one has ever seen either God or his heavenly city, and so no one knows that either exists. In the absence of all proof or evidence, or of the testimony of any eyewitness, we believe in neither; and believing in neither we have all the stronger belief in the world and the beings we both see and touch every day. These are within our reach, and as real as we can conceive them to be. We may know nothing as it is in itself; but we do know our fellow-beings as they appear to and affect us. Well, let us try to get into right relations with them as we know them, and with the world in which we all live. This is the quintessence of Secularism, as I understand it. It refuses to have anything to do with a world of which it has no knowledge, while it advocates the wisdom of making the most and best of a world concerning which we seem to know something. That, in a nutshell, is the whole teaching of Secularism; and is it not eminently a safe and wholesome teaching? The whole duty of man as a citizen of this world is embraced by it.

Minorities have rights which should not be denied to them. They have a right to exist and express themselves; and this is a simple human right. They have a right to be considered in the settlement of all matters which concern them, which right is not now granted to them. And let it be remembered that the minorities of to-day may be the majorities of to-morrow, and that then to-morrow may be a day of unexpected judgment and of rectification of false relationships.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Conversion of a Family.

My whole family was "converted" to Christianity when I was about six years of age. Yet none of them had ever doubted the truth of that creed before the said "conversion." They simply went to the parish church, believed what they were told, and troubled no more about it. They read the orthodox conservative rag, and indulged in the sins of their fathers. My brother and sister went to the State school, I still remember the horrible tales of the wholesale floggings, and periodical mutinies which occurred at that school, and also the awe with which I looked forward to the time when I was doomed to undergo my own ordeal. Happily I was spared this, for the conduct of the old school-master became so intolerable that my father resolved to remove my brother and sister to the Grundtvigian private school just before I commenced my schooling.

Here let me say that the Danish Grundtvigian sect is, to the best of my belief, the best Christian sect in the world, and one of the few religious communities for which I have a

good word to say. A pity it is that those people, like the Quakers, are so few in number. They are Radicals to a man, and many of them Republicans. They disbelieve in the State being allied with religion; but whether they would be faithful to that principle if the State patronised *their* brand is, of course, a different matter. Religious and political freedom is their watchword. In some respects Grundtvigianism is, theoretically, a reversion towards Catholicism. This is, however, belied by the practices of its adherents; for they dearly love enlightenment, and their teachers are pushing more and more towards Freethought.

In this said school there was no corporal punishment, we were invited to treat the teacher as our equal, and interrupt him whenever we did not understand him. There were no lessons to be learnt by heart, and often the lectures he gave us developed into animated discussions, or all-round conversation, and yet there was no disorder or disobedience. There was an evening lecture once a week for the people of the neighborhood, and my father and brothers and sisters attended. My family became friendly with the teacher, and were invited to go and hear Pastor Spleiss, who preached in one of the neighboring parishes. My brother and sister went. Through hearing this man, who was an earnest and eloquent preacher, they became so enthusiastic, that they besought my father to drive us over to hear him. This he did, not once, but every Sunday, till Pastor Spleiss was reluctantly compelled to relinquish his pulpit to go to another calling. It is even now hard for me to think ill of this preacher's motives in leaving us. But it is yet vivid in my memory how I puzzled my brain—young as I was—why he left us, as his heart was apparently breaking at the very thought of the approaching separation. "It grieves my heart to leave you," he would say, while his tear-washed cheeks glowed, and his voice was stifled with grief, "but it is the Lord's will." And I thought with a sigh: So be it—there must be some mysterious reason for this sudden call.

Had this occurred now I fancy I should have been rather sarcastic about it. I rather suspect there were more grapes in that part of the Lord's vineyard to which this servant of the Lord had been called than in the one he had been called from. I have another criticism to make concerning this otherwise excellent man. He came once to our school to deliver an evening lecture. I, as a school-boy, was fond of hearing a speech. As there were not sufficient seats for all, I stood up in deference to elder folks upon the only standing room there was, namely, on the floor in front of the platform. Here I reared my stately form before the eloquent preacher, no doubt somewhat rudely gazing at him, while he delivered his oration. It seems, however, that he did not appreciate my eagerness to be initiated into the mysteries of the Christian religion, for he opened his speech by remarking that if the boys came there to stare at him he would set an hour especially apart for that purpose. That was a beautiful illustration of the saying of Christ: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Now, what was the influence of all this upon my father's life? He ceased swearing—except when very angry, and then only when he thought nobody heard him. He ceased to drink—except two wine-glasses of spirit for breakfast, and two more instead of tea. He ceased to associate with the neighbors—except occasionally. He took to reading, and forgot his work, which partially caused his downfall. Our women folk retained the sin of continually, in the most blasphemous manner, at every occasion, taking the Lord's name in vain. I, who grew up the most sincerely religious of them all, was always remonstrating with them, but in vain. The other Grundtvigian farmers in the parish left off the sins of their fathers, and adopted others of their own. They formed a sanctimonious and aristocratic *clique*, and looked down on everybody "lower" than themselves. Their love of liberty and general good-heartedness expressed itself in a too great leniency towards their offspring. They allowed their children to go astray. Their daughters formed roadside and moonshine, and even bedroom, *liaisons* with the scum of the parish, and after Sunday church service they would discuss their Saturday night's escapades outside the church. When they had sown their wild oats they would generally contract a "respectable" marriage.

At that time my father was a member of the parish council, one function of which was to appoint teachers to the various schools. There came a Grundtvigian teacher, who was an applicant, to present himself to my father. He used his influence on his behalf, and they were successful. This teacher was an extraordinary man, a fascinating personality, and a religious fanatic. He was of medium height, inclined to stoutness; he had black curly hair, black trimmed beard, red lips, wore a rough light grey suit, had a hollow voice, and his hands and arms were tattooed with blue ink. He had been seven years a sailor, had braved the dangers of the sea, and told of adventures in the jungles of Brazil. My family were infatuated with him. My father drove us once

a week, often through blinding snowstorms, over to hear this wonderful man lecture. After the lecture we, the favored few, were taken into the holy of holies, to converse upon sacred subjects, and were treated to singing of hymns; while Thorwald, the four-year-old, would accompany his father to any tune on a little cornet. When this man began his labors as a teacher he set himself the task of reforming the whole parish. He lectured every week upon various moral topics. One night his subject was swearing, and he elaborately explained the meaning and derivation of every oath in the language. Once he was heard to say that if a parent or teacher struck a child it was a self-declaration of spiritual bankruptcy. A year or so after that we heard that he himself had caused blood to flow from a boy's nose so freely that he had been obliged to take the child out and wash it. Still later he accompanied his wife on a holiday tour, and his spouse died suddenly on the journey. He came back with a story to the effect that she had on her death-bed solemnly entreated him, for the children's sake, to marry their servant girl, whom they had, so to speak, adopted from childhood. This was soon an accomplished fact, and the first-born by his second wife was a little too previous by about four months, although well developed. He explained this by saying that it was premature. However, no suspicions as to foul play were aroused, no inquest was held, and no post mortem was made; but his friends turned their backs upon him, and my father was no exception.

This religious teacher came to my father's death-bed, years after these events, not as a father confessor, but as a penitent, in order to make a clean breast to my dying parent. "I have sinned," he said, "but I aggravated my sin by seeking to hide it by lies."

J. K. MAAGAARD.

### A Question.

Sorrow and suffering, anguish and agony  
Sickness and pain!  
Is there an Arm for a Shield to the helpless?  
Is there a brain  
Measureless, mighty, working our happiness?  
Or is earth's sod  
Cast in the man-mould, then shattered to dust again?  
Springs life from lifelessness? Sinks it to nothingness,  
Having a Fate without just Dispensator,  
Having no hope of a loving Creator,  
Knowing no God?

Cries of the desolate rising unheededly,  
Wails of the wronged,  
Cries of the innocent, plaints of the hungering,  
Piteous, prolonged;  
Rise these above to the heights where they say a God  
Ceaselessly keeps [Heaven  
Watch o'er the ways of earth. Can an eye shine from  
Seeing earth's wickedness? Can an unailing hand  
Grasp and direct all the life-reins unflinching?  
Is there a God giving justice unalteringly?  
Nay, or He sleeps!

Or, if He sleep not, yet suffer unheedingly  
Passion and crime,  
Innocents helpless—from brother-slain Abel  
Down to our time—  
Ever to slaughter and compass with snares of death  
Surely His might  
Working for good must be weaker than evil!  
Surely must bow 'neath the power of the Maker  
Of ill! Or, if God be the Almighty Master  
Can he love justice when evil grows faster  
Ever than right?

J. E.

### The Birth of Metaphysics.

"Fowk never live more'n a hunderd year"  
Said Uncle Tom. When ol' Ben Thrifty  
Said "Wal—I'll bet ye a gallon o' beer  
Ol' Noah—he lived to nine hunderd and fifty."  
So Ben dragged down the good old book,  
An' turned on the tex', an' smole.  
An' Uncle Tom—he had a look,  
An' his eye had a cur'ous roll.  
He sucked his pipe an' it fizzled.  
"You can't call it properly living," he thundered,  
An' what I said I still maintain,  
That there tex' 's as right as rain,  
But you can't call it living after a hunderd;  
I racken he on'y mizzled."

G. E. W.

### MONTAIGNE'S TOLERATION.

He was a good Catholic in his easy way; he attended divine service regularly; he crossed himself when he yawned. He conformed in practice to every rule of the Church; but if orthodox in these matters he was daring in speculation. There was nothing he was not bold enough to question. He waged war after his peculiar fashion with every form of superstition. He worked under the foundations of priest-craft. But while serving the Reformed cause, he had no sympathy with Reformers. If they would but remain quiet, but keep their peculiar notions to themselves, France would rest! That a man should go to the stake for an opinion, was as incomprehensible to him as that a priest or king should send him there for an opinion. He thought the persecuted and the persecutors fools about equally matched. He was easy tempered and humane—in the hunting-field he could not bear the cry of a dying hare with composure—martyr-burning had consequently no attraction for such a man. His scepticism came into play, his melancholy humor, his sense of the illimitable which surrounds man's life, and which mocks, defeats, flings back his thought upon himself. Man is here, he said, with bounded powers, with limited knowledge, with an unknown behind, an unknown in front, assured of nothing but that he was born, and that he must die; why, then, in Heaven's name should he burn his fellow for a difference of opinion in the matter of surplices, or as to the proper fashion of conducting devotion? Out of his scepticism and his merciful disposition grew, in that fiercely intolerant age, the idea of toleration, of which he was the apostle.—*Alexander Smith.*

### NATURE AND MAN.

We bow down to the universal laws,  
Which never had for man a special clause  
Of cruelty or kindness, love or hate:  
If toads and vultures are obscene to sight,  
If tigers burn with beauty and with might,  
Is it by favor or by wrath of Fate?

All substance lives and struggles evermore  
Through countless shapes continually at war,  
By countless interactions interknit:  
If one is born a certain day on earth,  
All times and forces tended to that birth,  
Not all the world could change or hinder it.

—JAMES THOMSON, *City of Dreadful Night.*

There is a common-place book argument,  
Which glibly glides from every tongue;  
When any dare a new light to present,  
"If you are right, then everybody's wrong!"  
Suppose the converse of this precedent  
So often urged, so loudly and so long;  
"If you are wrong, then everybody's right!"  
—*Byron.*

The time will come when even selfishness will be charitable for its own sake, because at that time the man will have grown and developed to that degree that selfishness demands generosity and kindness and justice. The self becomes so noble that selfishness is a virtue. The lowest form of selfishness is willing to be happy or wishes to be happy at the expense or the misery of another. The highest form of selfishness is when a man becomes so noble that he finds his happiness is making others so. This is the nobility of selfishness.—*Ingersoll.*

### ONE ON ANDREW CARNEGIE.

The story is told in the *Springfield Republican* that Andrew Carnegie asked a young man who was about to become a student at Jena, to get for him an autograph of Professor Haeckel. When it arrived it read thus: "Ernst Haeckel gratefully acknowledges the receipt from Andrew Carnegie of a Zumpt microscope for the biological laboratory of the Jena University." Mr. Carnegie made good, admiring the scientist more than ever.

"You'd be surprised to know how many grafters there are among the clergy," said a New York undertaker the other day, when somebody expressed astonishment at the fact that the undertaker allowed clergymen a "rake-off" of 10 per cent. on the cost of all funerals they send to him. Why, "graft" is only a fair description of the whole preaching business. Like plumbers, bakers, carpenters, and other tradesmen, the preachers are simply "out for the stuff," and all who have to do business with them soon find this out. "The laborer is worthy of his hire," of course. So also the grafter, and he should get it.—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

## Acid Drops.

Sir Oliver Lodge seems to have mistaken his vocation. After sneering severely at Haeckel for presuming to give the world his views on other subjects than biology, the Principal of Birmingham University writes and talks himself on almost every subject but physics and chemistry. Biology he takes specially under his wing; he is particularly strong on "occult" phenomena; he poses as a politician and reformer in the *Clarion*; and he undertakes to revise all the important doctrines of Christianity. Having tackled "sin" and the "atonement" and the "virgin birth of Christ," he is now tackling the "Resurrection." This he does in the new number of the *Hibbert Journal*. According to his opinion, the story of Christ's bodily resurrection from the tomb is a "legend." That is what we have been saying in the *Freethinker* for more than twenty years. When we began saying it we were called a vulgar blasphemer. Sir Oliver Lodge says it and he is called a defender of the faith. What a world we all live in!

"Merlin" of the *Referee* keeps on preaching against Atheism—which, by the way, he doesn't understand. "The posture of the militant Atheist," he said last week, "is as arrogant as it is absurd." We quite agree with him. It is as arrogant as it is absurd; that is, it is neither. Atheists, as such, do not undertake to explain the universe and reduce it all to the simplicity of an A B C time-table. Atheists simply deny the validity of Theism, as it has hitherto been presented, and they are quite prepared to reconsider the matter if a new argument is introduced or an old one is presented with fresh power. What need is there, then, for "Merlin's" warning the young men of England against "bullies of debate" who would frighten them out of their faith? Atheists have always appealed to reason, and to reason only; it is the other side that has too often replied with the prison and the scaffold.

The Liberation Society is issuing a number of tracts for the general election. Amongst them is one by Dr. Clifford setting forth his hackneyed platitudes and subterfuges on the Education question. Nothing could more clearly show that the Liberation Society is a Nonconformist political agency for pulling down the Church of England. If it were not so it would shrink from the absurdity and inconsistency of advocating the Disestablishment of Religion through State Churches, and at the same time advocating the Establishment of Religion (and Nonconformist religion too!) through State Schools.

A correspondent favors us with a handbill of a recent Mass Meeting, under the auspices of the Free Church Councils, in the Great Assembly Hall, Mile-end. This meeting was addressed by the Liberal candidates for Poplar and Stepney, and Dr. Clifford's name was starred on the handbill. He was also dubbed "the modern Cromwell." How Old Noll would laugh at the description! All the blood (metaphorically speaking) that Dr. Clifford has shed in the blood of his own party. With untiring industry he has gone round the country urging Passive Resisters to go to prison, but has judiciously kept outside himself. We respect his discretion.

That energetic and self-confident young man, the Rev. Silvester Horne, is one of the leading political Nonconformists, and we see by a religious weekly that he is in the thick of "the fight against Tory misrule." One of his written performances is a "sketch of an honest election address such as Unionist candidates ought to have issued at the last election." With regard to Education the imaginary Unionist candidate is made to say what follows:—

"I am in favor of making Nonconformists pay for schools in which they cannot teach, and for denominational teaching which they believe to be false."

This is very shocking, to be sure; but we could put essentially similar language in Mr. Horne's own mouth as an imaginary candidate issuing an honest election address. What he would say, if he said what he meant, would be this:—

"I am in favor of making Jews, Secularists, and all other non-Christians, pay for schools in which they cannot teach, and for religious teaching which they believe to be false."

Mr. Horne is as much a designing partisan as any of the Bishops he rails at. All he wants is his own six in preference to the other side's half-dozen. It is a case of *arcades ambo*.

The *Christian World* lets the cat out of the bag at last. The following passage occurred in its last week's article on "Free Church Candidates." Nearly two hundred of them

are seeking election in England and Wales, and this is their common object:—

"These men are standing as Liberals, but in the forefront they are placing the Education question. Drastic amendment of the Education Acts is a central plank in their platforms. Not in any sense as selfish sectarians, but as citizens demanding equality of treatment for all branches of the Christian Church they are appealing for support."

After years and years of studied reticence the *Christian World* gives the whole game away in one unguarded moment. The real object of Nonconformists in the Education struggle is what we always said it was—*Equality of treatment for all branches of the Christian Church*. Nonconformists simply mean to have their share of the advantage of religious teaching in the nation's schools. The rights of non-Christians are not to be respected. All they have to do is to pay for Nonconformist religion in the schools—and look cheerful. We are really grateful to the *Christian World* for telling the truth at what it doubtless thinks is a quarter to twelve. There are more rounds of the clock coming.

The Bishop of Liverpool, in defending the Educational policy of the Church, describes it as follows:—

"We ask that every child should have the opportunity of receiving religious teaching in accordance with the faith of its father, that such teaching should be given by those who believe what they teach and who have been trained to teach it, and that this instruction shall be given during school hours and alike in council and in voluntary schools. As the State has already admitted this principle in the treatment of children in industrial schools and in workhouses, and as philanthropists have adopted it we ask for nothing but what is already acknowledged to be a fair and reasonable solution of the so-called religious difficulty. This right we ask not only for our own children, but for those of Nonconformity, Roman Catholics, Jews, and Agnostics."

Now we cheerfully admit that this looks fair enough—at the first glance. And it has this advantage over the Nonconformist policy that it does appeal to some sort of principle. But at a second glance it is easy to see that the Bishop's first sentence may mean one of two things. It may mean that the lay teachers in schools should give the religious instruction, or it may mean that the religious instruction should be given by clerical teachers brought in from outside. The second alternative is commonly called "the right of entry." And it means that the religious instruction shall be given to the children before or after, but not during, the regular school hours. This, however, we take it, is not what the Bishop of Liverpool favors. We must therefore fall back upon the first alternative. The religious instruction is to be given by the lay teachers during school hours. And every father is to say what religious teaching his children shall have. Now there are scores of different Christian sects (not to mention others) in England. And what we want to know is this: How on earth could the lay teachers manage to give denominational religious instruction to the whole miscellaneous crowd of children in their schools? It appears to us that such a policy would be simply a ridiculous chaos.

What the Bishop of Liverpool probably means, if he would only take the trouble to be precise, is that Churchmen, Nonconformists, Catholics, Jews, and Freethinkers should all be free to build and control "voluntary" schools in which their own "religious" views could be taught to their children. But there are serious objections to this policy. In the first place, the Church of England, being established by law, having the use of national funds, and being organized in every parish in the country, has naturally an immense advantage in carrying on "voluntary" schools. "Agnostics," at any rate, are comparatively few and scattered, and the "voluntary" schools they would be able to run could be counted on less than the fingers of a single hand. In the second place, it is contrary to the principles of Freethinkers to allow (voluntarily) of any connection whatever between religion and the State; and this is clearly involved in the policy of denominational "voluntary" schools. In the third place, "Agnostics" do not favor the idea of forcing speculative and controvertible conceptions upon the minds of children as ascertained truths. The Bishop of Liverpool, therefore, is offering "Agnostics" what they do not want and would not take. His policy, therefore, is just as futile as all the others which stop short of absolute Secular Education in State schools—leaving religious instruction, which is a personal and not a civic matter, to be attended to by voluntary agencies to which the State has no kind of relationship.

The Bishop of Manchester is a rare old joker. His appeal to the Church of his diocese winds up with a special word to Nonconformists. He begs them "not to bring in the State as a teacher of religion." What on earth is the State

Church doing then? The Church of England only exists by virtue of Acts of Parliament. Its very Prayer Book, containing its doctrine and ritual, was drawn up by a State Commission. Evidently the Bishop of Manchester's appeal belongs to the higher literature of electioneering.

"Dagonet" (Mr. G. R. Sims) appears to put some of his time to good use. The following paragraph appeared in "Mustard and Cress" in last week's *Referee* :—

"Only last week I received a letter—typed and signed, but dated from a false address—in which the writer, after a farrago of foul insult, which included a desire to see me run over and killed in the street by a motor omnibus, wound up by declaring that I was utterly

OUT OF TOUCH WITH MODERN THOUGHT.

Now, I resent this, and I will tell you why. Every week I read the *Clarion*, the *Labour Leader*, the *Free Thinker*, the *Socialist*, *Catch 'Em Alive Oh's Racing Snips*, the *Police Budget*, the *Pawnbrokers' Gazette*, and the *Undertakers' Journal*. How, in these circumstances, I can be out of touch with modern thought puzzles me prodigiously."

Of course we are sorry that Mr. Sims should be troubled with insulting letters. Christians send us hundreds of them—and insulting postcards too. Still, we are glad to hear that he reads the *Freethinker* weekly. Not that it appears to do him much good. But you never can tell. It may prevent him from being worse than he is.

No doubt Mr. Sims forgets his old "Radical" days, before his liver went wrong, before he made plenty of money, and before he basked in the sunny smiles of the "hupper suckles"—the old days when he was not above lecturing for the North London Branch of the National Secular Society on a Sunday evening at Claremont Hall. We don't forget them—as he sees. He was an abler man then. Perhaps he was also more honest.

Madame (but why *madame*?) Sarah Grand, the well-known writer, has been penning some pungent things about mistresses and servants. She mentions the case of a cook who was applying for a job, and who asked "Do you have family prayers, m'm?" The lady, much pleased, replied "Always." "Morning and evening?" asked the cook. "Both—certainly," was the proud reply. "Then I must mention," said the cook, "that I shall require two guineas extra." This strikes us as extremely moderate. A guinea a year for attending family prayers once a day seems a very trifling charge. It is only a little over a halfpenny a time.

Free speech is every citizen's concern. We therefore deplore the howling down of Mr. Chamberlain at Derby. We do not trouble ourselves about the color of his politics; that has nothing to do with his right to be heard. For this reason we are unable to approve the attitude of the *Daily News*, which censured the hooliganism of the Derby interrupters by reminding them that it injured the cause of Liberalism—as though it would have been all right if it helped the cause of Liberalism! The right of free speech lies deeper than Liberalism, Conservatism, or any other political "ism." It is any elementary principle of civilisation.

"The shipwrecked crew of the American barque," we read, "were not allowed to land from the steamer *Ella* at Southampton, on the ground that they were destitute aliens, until the United States Consul became guarantee for them." Reading this is like taking dirty sawdust into the mouth. One longs for the old hospitable England again. Bye-and-bye we shall doubtless see lifeboats prevented from landing shipwrecked foreign sailors. And no doubt there would be plenty of men of God prepared to bless it and approve it with a text.

Here is another case from the other side of the Atlantic. Mrs. Lydia Thompson, of London, sixty years of age, sailed for New York by the *Minneapolis*, to visit some wealthy relatives living in Pennsylvania. The voyage was a very rough one, and the poor lady got crazed with fright. She had not recovered her mental balance when the ship reached New York, and the "authorities" refused to allow her to land. She had plenty of money, and her relatives who came to meet her offered to give a bond that she would not become a "public charge." But all was of no avail. The captain of the *Minneapolis* was ordered to take her back to London. So the poor lady, frightened out of her wits by one rough passage, was compelled to face the probability of another. Surely the people who do such things are not civilised. Of course they may be Christians. But that is a question for themselves.

The *Christian World* announces that Mr. Thomas Burt, M.P., the Miners' representative, who has just been made a Privy Councillor, has "been connected with Primitive Methodism from his boyhood." We have reason for believing that this is untrue. Perhaps our Christian contemporary will make fresh inquiries.

Mr. Andrew Carnegie, the reputed Agnostic (bless the man who invented the word!) has given £150 towards the cost of a new organ in the Primitive Methodist Church, Leeming-street, Mansfield. Is the old Scotch-American millionaire "hedging" a bit before taking his last "leap in the dark?"

Rev. James Dudman and his wife, of Eastbourne, have succeeded in escaping the month's imprisonment to which they were sentenced for inhumanly beating their servant girl, Agnes Telling. The sentence has been reduced to a fine of £2 10s., on condition that they pay Miss Telling £100 compensation and the cost of the appeal.

Harrison Weir, the artist, recently deceased at the age of eighty-two, used to tell a Douglas Jerrold story. Jerrold was asked for a subscription to a society for the conversion of the Jews. "How much does it cost to convert a Jew?" he asked. He was told £300. "Oh, then," he said, "I'll give you £300—I'll convert a Jew for you."

Fresh uses for prayer are constantly turning up. The latest is reported from New York. Robert Allan, a negro evangelist, formerly a professional pugilist, returned to the prize ring for a final "scrap" with another darkie. Before starting business he knelt in the ring, and prayed that his opponent would be licked. This prayer was nearly answered, but striking suspiciously near the belt caused trouble with the referee, who called a "draw." But the godly were ever persecuted.

St. Martin's (Gospel Oak) *Parish Magazine* contains a "New Year's Letter" from the Vicar, the Rev. T. H. Russell. The poor man of God laments that the collections are "nothing like what they ought to be," and reminds his dearly beloved flock that "God loveth a cheerful giver." He also deplores the possibility of Church schools being interfered with, and says that the loss of "definite religious teaching" would be "a calamity from which we shall never recover." Altogether the reverend gentleman seems in need of a little sympathy—and we tender him all we can spare for the occasion.

## A Word for a Veteran.

SOME months ago I made an appeal for a veteran Freethinker at Birmingham. For several good reasons I had to drop the appeal after a few weeks. The great reason was that important matters, which could not be kept waiting, stood in the way.

I now renew that appeal. Mr. J. H. Ridgway, one of the most stalwart Freethinkers in England, one of the Old Guard of Freethought, one who fought in fierce old battles under the banner of Charles Bradlaugh, one who never faltered, never blenched, and never thought of himself when "the good old cause" had to be served—is now turned eighty, and past working for his daily bread. And there never was a man whom Freethinkers might more desire to save from the discomforts and humiliations of a helpless old age.

About £25 was acknowledged before. Cannot we make this £50? That amount would secure Mr. Ridgway a fireside corner with his own for a good while. I ask Freethinkers who are more happily situated to remember this fine old veteran in his hour of need. And don't let the appeal drag along for weeks. The thing can be done straight away if we only mean business.

Donations can be sent to me direct, or to Mr. J. Partridge, secretary of the local N.S.S. branch, 183 Vauxhall-road, Birmingham; and will all be acknowledged in the *Freethinker*.

G. W. FOOTE.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

January 21, Glasgow; 28, Manchester.

## To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 14, Birmingham; 21, Forest Gate; 28, Merthyr Tydvil. February 11, Liverpool. March 25, Glasgow.
- J. P. WARDROP (Hong Kong).—Pleased to hear you take such an interest in the *Freethinker*, but afraid we cannot adopt your well-meant suggestion of an "over seas edition." Nor can we quite see our way to having "a column or page devoted to the interests of Colonials and others outside the pale of the British Isles." The fact is that we could hardly undertake such a work, our hands being really too full already. But we shall be always happy to deal with any material sent us from distant parts of the world, if we can only make it of some interest to the general body of our readers. With regard to illustrating the *Freethinker*, which we did many years ago, you must recollect that good illustrations are expensive, and that we appeal to a limited public. The Burial Service you refer to is not lost sight of.
- R. ALGER.—No doubt the enclosures will be useful. Thanks for your good wishes.
- JOHN ROSS.—Your letter shall appear in next week's *Freethinker*, with anything else that it may be necessary to say about the Liverpool trouble, as we do not mean to let the matter run through several numbers of this journal. We wish to be just, and any unintentional mistatement on our part shall be rectified.
- E. GWINNELL.—Shall be sent as requested. Thanks. Sorry we could be of no use in the other matter.
- R. IRVING.—Thanks for cuttings. We should like to be as happy and prosperous as you wish us in the new year.
- E. OLDHAM.—Thanks for the reference. We assume you have read the book you commend to our attention. Charles Bradlaugh did write a portion of the *Freethinker's Text Book*—Mrs. Besant writing the remainder. His part of the work has long been out of print.
- W. J. SCORROW.—Pleased to hear that Sir E. Cornwall, the Liberal candidate in your division (Bethnal Green), in reply to your question "Are you in favor of the total abolition of the Blasphemy Laws?" put to him at a public meeting in the Victoria Hall, replied, "Yes, most certainly."—Thanks for your renewed good wishes as "a more than twenty years' regular subscriber to the *Freethinker*."
- T. DUNBAR.—Glad to learn that the Liberal candidate for Ealing will support the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. We note that the newsagent (you omit name) at 62 Grand-parade, Northfields, West Ealing, sells the *Freethinker* and exhibits it at his door. The "saints" should patronise newsagents who do that.
- C. K.—Your questions could only be answered properly in a long article. The Church party built their "Voluntary" schools, but the maintenance, which is far more important, comes almost entirely now from the State.
- J. G. STUART.—Your seasonable compliments are cordially reciprocated.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your always welcome cuttings.
- R. OWEN.—We are obliged; see paragraph.
- T. O'NEILL.—We fear you could hardly have expected anything else from such a candidate.
- J. W. E. BENNETT.—A "non-provided" school is what used to be called a "voluntary" school; a school built and managed, but not maintained, by a denomination. The "provided" schools are those built by the Councils.
- W. CHALMERS.—The proper rule is that the final consonant should not be doubled unless the accent is on that syllable. But writers and printers won't take trouble, if they can help it, and adopt the easy practice of doubling the consonant always. Dictionaries follow the fashion.
- E. FENTON.—Glad to hear you intend bringing your wife to our next lectures at Manchester.
- G. SCOTT.—Thanks for your new year's good wishes, which we know are sincere. We are looking forward to meeting you and many more of our Scotch friends at Glasgow, where we always find a warm and loyal welcome.
- R. JOHNSON.—The *Freethinker* of December 31 was a few hours late, in consequence of the "reaction" in printing circles after the holidays. Some orders that are usually executed on Wednesday evening could not be executed till Thursday morning. But this does not account for your agent's not supplying you till the following week.
- D. MALINGER.—May be useful. Thanks.
- H. R. CLIFTON.—Accept our thanks. It is of the utmost importance that parliamentary candidates should be questioned as to the Blasphemy Laws.
- W. PECKE.—See "Acid Drops." Pleased you think the *Freethinker* "splendid."
- W. P. PEARSON.—We hope the Liverpool Secularists will rally round the N. S. S. Branch at the Milton Hall in Daulby-street; and that Mr. J. Arnold Sharpley and Mr. H. Buxton will have good audiences there this afternoon and evening (Jan. 14).
- W. B.—We think Mr. Cohen was quite right. The majority has no more claim to absolute power than the Czar of Russia.

Counting heads is not the way to find truth, and numbers do not make justice. Truth and justice are principles. On your theory the majority has the right to do whatever it pleases; which might include imprisoning or killing the minority.

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

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

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

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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## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote has been resting from platform work for a little, and trying to get through his arrears of literary work and correspondence. He will begin platform work again next Sunday (Jan. 21), when he delivers two lectures, in the Secular Hall, Glasgow. The local "saints" will please note—for these meetings will open the Branch's new-year session.

Mr. Cohen lectures for the Liverpool Branch next Sunday (Jan. 21) in the Milton Hall, Daulby-street—not far from the Branch's old quarters in Islington-square. After his evening lecture there will be a general meeting of members "to consider the position of the trustees," etc. All concerned will please note. On the following Sunday there will be two lectures by Mr. J. M. Robertson. The local "saints" should see that there are good meetings on both occasions.

Freethinkers all over the country should heckle parliamentary candidates on Secular Education and the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. In a way it is a question of now or never. Nobody knows how long it may be before we have another general election. The utmost use should be made of the present opportunity.

Candidates like Mr. John Morley and Mr. John Burns should be heckled on these questions just like other candidates. Nothing should be taken for granted. Neither is it our concern whether this would "damage their chances" or not. That is *their* concern. Our policy as Freethinkers is to defend our own principles and interests. We want to see religious teaching swept out of the State schools, and we want to see the Blasphemy Laws swept out of the Statute Book. And to ask us to be silent on these matters is mere silliness. Churchmen and Nonconformists are shouting loudly enough. Why should we, and we only, be quiet? And when it comes to our enjoyment of the common rights of citizenship, which are flagrantly outraged in our case by the Blasphemy Laws, we should be contemptible cowards to hold our tongues. Let every candidate be heckled.

According to a newspaper cutting, a North Camberwell lady asked Dr. Macnamara if he was in favor of the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and he replied "Oh! I'm a golfer." Smart, perhaps, but a weak evasion. We hope the Camberwell Freethinkers will not let Dr. Macnamara off so lightly. They should press him for a proper answer. For the question is serious to them, whatever it may be to him.

Mr. Schwann, the Liberal candidate for North Manchester, being asked (in writing) by Mr. R. Owen the two questions relating to the Blasphemy Laws printed at the end of our last week's article, replies through his election agent, Mr. E. L. Ashworth, that "as he believes in Freedom and Fair play for everyone he is able to answer both questions in the affirmative."

Mr. Travis Clegg, the Conservative candidate for Staley-bridge, is apparently one of those people who justify John

Stuart Mill's description of the Conservatives as "the stupid party." Being asked the first of our two questions, by Mr. T. O. Neill, he replied that he *was* in favor of equal rights and liberties for all forms of belief. Being asked the second question, he replied that as a Christian he would *not* vote for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws.

Mr. A. D. Corrick sent copies of our questions *re* the Blasphemy Laws to the North Islington candidates. Mr. David Waterlow (Liberal) says "yes to both your questions." Sir G. T. C. Bartley (Conservative) is more guarded. He says the law should be the same for all, and if it is not so it should be amended.

Councillor Stranks, the Labor candidate for Croydon, being asked our two questions *re* the Blasphemy Laws at a public meeting in Clyde Hall, answered both with a "Yes, decidedly."

Mr. J. W. Marshall, president of the West Ham Branch, accompanied by Mr. J. Livingstone Anderson, interviewed Mr. Ernest Gray, the local Conservative candidate, on the question of the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. After nearly an hour's explanation and discussion, he promised to support a Bill removing any special disabilities against Freethinkers. Mr. Masterman, the Liberal candidate (a *Daily News* favorite, we believe) declines to examine the subject.

What is the matter with Mr. Thomas Lough, the Liberal candidate for West Islington? Mr. W. J. Caisey wrote him *re* Secular Education and the Blasphemy Laws, and received an answer from his election agent, Mr. Walter Isaac, who said: "As you are aware, Mr. Thomas Lough is now Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, and as a member of the Ministry he cannot answer any questions which directly affects his office." We have read this forwards and backwards—and it is still unintelligible. Mr. Lough or his agent, or both of them, must have been studying Donelley's cryptogram. We suggest that Mr. Lough be pressed for a sensible answer.

A good report of Mr. Foote's lecture at Leicester on "What has Christianity done for Russia" appeared in the local weekly, the *Leicester Pioneer*.

We see with pleasure an outspoken letter by "Observer" in the *Darwen News*. It raps the knuckles of the superstitionists all round, and ends by remarking that Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge have no more evidence for the resurrection than is possessed by "those who earn their living in mystery mongering." We wish Freethinkers would make more use of their local newspapers in this way.

The *Northern Echo* publishes an excellent letter by Dr. J. G. Stuart, severely criticising Mr. Lloyd-George's partisan attitude on the Education question. It is good to see a little plain speaking on this subject in a daily newspaper. Dr. Stuart boldly draws attention to an important fact which is ridiculously overlooked. "Mr. Lloyd-George's illogical position," he says, "is developed from the fallacious assumption that the community is composed simply of Church and chapel people, which is far from being true."

The Pioneer Press has just published *A Guide to Income and Property Tax Assessment and Recovery*, by H. Theobald, Incorporated Accountant, at the price of 3s. 6d. net. Mr. Theobald has from the first acted as Auditor to the Free-thought Publishing Company, Limited, and to the Secular Society, Limited. He is a most troublesome Auditor, and sometimes, when the Annual Balance Sheets of these bodies are being prepared, we are very near wishing that he had never been born. We understand, however, that this is all right from the members' and shareholders' point of view, so we suppose we must tolerate his existence as best we can. With regard to this *Guide*, of course, our feelings do not count; we are able to look at it dispassionately; and we are bound to say (as far as we are any judge of such things) that it appears to be a remarkably thorough piece of work. It is clear, concise, and methodical; nothing seems to have been omitted that any person can require; and Acts and Cases are cited in every instance—which is a feature of the greatest importance. Amongst our own readers there are some who have to face the Income Tax people just at present; and if they want any information, or need to deal with any difficulty, we believe this volume will supply them with all they require. And we are fortified in this opinion by the flattering notices of Mr. Theobald's book which have appeared in legal and financial journals.

## A Refutation of Atheism.

ONE of the Catholic Truth Society's cheaper publications is a pamphlet entitled a *Popular Refutation of Atheism*. Regarding the title we would remark that while the pamphlet may be popular—much more trashy literature is amazingly popular—it is not a *refutation* of Atheism by any means. Neither does the author—who is a Bishop—seem to understand the position of the Atheist in relation to the God idea. This, of course, is a common enough failing on the part of the orthodox. They do not read a sufficient quantity of Atheistic literature to know what Atheism really has to say for itself. Consequently the average Christian refutation of Atheism is largely a beating of the air, from sheer lack of comprehension of the Atheistic case. The pamphlet we are dealing with begins by assuming that the Atheist declares there is no God. Freethinkers are getting tired of correcting this error. The inevitable and familiar text from the Thirteenth Psalm is lugged in by the reverend author more than once. He tells us, more in sorrow than in anger, that though ours is still a Christian people "agnosticism is stretching forth its feelers more and more." It is a cheering fact, though not from the Bishop's point of view, that the "feelers" of agnosticism have been stretched out to such good effect that they have secured a firm hold of the people. He is concerned that young men who are drawn into discussion about the existence of God are often taken by surprise and found unprepared. We quite agree with him that it is very desirable young men should get "some idea of the trend of agnostic thought." We wish the majority of Roman Catholic young men would. They are not likely to do so from the Bishop's pamphlet. Nor will they find therein any very potent arguments for the existence of God. Like many other religious defensive publications this refutation of Atheism may serve to strengthen an already existing faith in God—though even that is doubtful. It will do nothing to remove anyone's scepticism on the subject.

We are told "it is neither necessary nor possible to set forth all proofs for the existence of God; they would fill whole books." This is surprising information for the Atheist who is under the impression that the proofs are *nil*. The proofs for the existence of God would fill whole books! Would it be too much to ask the good Bishop, or any other Christian protagonist of Theism, to mention just *one* solid proof of God's existence? One would do; we can spare all the volumes of proof so lavishly boasted of. Is it not an astonishing thing that if proofs of God's existence are so numerous as the Bishop represents them to be anyone should be found who is still unconvinced of its truth? The Bishop further on resorts to the very Christian philosophic method of bringing forward one unproved assumption to substantiate by way of analogy another unproved assumption. He points out that many natural forces are known to us only by the effects they produce, the forces themselves never coming under our vision or actual observation. He is arguing, of course, that the existence of God may be inferred from certain facts in nature which necessitate us postulating a primal cause. Then he proceeds to his analogy. Even our very soul, he says, is hidden from us. "It is the soul that makes us live, and think, and act; we clearly recognise it in these manifestations of life, but no anatomist will ever touch it with his lancet, nor can mortal eye ever get a glimpse of its essence." We will not venture to dispute the truth of the closing part of this passage. We fear it is only too true that no anatomist will ever touch the soul with his lancet, nor mortal eye ever get a glimpse of its essence. It is extremely difficult to see or touch anything that does not exist. There is no proof of the existence of soul in the theological sense of the word. But no anatomist need have any difficulty in touching with his lancet the organism whereby "we live, and think, and act," and it is also quite amenable to scrutiny by mortal vision. Would it not be advisable thoroughly

to establish the reality of an invisible soul in man before putting it forward as furnishing an analogy of the invisible God? Can one assumption prove another?

Some of the Bishop's objections to the acceptance of the Evolutionary theory remind us of the criticism of the tyro in Evolution who always wants to know, if it is true we are evolved from apes, why there are any apes left, and why they have not all developed into human beings. Religious believers are most insatiable in their demands on Science for proof of its theories, but they never seem to think it necessary to afford any proofs of their own speculations. They talk of the multiplicity of Christian evidences but they never produce any. Perhaps it is a case of "embarrassment of riches," or of not being able to find the wood for the trees. Preparatory to accepting Darwin's theory of the origin of species the Bishop demands the production of specimens of the numerous transition forms that must have existed in every conceivable state of inceptive, half-formed, intermediate development between one species and another. He also thinks he clinches the argument against Evolution by pointing out that the mummies of animals found in the Egyptian pyramids, although nearly 4,000 years old, are not appreciably different from living specimens to-day. He surely overlooks the fact that 4,000 years is but a brief moment in the history of Evolution.

A lengthy note by the translator inserted in the body of this pamphlet on Atheism is, in its way, of more importance than the pamphlet itself. The translator is a Jesuit father, and in his note he enlarges upon "aggressive Atheism" and the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the Evolutionary theory. He has no hard words for the many agnostics "who do not see their way to believe anything with positive and unwavering faith, and who have a certain feeling of unavoidable regret at not knowing a positive creed in which they think it possible to find intellectual repose. Their's is a modest disposition, and an unfortunate position, and one which deserves respectful, helpful, and prayerful sympathy." It can be gathered Father Egger has a good-natured tolerance for the above type of unbeliever. He seems to recognise that such are not likely to injure religion very much. And he is right. Persons who are sorry they cannot believe in Christianity will scarcely contribute much to its overthrow however absolute their own scepticism may be. And they are really curious intellectual specimens. Why should anyone be sorry at not being able to believe in a lie? And if Christianity be a lie or a delusion why not do everything possible to destroy it? Father Egger can see that aggressive Atheists are dangerous; and here again he is right. They are dangerous to him and his order.

Father Egger seems to think that atheistic philosophy breaks down because it cannot give an explanation of the origin of things. Why should Atheists be expected to furnish such an explanation? They do not profess to do so, nor is it necessary they should undertake the task. Does religion, does Roman Catholicism give a "reasonable explanation of things in and around us" such as ought to satisfy a "reasonable" man? Religion most certainly does not. That is precisely why there are so many Atheists and sceptics. All that the theologian or religious philosopher can do when asked as to the origin of things is to refer us to God, which, of course, whatever Father Egger may think, is no explanation at all. When anyone brings in God to account for anything it really means that he does not know *how* to account for it. Who is the more honest—the agnostic who frankly confesses his ignorance regarding certain matters, or the priest who evades confession of his ignorance by muttering the mystic word God? It is *religion*—not atheistic philosophy—that professes to give an explanation of the visible and invisible universe that shall satisfactorily account both for its origin and its present condition. It has been the function of atheistic philosophy to demonstrate how absurd and untenable the proffered explanation is, whether embodied in the so-called

revealed writings of the Bible, or evolved from the ingenious brain of the Roman Catholic theologian. This, atheistic philosophy has done very thoroughly, but it is not committed—nor is it necessary it should be committed—to any alternative explanation. We decline to impale ourselves on either horn of the Jesuitical dilemma presented to us. We are not bound either to accept the explanation of the universe tendered by religion or suggest a more feasible alternative. Both the Bishop and his translator misapprehend the atheistic position. The atheistic philosopher is perfectly prepared to consider any and every cosmological theory brought forward by either religion or science, and will criticise it entirely on its merits. He will gladly accept any "reasonable explanation" from whatever source it may come. But he is surely entitled to assert that no such explanation of the riddle of the universe has yet been forthcoming from any of the Churches without it being deemed incumbent he should enter into competition with the theological dogmatists. The pamphlet we have alluded to contains many quotations to show that scientists admit their ignorance of the origin of life. We commend the modesty and truthfulness of these scientists to Christian and Roman Catholic philosophers. It would be well did they imitate the scientists in this respect. For what do religious believers *know* on this point? Absolutely nothing.

The believing Bishop who is the author of this refutation of Atheism makes much of the design argument, and gets into the usual orthodox muddle on the subject. His instances of design betray all that perversity of reasoning so characteristic of those who profess to see the witness of God in the works of nature. We were reading lately a Roman Catholic sermon on the God idea, in which sermon the preacher instanced the sustenance afforded by the grass to the cow as an evidence of design! We confess we cannot quite appreciate or understand the type of mind that thinks because a cow eats grass and thrives on it therefore God designed the grass for the cow to eat. All we are really entitled to infer from the fact that the cow eats grass and fattens on it is that grass is good for cows. But on what principle it can be affirmed that grass was designed for the cow puzzles us to determine. We believe the cannibal appreciates and thrives on human flesh, and probably thanks whatever Gods he has when any specially succulent specimen of humanity comes his way. Are we to suppose God designed the victim of the cannibal to gratify the latter's peculiar taste in edibles? That mankind has put certain natural products and natural forces to certain uses is no proof that they were originally designed for that purpose and no other. There must be millions of acres of grass grown and wasted all over the world every year that passes. What was this grass designed for? And although, for instance, we are putting electricity to the task of driving our omnibuses and illuminating our streets, it scarcely follows that God designed it for that purpose. The electricity must have been present in nature throughout an inconceivable space of time. Man has discovered its existence and potency for himself and has devoted it to his service. What it was designed for no one knows, or that it was designed at all. We only know the uses to which it has been put.

The Bishop's examples of design are of a kindred nature. The composition of the air we breathe fills him with adoring wonder. What would we do, he fatuously asks, if the air were inelastic? He might as well ask what we would do if there were no air at all? It is highly probable, to say the least, that none of us would be here—not even the bishops. Though even *they* do not live altogether on air. The Bishop—like many abler controversialists—utterly fails to see that the design argument is hopelessly incompetent unless we know what God's design is. When—if ever—we actually know what God wants to be at, then, and only then, can we determine whether the means he adopts are intelligently calcu-

lated to achieve the end. All that the most skilful elaboration of the design argument can possibly prove is that certain more or less well-known causes and influences combine to produce certain known results, and this is not likely to be disputed by anyone outside a lunatic asylum. That any one cause—however remote—deliberately contrived the entire sequence for a definite end is something that may be believed—if one is so minded—but is absolutely unsusceptible of demonstration.

G. SCOTT.

## The Book of the Acts.—VII.

### ITS UNAUTHENTIC AND UNHISTORICAL CHARACTER.

(Continued from p. 13.)

WE come now to some of the matters of history to which reference is made in the Acts; and, since the Third Gospel is admitted by all critics to have been written by the same compiler, I will commence with Luke's statement respecting the date of the appearance of the Baptist.

1. In this paragraph (Luke iii. 1-3) it is stated in the most precise terms that Lysanias was "tetrarch of Abilene" and that "Annas and Caiaphas" were high priests "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar" (*i.e.*, in A.D. 28).

Now, with regard to the first-named personage, it is a simple matter of history that Lysanias was ruler over the district of Abilene between B.C. 41 and B.C. 32, and at no other time; and that in the last-mentioned year he was put to death by Antony: consequently "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar" Lysanias had been dead sixty years. Luke was therefore very far out in his reckoning.

Next, with regard to the high priests Annas and Caiaphas, whom Luke represents as holding the office conjointly in the year 28, it may be stated as another fact of history that the two personages named were never associated in the high priesthood. Annas was high priest from A.D. 7 to 14; Caiaphas held that office between A.D. 25 and 36. It may further be noticed that Matthew names but one high priest, Caiaphas, and is, of course, correct; while Mark, following the original account, employs only the very safe term "the high priest," and is likewise correct. Luke's attempt to improve the older text was evidently a leap in the dark, and turned out an unfortunate one.

2. In a speech which the compiler of the Acts has put in the mouth of a certain Gamaliel, a "doctor of the law," appears the following statement:—

Acts v. 36-37.—"For before these days rose up Theudas, giving himself out to be somebody.....After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the enrolment, and drew away many people after him."

According to the account in the Acts, the speech of Gamaliel was delivered soon after the commencement of the ministry of the apostles, that is to say, about A.D. 31 or 32. The historical events to which reference is made in the passage quoted are the following:—

A.D. 7.—Insurrection of Judas of Galilee on account of an "enrolment" made by Quirinius, governor of Syria.

A.D. 45.—Insurrection of Theudas, during the procuratorship of Fadus.

By the light of the foregoing facts of history we have no difficulty in seeing the true character of the Acts' story. In that veracious narrative a famous "doctor of the law," speaking in the year 32, reminds the Sanhedrim that several years before—"before these days"—Judæa had been disturbed by two insurrections, both of which had come to naught. The first, he says, was the sedition stirred up by Theudas (A.D. 45); the second, and later one, was the revolt incited by Judas of Galilee (A.D. 7). Here we have clear proof of the fraudulent nature of the narrative. It is, of course, easy to understand that to an editor writing in the middle of the second century both events would be almost equally remote, and would

probably only be known to him from some historical work in use in his time. This work, there can be little doubt, was the Antiquities of Josephus, and the paragraphs which misled Editor Luke were numbers 1 and 2 in chapter v., book xx. These commence as follows:—

Antiq. xx., v., 1.—"Now it came to pass that while Fadus was procurator of Judæa, that a certain magician whose name was Theudas persuaded many of the people," etc.

Antiq. xx., v., 2.—"And besides this, the sons of Judas of Galilee were now slain; I mean of that Judas who caused the people to revolt when Cyrenius came to take an account of the estates of the Jews," etc.

Reading these paragraphs in succession, the compiler of the Acts confounded the sons of Judas of Galilee with Judas himself, and so took the insurrection raised by the latter as of later occurrence than that caused by Theudas. Hence the concoction of a speech which is placed in the mouth of Gamaliel, who is made to refer to an event as well known, and as having occurred several years before, which was still in the womb of futurity.

3. In recording the death of Herod Agrippa I. the compiler of the Acts says that that king was smitten by "an angel of the Lord," and was "eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost" (xii. 23). This, of course, is a pious falsehood. The real facts connected with the death of Agrippa are recorded by Josephus (Antiq. xix., vii., 2). In the theatre at Cæsarea this monarch was suddenly seized with violent pains in the stomach and intestines—which clearly point to poison—and died five days afterwards. The editor of the Acts, in this case also, probably took his information from Josephus; but, following the usual Christian system of editing, he misrepresented the facts, and made the king's death a direct punishment from the Lord. And it is upon the unsupported word of this mendacious writer that we are asked to believe (as recorded in the same chapter) that Peter, lying in prison and "sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, with guards before the door," was miraculously set free by the same or another "angel of the Lord," without any of those who guarded him knowing anything about the matter.

4. In Acts xviii. 2 it is stated that Paul, when at Corinth, "found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome."

The last sentence in this passage is another misstatement on the part of Luke. As a matter of history, Claudius was the only one of the early Roman emperors who showed any kindness to the Jews (see Antiq. xix., v.), and this was continued to the end of his reign. In one of the edicts granting the Jewish people fresh privileges that emperor says: "And this grant I make, not only for the sake of the petitioners [*i.e.*, Agrippa and Herod], but as judging those Jews for whom I have been petitioned, worthy of such a favor, on account of their fidelity and friendship to the Romans." There was no banishment of Jews from Rome in the reign of Claudius; the command which misled Luke was given by Tiberius more than twenty years earlier (see Antiq. xviii., iii., 5).

Aquila and Priscilla, the two people named as expelled from the imperial city by Claudius, are, no doubt, imaginary characters. Outside the book of the Acts their names are only found amongst a number of doubtful salutations in Rom. xvi. and at the end of 1 Cor. xvi.—the first a chapter rejected as spurious by Marcion, the great admirer of Paul (A.D. 140-150). Moreover, we know as one of the facts of ancient history that a Jew, named "Aquila of Pontus," who translated the Old Testament into Greek, lived in the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 117-138). This was, in all probability, the person whom Luke has made a Christian and a contemporary of Paul in his fabulous history of the early church.

5. We will next look at Luke's statements respecting certain Jewish high priests. So long as that

compiler described a holder of this office as simply "the high priest" he stood on safe ground; but when he ventured to designate any of these hierarchs by his proper name he is open to criticism. In Acts iv. 5-6 this second century editor says:—

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and *Annas the high priest was there*, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest."

According to the narratives in the Acts, this meeting was held during the first year of the preaching of the apostles, that is to say, in A.D. 31. Now the high priest at this date, and during the succeeding five years, was Caiaphas—the same who is represented as having taken a leading part in the arrest and trial of Jesus. Annas had held the high priestly office from A.D. 7 to 14, but at no subsequent period. Another Annas, the son of the last-named personage, was high priest for one year—A.D. 62. Luke was therefore very far out again.

To take another example, in Acts xxiv. 1 the same veracious chronicler says:—

"And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with certain elders.....and they informed the governor against Paul."

The "governor" in the foregoing passage was Felix, who was procurator between the years 52 and 60. We learn, further, from verse 27 in the same chapter, that the charge against Paul was made two years before Felix was superseded by Festus. This gives us A.D. 58 as the year in which "the high priest Ananias" is described as going down to Cæsarea to accuse Paul. Now, during the procuratorship of Felix two high priests had borne office in succession; namely, Jonathan (A.D. 51-55) and Ismael (A.D. 55-61). The latter held the high priest's office at the time Paul is stated to have been arraigned before Felix. There were, it is true, two high priests named Ananias; but unfortunately for Luke—or for the credibility of his narrative—neither of these dignitaries was in authority as high priest in the year 58. The first Ananias officiated during the governorship of Cumanus (A.D. 47-51); the second held the office under Florus, in the year 66. Luke was therefore again out in his calculations. That ancient compiler doubtless did his best to make the three narratives he has welded together appear credible; but despite the pains he has taken in composing speeches and inserting the names of historic persons, besides carefully revising the whole, his compilation can easily be seen to be nothing but pure fiction.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

#### MONKS AND PEASANTS.

Viewed from the standpoint of the Benedictines, these were the perfect days of rural peace and prosperity. Who would not have been a monk on the foundation of St. Denis in this golden age of the monastic system? From their placid labors in the fields, or by the river, or on the stately church that was rising at their gates, the monks trooped in when the Vesper bell sounded (and no more mellow note floats over the country-side) to the House Beautiful that they had made for themselves; a home of noble vaulted halls and vast kitchens, of summer-houses and paved courts, of pleasaunces that whispered of repose in noontide heats. Below, on the sunny hillside, lay the farm, its spacious barns and granaries that burst with grain and provender. Behind were filled with fruit-gardens and pear-gardens. By the broad flight of steps that led from the farm to the gardens rose the tall dovecot, that was at once a source of contemplative pleasure and of considerable profit. "It was good to live under the crozier of the Abbots of St. Denis," rapturously exclaims the local historian.

Side by side, however, with this charming picture, we have another which the enthusiastic historian (he was of the Benedictine Order, it may be observed) turns to the wall with a certain haste. It is that of the peasant attached to the soil by a chain immaterial indeed but no less binding than steel. He shared perhaps the prosperity of his masters, but somewhat in the way that the lamb shares the mint-

sauce with which he is eaten. The peasant indeed, was not eaten, because he was more profitable alive than dead; but he was made to pay so heavily for the privilege of living that it would have been as kind to withdraw the privilege altogether. The monks took from him taxes in kind amounting to nine or even fourteen per cent. of his produce, and exacted tithes (great, mean, and small) on everything that he grew and raised, from his mint and rue to his wheat, and from his sucking-pigs to his oxen. He had to pay commonalties, quit-rents, succession-duties, boundary-duties, and a number of other impositions that were collected with Levitical scrupulousness and regularity. The monks exercised the right of *corvée*, the claim to six days of the peasant's labor three times a year, at the sowing, in the ploughing season, and at irregular intervals on the roads; an iniquitous system, which took the poor fellow from his little plot at the very seasons at which his labor on it was most profitable, for Nature in her blindness draws no distinction between serge cassock and ragged fustian. The hill, now clad with firs, which crowns our village, was in those days less pleasantly adorned with a prison and no fewer than three gallows, constant reminders to the peasant of his duty towards God and towards his neighbor, the abbot. If the monks in their turn practised works of charity towards their dependants, they did so on the lines of such true Christian modesty that the world of to-day knows not what those works were, and on such sound economical principles that there never was in those early days a deficit in the monasterial budget.—Charles Oliver, "Two Passings," *Macmillan's Magazine*, January.

#### BYRON ON THE TURKS.

In all money transactions with the Moslems, I ever found the strictest honor, the highest disinterestedness. In transacting business with them, there are none of those dirty peculations, under the name of interest, difference of exchange, commission, etc., etc., uniformly found in applying to a Greek consul to cash bills, even on the first houses in Pera.

In the capital and at court the citizens and courtiers are formed in the same school with those of Christianity; but there does not exist a more honorable, friendly, and high-spirited character than the true Turkish provincial Aga, or Moslem country gentleman. It is not meant here to designate the governors of towns, but those Agas who, by a kind of feudal tenure, possess lands and houses, of more or less extent, in Greece and Asia Minor.

The lower orders are in as tolerable discipline as the rabble in countries with greater pretensions to civilisation. A Moslem, in walking the streets of our country towns, would be more incommode in England than a Frank in a similar situation in Turkey.

If it be difficult to pronounce what they are, we can at least say what they are not: they are not treacherous, they are not cowardly, they do not burn heretics, they are not assassins, nor has an enemy advanced to their capital. They are faithful to their Sultan till he becomes unfit to govern, and devout to their God without an inquisition. Were they driven from St. Sophia [Constantinople] to-morrow, and the French or Russians enthroned in their stead, it would become a question whether Europe would gain by the exchange. England would certainly be the loser.—Notes to *Childe Harold*.

#### LEST WE FORGET.

Some who are especially proud of their Puritan ancestry may be interested in the following, a copy of a letter in possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society. When we see the spirit of worship as illustrated by the Rev. Cotton Mather, we can understand that, while there may be fewer to-day to "do the Lord great service," there are more willing to aid humanity.

"To the Aged and Beloved John Higginson:

There be now at sea a shipp (for our friend Elias Holcroft of London did advise me by the last packet that it would be some time in August) called the *Welcome*, which has aboard it a hundred or more of the hereticks and malignants called Quakers, with William Penn the scamp at the head of them. The General Court has accordingly given secret orders to Master Malachi Haxett of the brig *Porpoise* to waylay said *Welcome* as near the end of Cod as may be, and make captives of the Penn and his ungodly crew, so that the Lord may be glorified and not mocked on the soil of this new country with the heathen worshippers of these people. Much spoil may be made by selling the whole lot to Barbadoes, where slaves fetch good prices in rumme and sugar, and we shall not only do the Lord great service by punishing the wicked, but shall make great gayne (gain), for his ministers and people.

Yours in the bonds of Christ,

COTTON MATHER."

—*Secular Thought*

**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, H. E. Dodson, "Propaganda Work of the N. S. S."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "Jesus Christ and the Labor Party."

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): John Lloyd, 3, "The Christian Degradation of Morals"; 7, "Should Freethinkers be Miserable?"

FALLSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Falls-worth String Band.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): 12 (noon), D. Ross, "Art and Life"; 6.30, Social Meeting in commemoration of Burns and Paine.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): 3, J. Arnold Sharpley, "Ibsen and the Present Revolution"; 7, H. Buxton, "The Population Question."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, Wm. Simpson, "The Politics of Landlordism and State Socialism."

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, P. B. Williams, "Fifty Years of Theology."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (76 Joicey-terrace, Oxhill): 8.30, A. White, "Shakespeare."

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