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Remember how many bright souls are living courageously, seeing the good wherever it may be discovered, undismayed by portents, doing what they have to do with all their strength. In every land there are such, no few of them, a great brotherhood, without distinction of race or faith; for they, indeed, constitute the race of man, rightly designated, and their faith is one, the cult of reason and of justice. Whether the future is to them or to the talking anthropoid, no one can say. But they live and labor, guarding the fire of sacred hope.

—GEORGE GISSING.

Christianity and Chastity.

MR. W. T. STEAD'S action in the Torrey matter was so uncommonly fine that we are very reluctant to begin criticising him. But as he forwards us a cutting from the new number of the *Review of Reviews* "in the hope that it may be of interest" to us, we feel that he invites an expression of our opinion, and silence on our part might be regarded as the worst form of discourtesy.

The cutting from Mr. Stead's magazine has a sensational heading, which runs as follows, but in much bolder type:—"Has Chastity Ceased to be a Virtue? Yes, Replies Maurice Maeterlinck."

Maeterlinck, whom Mr. Stead calls the Belgian mystic, has contributed an article entitled "Of Our Anxious Morality" to the *Fortnightly Review*. "It is a discussion," Mr. Stead says, "of the most momentous of all themes, the question as to whether ethics will survive if Christianity should disappear." But is this, after all, a fair description of Maeterlinck's article? Would not the Belgian essayist regard such a "discussion" as rather fantastic? Ethics existed before Christianity, and consequently may live after it. So much is dictated by history and common sense. Maeterlinck's argument is really wider than Mr. Stead seems to regard it. He maintains that morality is independent of religion; not of this or that form of it—such as Christianity, Mohammedanism, or Brahmanism—but of religion itself, in any shape whatever. The emphasis, therefore, which Mr. Stead lays upon Christianity is misleading.

It appears to us that Mr. Stead—perhaps not theoretically, but practically—looks upon Christianity as religion, and religion as Christianity; otherwise he would hardly write such a sentence as this—that "mankind is gradually forsaking the religion in which it has lived for nearly twenty centuries." This statement cannot apply to "mankind." It can only apply to Christendom. And even then, we may observe in passing, Mr. Stead's chronology is painfully loose. The nations that compose Christendom have not been living for "nearly twenty centuries" in the Christian faith. Clovis, King of the Franks, was not converted and baptised until the end of the fifth century; Pope Gregory did not send Saint Augustine to convert the English until the end of the sixth century; Charlemagne did not start converting the Saxons (with fire and sword) until the end of the eighth century; and King Vladimir, who started Christianity in Russia, was not baptised until the end of the tenth century. Christianity

took a thousand years to complete its triumph over Paganism in Europe; and now, after less than a thousand years of sovereignty, it is fast losing its hold upon the "intellectuals" and the workmen in every Christian country in the world.

Having criticised Mr. Stead's unfortunate sentence—not in any carping spirit, but in the interest of sober truth—we will quote it with its context:—

"M. Maeterlinck starts from the assumption that mankind is gradually forsaking the religion in which it has lived for nearly twenty centuries, and is taking to itself no new faith. What will happen to morality? Mr. Morley, it will be remembered, touched upon this subject in his work on Diderot, and answered it on one point at least very much like M. Maeterlinck. Rationalism preserves many virtues, but chastity finds no place in its canon. M. Maeterlinck roundly asserts and approves of the dethronement of chastity."

Now with regard to Mr. Morley, we do not know what part of his work on Diderot is referred to, and we wish Mr. Stead had been more precise. We can only think of one part of the work which has any sort of relation to this subject; namely, the conclusion of the first chapter in the second volume; and it is far from bearing out Mr. Stead's suggestion. We think it possible that he has been misled by the word "naturalism." Mr. Morley does not use the word, on those pages, in opposition to "supernaturalism." He is referring to the eighteenth-century idea of "the return to nature," which found its most famous expression in the writings of Rousseau, who was not an Atheist, but a Theist, and a most eloquent eulogist of Jesus Christ.

And now let us see the passage in Maeterlinck on which Mr. Stead bases his startling announcement as to the "dethronement of chastity" by Freethinkers. Here it is:—

"Already we have thrown off a number of constraints which were assuredly hurtful, but which at least kept up the activity of our inner life. We are no longer chaste, since we have recognised that the work of the flesh, cursed for twenty centuries, is natural and lawful."

In separating this passage from its context Mr. Stead has, we think, confused its meaning. Maeterlinck, who is a very decided Freethinker, appears to us to be pleading for restraints and asceticisms in counteraction to the grossness of our inherited animal nature. But even if we are mistaken in this interpretation, we are none the less dissatisfied with Mr. Stead's criticism of the passage as it stands. This is what he says:—

"Of course, if by chaste he means celibate, M. Maeterlinck's statement is obvious. But conjugal love has not been cursed for twenty centuries. The work of the flesh condemned by Christianity has been incontinence, and this, it is true, Christianity has never regarded as natural and lawful. But it would seem the new morality is going to change all that. This notable assertion of M. Maeterlinck's occurs towards the close of a long and subtle argument against the assumption that common sense or good sense, or in other words, enlightened self-interest, will suffice as a guide for mankind when conscience and the religions have been dethroned."

Mr. Stead must try to pardon us for saying that this is not careful writing. He himself may think that dethroning religions is the same thing as dethroning conscience, but he has no right to saddle Maeterlinck with the responsibilities of that theory. He may also think that "enlightened self-interest"

is what Maeterlinck's morality comes to, but he should recollect that Maeterlinck's position, as stated by himself, is that man has never been "a sort of purely logical animal," and that his highest moral intuitions have come through his "imagination or mystic reason," which responds to the call of "the unknown" that will some day be the known, when the future becomes the present. And we may remind Mr. Stead that this view of Maeterlinck's, whether right or wrong, should not be crudely labelled; and also that it is quite consistent with a thoroughly "materialistic" conception of nature; for Campbell was really not talking supernaturalism when he said that "Coming events cast their shadows before"—neither was Shakespeare when he struck off that magnificent phrase about "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

We could wish, also, that Mr. Stead had not taken a word of well-known double meaning, and given himself the benefit of the one significance and his opponent the disgrace of the other. The word "chaste," like so many others, has primary and secondary meanings. The primary meaning of the word is "celibate." "Vows of chastity" and "vows of celibacy" are one and the same thing. Johnson was quite right in giving "Pure from all commerce of sexes" as his first definition of *chaste*. Dian, the goddess of chastity, was a perpetual virgin. Shakespeare often uses the secondary meaning of "chaste," but he also uses its primary meaning; for instance, in the early bantering conversation between Romeo and Benvolio. Romeo says he loves a woman who will not be loved:—

"she'll not be hit
With Cupid's arrow—she hath Dian's wit;
And, in strong proof of chastity well arm'd,
From love's weak childish bow she lives unharm'd.
She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
Nor bide th' encounter of assailing eyes,
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold:
O, she is rich in beauty; only poor,
That, when she dies, with her dies beauty's store."

Benvolio asks:

"Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?"

Romeo replies:

"She hath, and in that sparing makes huge waste;
For beauty, starv'd with her severity,
Cuts beauty off from all posterity."

Here to "live chaste" means to avoid what Johnson calls "commerce of the sexes," and "chastity" is synonymous with "celibacy." And it is this sense of the word that gave rise to the severe derivatives "chasten" and "chastise."

Whether Christianity has cursed "the work of the flesh" or not is a question on which Mr. Stead and Maeterlinck are unlikely to agree. And it is really not settled or turned aside by declaring that "conjugal love has not been cursed." The question lies deeper than that. Conjugal love, according to the New Testament, is less a virtue than a makeshift. Marriage is merely a concession to the violent demands of the flesh. It is distinctly stated that virginity is the higher life. And if we carry our scrutiny far enough we shall find that the supreme reason for the Virgin Birth of Christ is the necessity of avoiding his introduction to the world through "the work of the flesh"—which was as unclean (though not positively sinful) in marriage as outside it. This idea runs through the Old Testament, and is countenanced in the New Testament. Tolstoy, indeed, goes still farther, and contends that all sexual intercourse, under any circumstances whatever, and in the case of both single and married persons, is of the nature of sin to every true Christian. And as Mr. Stead has been to a large extent a disciple of Tolstoy we are rather astonished at the easy way in which he fancies he may dispose of Maeterlinck.

Mr. Stead says that what Christianity has condemned is "incontinence." But he does not tell us what incontinence is. Probably he means sexual intercourse outside marriage. But this is only the reverse side of his affirmation concerning "conjugal

love," and does not carry the argument a step further as between Maeterlinck and himself.

It seems to us that Mr. Stead errs throughout by not defining his terms. He should attach a precise meaning to such words as "chaste" and "chastity." We should then be able to decide whether they were used in the same sense by Maeterlinck, and how far Mr. Stead's view of the lawfulness of "the work of the flesh" under these conditions agreed with the teachings of Jesus Christ and Saint Paul.

Finally, we believe that Mr. Stead's fears for the future of morality are grounded upon a misconception. Religion and morality had entirely different origins. In the course of time religion took morality under its patronage, represented it as of celestial birth, and taught its dependence on supernatural sanctions. This looks like a triumph of religion, and in a sense it was so; but in another sense it was a triumph of morality; for while the apparent process was the religionising of morality, the real process was the moralising of religion. From that stage every religious reform is but the expression of an antecedent moral reform. And every such reform leaves religion with diminished power, both in comprehensiveness and intensity. Civilisation is, indeed, the secularisation of life; first, of political life—secondly, of social life—and finally, of domestic life. And as this process is likely to continue, we believe that Mr. Stead's fears look in a wrong direction; that he should be apprehensive, not for the future of morality, but for the future of religion.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and the Child.

IF the game of politics were a game in which truth was aimed at and honesty counted, the attitude of candidates on the question of religion in the schools, it would be simple and devoid of misapprehension. They would advocate either religious instruction of a definite character or they would uphold a system of complete secular education. And if this were so, Freethinkers could face their opponents or look upon candidates with much more respect than is at present possible. But politics being what it is, with leaders who assert that they believe in secular education as a honest and logical policy, but will not advocate it because the people do not want it (that is, for fear they may lose votes) and Freethinking members of the Cabinet who are silent on the subject for the same reason, one is compelled to treat the high-flown professions of principle, with which the air is at present ringing, as food intended for the consumption of immature minds or political groundlings.

In the present election campaign, one of the most notable features is the activity of parsons of various denominations. In fact, the campaign might be distinguished from others as the Parson's Campaign. And their interest centres on one point—the control of the schools. No other question has ever enlisted their interest as this has done, and no other question ever will. For them the control of the schools is vital. Not that this is said on the political platform. There the solicitude is for equal rights for all—with a fight against Free Trade in their own domain, or concern for the working classes—whose existence was only discovered when a vote enabled them to be used against religious rivals. But the real thing is how to grab the children. In spite of all the talk concerning man's inextinguishable craving for religion, they know that people who are not inoculated while young do not display any such yearning; and if we leave the political field and turn to the non-political writings of Christian leaders, the real object is very apparent.

Some eight years ago, readers of the *Freethinker* will remember, there appeared a little book, written by leading Christians, called *The Bible and the Child*. The real—although unavowed—question of the work

was: "How much of the truth about the Bible ought to be told to children?" or, "How many of the old falsehoods concerning the Bible can we tell children, without running the risk of exposure as they reach maturity?" The question was answered in various ways, with none of which we are now concerned. Quite recently a sort of sequel to this work has been issued under the title of *The Child and Religion*. The work is written by eleven members of various denominations, eight of them being clergymen; and with the exception of the first two essays, written by laymen, on Heredity and Environment, the real question under discussion is how best to develop religious belief in young children. The Rev. Henley Henson, on behalf of the Church of England, says that the educational system under which the child is brought up should include definite Christian instruction, and that the religious teaching of the young must be entrusted to religious teachers. This is plain, sensible in its way, and straightforward. Dr. R. F. Horton, speaking for the Free Churches, does not believe in teaching dogmas to young children, which, in the light of what he does want children taught, is neither plain, sensible, nor straightforward. While the Rev. George Hill says that to Baptists it is incredible that the teaching of religion can rightly be a function of the State.

I have said Dr. Horton's position is neither sensible nor fundamentally honest. He disclaims any desire to teach children dogmas, and relates with indignation the manner in which Roman Catholics impress upon the "tender and unreasoning minds of children" the dogma of transubstantiation. But Dr. Horton would have children taught the life and character of Jesus, which he says are intelligible to "even a very little child," and Dr. Agar Beet puts it more emphatically in saying that "little children" should be taught the story of Christ's life "laying due emphasis on His death, resurrection and ascension." Now is it possible for anyone to distinguish any substantial difference between a Roman Catholic teaching that the bread at the altar is turned into the body of Christ and a Free Churchman teaching the life of Christ, with "due emphasis" on his resurrection and ascension? For let it be noted that teaching the life of Christ does not mean with the Christian telling the story of a *man's* life. It means the narration of miracles, resurrections, heaven, hell, God, a future life, etc., etc. And if these are not dogmas what are they? They are quite as much so as the specific Catholic one with which Dr. Horton is so indignant. His indignation is mere prejudice. There are really no grades in the supernatural or in the miraculous. A thing is either natural or it is not; and the moment it ceases to be natural all our intellectual weights and measures may be cast on one side as useless.

Dr. Horton is also of opinion that the Bible is "in a very curious sense a children's book." His reason is that it teaches by tales and parables. Well, it is tolerably certain that Dr. Horton has seen much more of the children of Christians than I have, yet, as I have a shrewd suspicion that children are pretty much alike, whether they belong to Christians or Freethinkers, I am quite prepared to wager that out of every thousand children selected haphazard ninety-nine per cent., given equal chances, would prefer *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, or even *Alice in Wonderland*, to the Bible. Did Dr. Horton, or anybody else for that matter, ever discover a boy of, say, nine or ten years of age who preferred the Bible to an ordinary book of adventures? Or if such an one was discovered, how often did it occur? Dr. Horton's opinion about the Bible is on all fours with his conviction that children find religion a "fascinating study." Why, then, are there needed so many attractions to get them to Sunday-schools? And where are these wonderful children who find religion such a fascinating study?

The Rev. Mr. Hill thinks it incredible that the State should teach religion. Dr. Horton agrees with him in this. But both of them are agitating to keep the Bible in the schools, and to make teachers—who

are State officials—teach it to the children. But the ostensible grounds for this agitation is that it would be unfair to exclude the Bible from the schools and keep children from a knowledge of the book that has entered so largely into English life. It is all humbug; and Dr. Horton unconsciously gives away the case. The Bible, he says, "evokes faith towards God the Creator, and leads the mind judiciously to God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son.... And therefore, while imparting Bible knowledge, any teacher of good intention can hardly fail to convey religious truth and spiritual influence." Why, this is, in substance, only what Freethinkers have said over and over again. We have pointed out that to have the Christian Bible in public schools in a Christian country is to have Christianity taught at the public expense. And here is Dr. Horton saying that this can "hardly fail" to be the case. Well, it is a late admission, but a timely one.

The attractiveness of religion to children is peculiarly emphasised by what several of the writers have to say on the subject of a sense of sin. The Rev. Mr. Jones, of Cardiff, asserts that all children are born in a state of guilt. The same gentleman, by the way, is apparently quite convinced that death is not merely a calamity, but a punishment—"Had Adam continued in his integrity, his posterity would not have died." The Rev. Mr. Hill defines the child as "a human being with a bias to wrong-doing." And Professor Agar Beet says that "an essential element of all religious education is to evoke in our pupils a consciousness of personal sin and sinfulness, and of their need of pardon for the past and of deliverance in the future from the power of sin." How or in what way teaching a child that he is a miserable little sinner, born bad and booked for the Devil unless he abases himself sufficiently to avert punishment—how this is to become conducive to either a child's welfare or happiness is more than one can discover. If it were true it would be depressing; and as it is not true one need only point it out in order to emphasise the positive injury that must be done to the nature of a child brought up amid such an educational influence. Such teachings are responsible for more of the hardness of character and narrowness of mind now existing than can be easily traced.

Canon Henson administers, in the course of his essay, a very solemn warning as to what may happen if our schools become "consciously and professedly" non-Christian. It is easy to prophesy evil, and quite as easy to prophesy good. But, unfortunately for the Canon, what would be the effect on English life of secular education is a matter of opinion. What has been the effect—or want of effect—of religious instruction on national life is not a matter of opinion, but of history. Is the conduct of children brought up in very religious schools so superior to those educated where religious instruction is reduced to a minimum that we need fear abolishing even this modicum of supernaturalism? Fifty years ago practically all the schools of the country were definitely religious. Have we grown worse or better since the Act of 1870 was passed? Or has the country generally declined with the secularisation of its affairs? We all know to the contrary. We all know that there has been a promise of improvement, and often the actuality, just in proportion as power has been taken from the clergy, just in proportion as religious belief has lost its hold on the public mind. Nor is it inappropriate to point out that the present general election, in which religion is playing a larger part than has been the case for years, bids fair to be the rowdiest we have had for some time.

It is not the danger to the nation that these gentlemen of the black robe fear, but the danger to Christianity and to their order. They know that, poor as our general education is, it is enough to make the conversion of a healthy adult, brought up without religion, an impossibility. Their only hope is in the children. It is the raw material of religion they are fighting for; their chief desire being to trade upon the child's ignorance and innocence, and develop its natural fetishistic instincts. And in this religion

stands absolutely alone. The politician, the scientist, the sociologist, all of these are prepared to fight with adults and make their conquests from the ranks of the intellectually mature. The parson is the only one whose business is to loiter outside the nursery waiting for its unsuspecting and defenceless population. How long will it be before the community is sufficiently alive to its own interest to make this kind of kidnapping impossible?

C. COHEN.

A Practical Argument.

THE most crushing argument against the truth of the Christian religion is its lack of initiative. Not one of its experiences is possible apart from human machinery. No one is a Christian by nature, nor does anybody ever become one of his own accord. In the making of a Christian there must always be the intervention of a third person. This is of the utmost significance. God never speaks first, his speech being always in response to the cry of faith. The active existence of faith is the supreme condition of his doing anything. This is inexplicable except on the supposition that God is a creation of the human imagination. If He objectively existed He would certainly possess the power of initiation. He would approach the children of his heart without calling in any intermediaries. We are all familiar with Tennyson's famous lines:—

"Speak to him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

But if He is so much nearer than all others, why is it that He, the Father-Spirit, remains utterly silent until he is addressed by the child-spirit? If "Spirit with Spirit can meet," how is it that the human spirit must invariably make the first move? Is not this a reversal of the natural order? Among us, parents speak to their children long before the children are able to speak back to them. It is the parents who teach the children to speak. Why is it so absolutely different in the sphere of religion? St. Paul tells us that we are the offspring of God; and yet our Heavenly Father takes no notice of us, never makes the least advance towards us until we are taught by others to acknowledge him and to beseech him to make himself known to us. Then slowly we begin to develop a sense of his presence and activity in the Universe, or a sort of dim consciousness that He takes an interest in us.

Take prayer as an apt illustration of this point. In reality, prayer is the strongest possible argument for Atheism. Some theologians define prayer as the human child's converse with his Divine Father; but there can be no converse when only one does all the talking. Prayer is a monologue, never a dialogue. To pray is to approach the Supreme Being and plead with him to approach us in response. Have you not often noticed that the prayers of the sanctuary all partake of that character? They are not colloquies or conversations, but soliloquies. My point, however, is that in prayer man appears as a *suppliant*. When he prays he begs, entreats, beseeches, presents his suit. "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down," "How long, O Lord, wilt thou hide thyself forever?" "O God, keep not thou silence: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God," "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel," "Answer me, for thy loving-kindness is good; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies turn thou unto me, and hide not thy face from thy servant," "Save me, O God"—these are a few of the expressions found in Biblical prayers; and similar ones abound in the public prayers of to-day. God never comes to man of his own accord; He has to be coaxed and cajoled into coming. No sensible human father ever behaves like that towards his children. A human father, if worthy of the name, takes his children into his confidence and enjoys sacred fellowship with them from day to day. If God existed, He would be a perfect

father, and all his children would know and trust and love him. The home-life would then be bright and joyous; and there would be no black sheep in the fold of perfect love.

Take the scheme of salvation through Christ as another illustration. There are many different and conflicting interpretations of that scheme; but all interpretations alike testify that the belief in a loving Heavenly Father is an absurdity. The contention of theology is that man was created in the image and after the likeness of God. If that doctrine is true, God and man could enter into personal relations with each other. But if they could enter into personal relations with each other what need would there be of a mediator between them? According to one theory of the Atonement, the object of the Incarnation was to make a manifestation of God's redeeming love to fallen man. Paul tells us that Jesus was God manifested in the flesh; but, if we believe the Bible, humanity itself is God manifested in the flesh, a fact which would have rendered the special manifestation in Christ superfluous. Even granting that humanity had fallen from its pristine state of perfection, surely its Maker and Father would have been able to reveal his redeeming love to it without becoming specially incarnate in a special man. The doctrine of the incarnation of God in Christ is a virtual denial of the incarnation of God in humanity. The one incarnation nullifies the other. As a matter of fact, however, neither incarnation can be regarded as historically credible, because God has never entered into personal relations with mankind. Man as man only knows God by hearsay. Under the Old Testament He addressed himself alone to the prophets. It was to them the word of the Lord always came, and the people received it from them. The same thing obtains under Christianity. This is how the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it:—

"God having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds, who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 1-3).

Although all men are equally God's sons, having been made in his image and after his likeness, He has personal dealings with only a chosen few, and with the mass of the people only through these. On the face of it such an idea is contrary to all reason. If there were a God of love He would find his way to all alike. He would have direct personal dealings with all without any distinctions. He would require neither prophets nor saviors, being himself the only prophet and savior needed by his children.

Let us carry our reasoning one step farther. For the sake of argument we will admit the actuality of the fall of the whole human race in the person of Adam. We will accept the orthodox doctrine of the Atonement, looking upon Christ as the only begotten Son of the Father, who came down to earth to suffer and die in order to redeem a world lying helpless under the sentence of eternal damnation. We will admit, with the apostle Paul, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses." Now, mark, Christ is a Divine Being, equal with the Father; and as such He can enter into personal relations and have direct personal dealings with men. He is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, and can declare the Father's redeeming love to all in a direct, personal manner. Does He do so? If He had done so from the beginning the world would have been saved long ago. But here we are face to face with the inherent incredibility of the Christian Gospel. Having said that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," Paul goes on to describe himself and his fellow apostles as custodians of this precious Gospel:—

"Having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us: we beseech you, be

ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. And working together with him we intreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

In those words we see the germ which in after years grew and developed into that abominable priestcraft which has been the curse of the world for so many centuries. Ministers and clergymen and priests are ambassadors unto whom the word of reconciliation has been committed, and without whom the people cannot be saved. Elsewhere Paul expresses himself thus:—

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent" (Romans x. 13, 14)?

Now, the question I must ask is this: Is it likely that a God of love would have committed "the word of reconciliation" to a class of men who make the proclamation of that word a profession by which they get their living? Is it probable that the Savior of the world would have entrusted his Gospel of life to such men when He could have preached it himself, with irresistible power, to the whole world at once? Is it credible that so tender and loving and gracious a Being could have acted with such unutterable cruelty? He fills and transcends the Universe. If He himself but appealed to it the hardest heart would melt, the most sluggish conscience would awake, and the darkest mind would be enlightened. No sinner would then be able to resist the magnetism of Divine love. But neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Ghost does any saving work except now and then through the professionals; and two-thirds of the work done through these must be pronounced a total failure. Many of the professionals fare sumptuously every day, occupying dignified and lucrative positions, while the people round about them grovel in ignorance, superstition, and vice, paying no heed to the good news said to have come from God.

This is an argument the crushing force of which no sophistry can parry. A minister cried out the other day, "God could so easily accomplish the mighty task of saving the world without our instrumentality." On hearing a statement like that one is tempted to retort, "Why then does God work through you at all? Why does He not take the whole matter into his own hands, and dispose of it with expedition?" But one is tempted to go further still, and say that, in that case, the awful guilt of the world's deplorable condition lies at God's own door, because while He could have brought complete and final deliverance, He has miserably failed to do so. Therefore we are obliged to choose between two possible inferences; namely, either that a God of infinite love does not exist, or that, if He does, an infinite load of guilt rests upon his conscience, which is a contradiction in terms. In any case, Christianity is not true. Even the Rev. R. Heber Newton, D.D., admits in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal*, that the one great movement of to-day "leads in a direction diametrically opposite to the conception of Christianity as the one true religion, miraculous in its birth, extraordinary in its institutions, infallible in its sacred books, fixed and final in its creeds, imposing an external authority from which no appeal can be taken to the courts of reason and conscience." I add that to this same movement "heads straight" for the conclusion that, like all other religions, Christianity is entirely *man-made*, and so destined to pass gradually away.

J. T. LLOYD.

An Interview.

The bottom dog scarce sees his native skies.
Yet unto Heaven shall his soul arise.
Through filthy London smoke, to those gay shores,
Where all was mystery (and is) he soars—
So like a full-fledged eaglet. Yet his eye
Is damp with more than tear of misery.
He shakes his sides again and screams awhile.
His wings flap laughter—Heaven begotten guile.

O commerce and piety—combine of lies!
And the jester must jest, though his loved one dies.
He must dangle his bladder and jangle his bell;
Your parson of fashion must preach of Hell,
While his thoughts are elsewhere with the bridge
and the pheasant;
Thus the heel of "to come" kicks the shins of
"at present."

But some of us yet are not bought for gold.
We *must* sing of love though we're dying of cold.
Now, perforce, we must weep, and now we must laugh,
As we winnow the grain of life from the chaff.

I arrived—I know not how, or why,
At a place that's considered beyond the sky.
O! how could I manage to keep quite serious
On a matter of humor so very delirious;
Though my dad was born like glorious Milton,
In the street called Bread with a flavor of Stilton.

I arrived, as I say, far over the sky.
I don't know how and I can't tell you why.
The best I can do is to sit in a stew
And report on this wonderful interview!
And strange to relate there was never a sign
Of a soul beside in that place divine.
All the glorious company of the apostles
Had gone to roost—the lazy old fossils.
But I guessed from a murmur like hundreds of kettles,
And a distant skating of glorified skittles,
That some undamned fools—fresh arrivals on high—
Were fitting on crowns or just learning to fly.

I found "my man" like a megathic frog
Wrapped in a dim religious fog.
A ragged halo of silver hair
Girdled his face so fiercely square.
An eagle nose and passionate lip—
One eye with a most magnetical dip
Centrally set 'neath a sinister frown:
Bearded and bent in a wizard's gown.
A robust sort of omnipotent chap
With a phiz like the boss of a brewery tap.
Sat the one above with his pen of pride
Culled from an overblown peacock's hide.
Before him a desk and an iron-bound tome
Built like the purgative index at Rome.
Back and around were his shelves of books
And files of accounts on dozens of hooks.
Natural histories, Notes on Miracles,
Compendis of creeds and false empiracles,
Saved and Damned in letters of gold,
Saints and Sinners and Martyrs bold,
Earthquakes, Diseases, Wars and Kings,
Tidal waves, Revivals and things,
How to kill Poets—How to breed brutes,
Sparrows, Hairs, Arks, Forbidden Fruits,
What the Submerged have Intended to do
In the very near Futuro—with my help (too true)!

Now He wasn't cross as you might have surmised,
And didn't look ever a bit surprised.
He stretched forth his hand with the best *haut ton*
And "How is the universe going on?
It must be several thousand years
Since last I left your vale of tears."
"Things might be better, good lord," I replied.
"Ever since poor old Nero died
Your priests and ministers cut such capers;
Their crimes and bazaars quite fill the papers.
Can't you do something to stop the scandal?
Don't you think 'twould be worth the candle
To clear the humbugs right clean away
From the rotten Earth to some Botany Bay?"

"Hum! Now you've asked me a 'Sunny Jim' question,
Excuse me, a twinge of indigestion.
Why! You've got my glorious creation;
Then there's my book of revelation,
As well as my only begotten son,
With miracles worked by the solid ton."

"May it please your worship," I ventured to say,
"We are scarcely certain at this time of day

Fame is not got by seeking it. All such pursuit is vain.
It may very well come about that a man will succeed through
tact and various artifices in making for himself some sort of
name. But if there is no inner worth, all will prove empty
and ephemeral.—Goethe.

(Any new facts would be bound to please us)
 Whether there really was any Jesus.
 We'd like his photo with autograph tagged
 And something he mentioned that wasn't bagged.
 And as for your little autobiography:
 'Twas suffered such devilish bad transmography,
 That the higher critics are all agreed
 That they're squarely cornered and fairly treed
 By its contradictions and regular hash,
 Though they guess there are gems mid the general trash.
 We often hear of your trees and grass,
 But Christians who hold them, alas! alas!
 Sell them for timber and building lots,
 Till we barely know in London town
 Whether your greens grow up or down;
 There's not much left for the under dog,
 When he comes up to breathe through your awful fog."

I expected a scene but upon my word,
 You ought to have seen him flare up—like a bird;
 And the dust flew around as he slapped his chest,
 Like a rank full of cabbies or goose possessed.
 "Bless me," he thundered, "This beats all
 After all the trouble I've had since the fall,
 If you go on like this, by the great blue bee,
 You'll be saying they don't believe in ME."

"Oh!" I coolly replied "for an off hand guess,
 You're not far wrong. There's the N. S. S.
 Forever discussing, 'Is there a doity?'
 Or some sort of infinite spontaneity.
 Though swindlers invoke your aid in dreams,
 Of watered stocks and wild-cat schemes,
 You're up the spout and under the hammer,
 Till we don't know whether—in terms of grammar—
 You're a proper, common, or abstract noun.
 As for the scientist all he allows is,
 You're too well known in idiot houses,
 There's no punster or pundit wherover we go—
 There's never a Christian of lengthy woe
 But suffers somewhat from unbelief,
 And would feel a sense of the greatest relief,
 If you paid us a visit however brief.
 If Atheism's the worst of crimes
 You ought to show up upon Earth at times.
 Or, failing that, how can you prove
 To any sane man that you live and move?"

With a metaphysical twist in his eye
 The one on top engaged to reply.
 Three times thrice he essayed to speak
 But his voice fizzled out in a sudden squeak.
 "Why! you can't—now bless me—after all
 The time I've spent since the blessed fall.
 Do I—er—do I not?—That is the query."
 But as he spake his eye grew faint and weary.
 His voice grew husky—then he wheezed—he wheezed.
 He shook the snuff from off his gown (I sneezed)
 And in his wisdom faded far away.
 And how I left there not an ass dare say.
 I woke and lo! 'twas dawn and Boxing Day.
 What though my eagle as 'twere to his toes
 Is turkey wattle of cardinal to parson's nose.
 Beyond a lark my new year's song shall away.
 I cursed the Christmas pudding. Then I swore
 No linnet could sing thus for evermore.

G. E. W.

Acid Drops

The *Weekly Dispatch* published some shocking nonsense about Charles Bradlaugh and Northampton in its last issue. It begins by calling Bradlaugh "the advanced Agnostic"—which is a term he deliberately repudiated. Other people should call him what he called himself—and he called himself an Atheist. He wrote a *Defence of Atheism*, but he never wrote a *Defence of Agnosticism*. The plain truth is that he had a remarkably clear head and inexhaustible courage. These two facts explain his attitude. And the absence of them, at least in conjunction, explains the different attitude of some other people.

The next statement in the *Dispatch* is perfectly true: "Bradlaugh, because of his religious views, did not have the support of the local Nonconformist section of the Radical Party." Samuel Morley, the famous Nonconformist lay leader of those days, actually sent a telegram to Northampton begging his co-religionists not to vote for the Atheist. When the Nonconformists found, after thirteen years and several elections, that Bradlaugh had to be one of the two members for Northampton, or else the town would be permanently represented by two Tories, they reluctantly accepted him,

and returned him with Mr. Labouchere. But a considerable number of them held aloof even then. And the proof of it is that when Bradlaugh died, and Mr. Manfield was adopted in his place, they returned that gentleman by considerably more votes than they had ever polled for Bradlaugh. They had got a Nonconformist at last, and they were in the land of Promise after long wandering in the wilderness. Mr. Manfield was only a Unitarian; it would have been better if he were a Methodist; but even a Unitarian is at least a Nonconformist.

What the *Dispatch* states next is a ridiculous, and probably a malicious, falsehood. It says that while they were waiting for the result of the poll Bradlaugh's followers used to dig out the cobbles from the roadway, and when the poll was declared they used to go round the town breaking the windows of "those Nonconformists who while holding Radical views, had not supported Bradlaugh." Those who knew Bradlaugh, as we did, are well aware that he was a determined enemy of disorder. He was a great lawyer, and he always fought within the law—and nearly always won. Only once was there any disorder at Northampton. His supporters thought he would win that time, but he did not, and they were exasperated. He went amongst them in the street, talked to them, bade them go home, begged them not to disgrace him, and used his great strength to restrain some of them. But he had to go to America, his berth was booked, and engagements he could not afford to break awaited him over there; so at last he had to leave, catching his train for Liverpool by the very skin of his teeth. And his restraining influence being gone, the row continued until the soldiers were called out. There was disorder that night, but never before, and never afterwards. We were at Northampton ourselves more than once, so we know what we are talking about.

Finally the *Dispatch* gets into a frightful muddle. Look at this:—

"As Bradlaugh sought election three times in succession, having been unseated for refusing to take the oath in the House, the most prominent Nonconformists used to anticipate the proceedings by solemnly boarding up their windows in the morning."

This is journalistic romance. Bradlaugh never refused to take the oath in the House of Commons. The bigots, led by "Randy" Churchill, refused to let him take it. Eventually he did take it (and his seat) in spite of them. Moreover, the by-elections, when Northampton had to decide between Bradlaugh and the House of Commons, all took place after the Nonconformists had—officially, at any rate—accepted Bradlaugh as their political representative. The old quarrel was then a thing of the dim and distant past; and Bradlaugh and his friends were the last persons to revive it in the circumstances.

Mr. Henry Vivian, the Liberal candidate at Birkenhead, complained that some of his opponent's canvassers had called him an "Atheist." "I am sure," he said, "that you will warn your canvassers against circulating this libel." Sir Elliott Lees replied that he would do so. What a pantomime! If it is a libel to call a Christian an Atheist, would it also be a libel to call an Atheist a Christian? As the orator said, we pause for a reply.

Another candidate was called an "Atheist." Mr. Bowles's canvassers at Norwood are said to have "repeatedly asserted that Mr. Hubbard is an Atheist," and the statement was denounced as "a wicked and deliberate lie." Even the grave and reverend (we beg pardon, sedate) *Daily Chronicle* refers to it as "the dastardly attempt to asperse Mr. Hubbard." How these meek and mild Christians use "language" when they are put out! Just like the unregenerate.

Mr. Victor Roger has sent us some interesting particulars of the Rev. F. B. Meyer's relation to the North Lambeth election. It appears that the *Morning Post* published an interview with Mr. Roger in its issue of January 6, which concluded as follows: "One of Mr. Myer's most prominent supporters is the Rev. F. B. Meyer, the minister of Christ Church, Westminster Bridge-road, and Mr. Myer also claims the support of 'other members of the Free Church.' It would be interesting to know whether Mr. Meyer and other shining lights of Nonconformity in North Lambeth who advocate Mr. Myer's return support that gentleman's view, as interpreted by his son, in favor of the restriction of Bible reading to the Old Testament." A marked copy of the *Morning Post* was delivered at the Rev. F. B. Meyer's house, but he made no sort of reply to that very pertinent question.

The story which hangs upon this is exquisitely farcical. Mr. D. Naoroji had been the Labor and Radical candidate in

North Lambeth for nearly five years. During that time he had spent much money in what is called nursing the constituency. Also, being a very amiable and intellectual man, he had won the esteem of all who came into contact with him. But he was not a Christian—and that would never do. So a few weeks before the election the local Nonconformists put their heads together and decided that the unbelieving Parsee should not have a free run for the seat. They found a candidate ready to do their questionable work in Mr. Horatio Myer. His address to the electors was got out in a hurry, and election cards were circulated with the names of his chief supporters on the back, conspicuous amongst them being the Rev. F. B. Meyer, with "many other members of the Free Churches" thrown in wholesale. But presently it turned out that Mr. Myer was not a Nonconformist at all. He was a Jew—which is worse than a Parsee. Moreover, he let it be stated by his son, who was canvassing for him, that by "Bible reading" in the schools he only meant the reading of the Old Testament, as the New Testament was a book he did not believe in. Which was surely one of the funniest situations conceivable.

A friend of Mr. Roger's, whom we must call "W. D.," wrote to the Rev. F. B. Meyer pointing out that the Liberals had to choose between a Parsee and a Jew; and that, while the Parsee was in favor of Secular Education, the Jew wanted to confine Bible reading in the schools to the Old Testament, and thus treated the New Testament insultingly. This hardly seemed fair to the Nonconformists; besides, it was very puzzling; and "W. D." begged the reverend gentleman to send him a few words of advice. Mr. Meyer replied to "Dear Mr. D." on January 5, and a copy of the letter lies before us. He admitted that the position in North Lambeth was a very unsatisfactory one; but the election promised to be "a very closely contested one," and it was necessary for all Nonconformists to carry Mr. Myer through, and give him, if possible, "a majority over the Conservative and Labor Party." The last clause is especially rich in view of the reverend gentleman's posing as the "friend of the working-classes." After this the working-classes will be able to understand his friendship.

Rev. W. Riley, the Free Churchman, who felt called by the Lord (in the interest of morality) to stand as a Liberal candidate in opposition to Mr. Bottomley in South Hackney, promised that if he were returned he would "seek to get public-houses, museums, etc., closed on Sundays." This is how he was reported in a friendly organ, the *Daily News*; so we may take it that this is what he said. We are free, therefore, to admire the reverend gentleman's impartiality. As a member of the House of Commons, he would remember that he is a minister of the gospel, and try to put down all opposition on his busiest day. Most men of God are Protectionists as far as their own trade is concerned—if you only sound them to the bottom.

According to the *Daily News*, a correspondent called Dr. Clifford's attention to some statements charging him with advocating Secular Education, and the reverend gentleman replied as follows:—

"Just now our Tory opponents, having little truth to tell, are distributing the falsehood that I am opposed to the use of the Bible in State schools; and Mr. Balfour is helping them, by contrasting me with Mr. Lloyd-George, and saying that I am in favor of 'secular education.' The fact is, I hold, as Mr. Lloyd-George holds, and have continuously advocated the duty of the State to give the children in its schools access to appropriate selections from the Bible for ethical, historical, and literary purposes. What I oppose is the teaching of the creeds and dogmas of any 'Church' and of all the 'Churches' at the cost of the State. If the use of the Bible is discontinued in State schools, it will not be at the bidding of the Free Churches; it will be the work of the priests."

We are glad to see Dr. Clifford's hand forced. He is really opposed to Secular Education, in spite of his recent coquettings with it—as we have steadily maintained; and as far as Freethinkers are concerned, he is as much an enemy with his Bible as the Bishop of London is with his Church Catechism. The Bishop wants *his* religion in the schools; Dr. Clifford wants *his* religion in the schools; and Freethinkers want to free the schools from *both*.

Our readers must not think that we are giving too much attention to Dr. Clifford. He is the fighting leader of the political Nonconformists on the Education question, and what he says is therefore of the highest importance. This is why we find room for another letter of his to the *Times*:—

"May I be permitted to refer to a speech made by Mr. Balfour, in which he described Mr. Lloyd-George as being

in favor of 'Biblical instruction' in State education, and myself as an advocate of 'secular education'? This statement is, I find, being used for the purpose of securing Tory votes. It is wholly inaccurate. I hold it to be the duty of the State to instruct children in State schools in the ethics, the history, and the literature of the Bible. What I oppose is the teaching of the dogmas of any Church; and of all the Churches at the cost of the State. As to them, the State ought, in my judgment, to be neutral, securing equal rights to all, and offering special privileges to none."

This is about as definite as a tricky person like Dr. Clifford will express himself. What he means, however, is perfectly obvious. Christians are to share the control of the public schools amongst themselves, and the Nonconformists are to control the whole combination.

Dr. Clifford's talk about "the ethics, the history, and the literature of the Bible" is all humbug. He wants the State to teach religion (Nonconformist religion) in the public schools, but it would never do to say so openly. Consequently he is obliged to get the Bible into the schools as something else than a text-book of religion. But he knows, quite as well as we do, that if the Bible is used in the schools at all it will be used as a text-book of religion, and nothing else.

Mr. Marshall Hall, K.C.—and a leading one at that—was addressing a Unionist meeting at Southport and defending the last Education Act, when an interrupter cried: "We don't want starvation." Perhaps the man thought that education was a poor thing for empty bellies. But the candidate retorted: "You want to starve the child of that religious education without which it can never become a man." Just fancy now! Mr. Marshall Hall, having had a religious education, is *a man*. John Stuart Mill, who was educated without religion, was, of course, *not a man*. It is Mr. Marshall Hall who says so; otherwise we should never have believed it.

The late Lord Randolph Churchill, who was a dreadful "bounder," began his public career by "baiting Bradlaugh" in the House of Commons. In the name of God Almighty, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, and all other deities that might be concerned, he protested against the admission of an Atheist to parliament. Rogues and scoundrels might come in, but an "infidel" was out of the question. This view was emphasised by Lord Randolph's friend and colleague in the Fourth Party, Sir Henry Drummond Wolfe. This gentleman told the House of Commons that the difference between Bradlaugh and the rest of the members was just this: Bradlaugh had no God at all, and they all had "some God or other." Any God would do. Even if it were only (as the Yankees) say a little tin Jesus.

Mr. Winston Churchill seems to have inherited all his father's qualities—including his real or affected piety. During his recent electioneering in Manchester the honorable gentleman visited the Charter-street Ragged School, and before rising to speak he asked for the "Glory Song" to be sung. When it was finished he said it had deeply touched him, and lifted him into a serene region above the brutal details of politics and elections. Well, we hope this was only a bit of blarney. We should be sorry to think that the "Glory Song" was Mr. Churchill's ideal of either music or poetry.

What a way men of God have of getting into trouble. Here is the Rev. George Alexander Montgomery, rector of Theddlethorpe St. Helen, near Alford, fined £5 for common assault on Gertrude Banks, a domestic servant, sixteen years old. The reverend gentleman's housekeeper, Miss Elizabeth Coote, was fined £1 for indulging in the same amusement.

Prophet Baxter, the celestial sporting tipster, fills three of the advertisement pages of *Chambers' Journal* with his "Twenty Coming Events." These coming events are to take place "from 1907 to 1929-31"—by which time Prophet Baxter will in all probability be off the Grand Stand and under the daisies. He starts by informing his readers that we "cannot help knowing seven years beforehand the exact time" of Christ's second coming, because we have the guarantee of "more than two hundred expositors." This is all very well, in its way; but Prophet Baxter forgets to say that he has relied upon these commentators again and again, and has been wrong every time. He has been in the prophetic business for about forty years, and has frequently foretold the second coming of Christ, but the "event" has never come off. Why should anybody believe him now? Many people will, no doubt; otherwise he would never be able to pay for costly advertisements; but the fool-crop, as Heine said, is perennial, and old Prophet Baxter will go on reaping

a rich harvest until Death fetches him away to the other side of Jordan.

Prophet Baxter began with the Napoleon bogey, and we see by the above advertisement that he is working it still. Parasites are hardy things, and the great Napoleon seems to have fleas in his grave. Prophet Baxter is one of them.

A million American women have petitioned against the entry of a Mormon representative of Utah into the United States Senate. They assert that he is, theoretically at any rate, in favor of polygamy. Well, we dare say there are some Senators who are practically in favor of polygamy, by living openly with one woman and privately with others. We have heard of such things even in "Christian America." And we suggest that the million lady petitioners would do better to look after this aspect of the case. We think it would be far preferable to violating the United States Constitution, which is what they propose to do. A Senator's private opinions on marriage are really no concern of anybody but himself. Polygamy is illegal in Utah. That is all that is necessary. To attempt more is to try to establish an inquisition over men's thoughts.

The Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* reports that two young women, officers of the German branch of the Salvation Army have been found dead in their beds at Kreuzlingen, near Constance. A post-mortem examination showed that they had died from the effects of some virulent poison. We do not suppose, however, that the affair will cause much excitement in religious circles. But there would have been a great ado if the young women had been Secularist lecturers.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton was turned on in the *Daily News* to fill a column with a notice of the fourth volume of Swinburne's *Tragedies*, containing "Mary Stuart." There is nothing in the whole column about the tragedy itself. Mr. Chesterton was briefed to pour out his characteristic impertinences on the "Atheist" Swinburne. Not the dramatic poetry, therefore, but the "infidel" notes to the play, occupied Mr. Chesterton's attention. Mr. Swinburne, with reference to Mary's perjury, remarks:—

"But the God of her worship, the God in whom she trusted, the God on whom she had been taught to lean for support of her conscience, would no more have been offended at this than the God of Dahomey is offended by human sacrifice."

This was naturally shocking to the inmates of Mr. Cocoa Cadbury's newspaper office. Mr. Chesterton had to avenge their wounded feelings; and he did so with a rollicking gusto that was worthy of the fee marked on the back of his brief. He told Mr. Swinburne, for instance, that he was a violent fool; and that, as a matter of fact, all his own ideas of right and wrong came to him through the Christian Church. And he wound up by telling Mr. Swinburne that he was utterly lacking in an "educated idea of Christianity." Fancy "G. K. C." rebuking Mr. Swinburne for "intellectual narrowness." How the friends of the Nonconformist Conscience who revel every morning in the *Daily News* must have clapped their hands and chuckled to themselves that the "bestly and unbelieving" Swinburne might consider himself annihilated.

"G. K. C." on Mr. Swinburne is like a fly leaving his mark on a bust. Even this, perhaps is a reflection on the fly.

An awful visitor upset the congregation of Wicklewood (Norfolk) Parish Church. It was not the Devil, but a wicked mouse. Fortunately the reassuring news is published in the Parish Magazine that the disturber has been caught "together with three of his relatives." Wicklewood Churchmen, and particularly Wicklewood Churchwomen, breathe freely again.

Johnnie Kensit, junior, the "Protestant" candidate for Birkenhead, was "certainly in favor of the Bible being kept in our schools, and of religious instruction based upon it, to embrace those truths which alone are fundamental, and in which the vast majority of English Christians are agreed." A silly, ill-informed youth naturally talks in this way. Fancy his deciding what "truths" are "fundamental"! It is enough to make the poor old horses in the knacker's yard laugh till they fall down.

Robert Leach, the Grimsby Spiritualist, preferred to "kiss and cuddle" a pretty young woman named Rose Fenner, instead of paying those attentions to his wife. A letter of his stating so was read out in the local County Court. But we dare say his amatory adventures will be forgotten. He is not a Secularist.

The Bishop of Lichfield's new year's motto is: "Our citizenship is in heaven." Why doesn't he take it?

The Bishop of London's new year's motto is: "Look straight with the Light, and you will always have the shadows behind." Poor man! He is always talking about what he doesn't understand. You must look *against* the light for the shadows to fall behind.

Last Words on the Liverpool Trouble.

THE letters on this subject which appear on another page call for a brief rejoinder, and when I have written it I shall consider the matter closed. Presumably the three gentlemen have said what they wanted to say, and everything must end somewhere.

Let me say, first of all, how sorry I am that I cannot discover one spark of good feeling in these letters, which I believe do the writers an injustice.

Mr. Ross is technically right. He has not refused to sign a cheque. But he is working with Mr. Hammond who has twice refused to sign it; and he knows all that is going on. If he differs from Mr. Hammond he will offer to give his signature; if he agrees with Mr. Hammond, he is hiding behind a technicality. Mr. Ross is technically right again on the other point. He is not a Director of the Hall Company. But we shall see in a moment that this makes no difference.

Mr. Hammond's statements about the cheques is amazing. The money at the Bank belongs to the Branch. He is not a "trustee" in the complete sense of the word. His duty is simply to sign in obedience to the Branch's orders. It is idle to suppose that he has separate and independent rights. If he has, the money is not the Branch's, but his. His object, of course, is to lock the money up, and put the Branch to a disadvantage. I will add that it is of no importance whether the Branch wanted the money to pay for the Alexandra Hall or for the Milton Hall. It comes to exactly the same thing in the end.

Let us get to the root of the matter. Mr. Hammond admits that the new Society, which he and the other malcontents formed, engaged the Alexandra Hall over the Branch's head. He regards this as legitimate business. But was it so? There is an important fact left in the background. All the while that Mr. Ross and Mr. Hammond were securing the Alexandra Hall for their new Society behind the Branch's back, they were actually *President and Vice-President of the Branch* they were seeking to dispossess. I need say no more. Everybody who reads this can judge for himself.

I begged them as President, I begged them as a friend, not to do that; not to attack the Branch from within; but I begged in vain.

And now for Mr. Ward. I am glad that he sees silence is golden. I am sorry that he sees it too late. Had he only held his tongue, as I implored him to do—at least until I came to Liverpool as a peacemaker—the worst of this trouble might have been avoided. It was the public discussion of a private quarrel which did all the mischief. And it was Mr. Ward's rushing into print that created the necessity for some statement in the *Freethinker*. The printed circular inviting financial help for his engagement under the new Society announced that he had resigned his Lectureship of the Branch "as a matter of honor"—which was about as nasty a suggestion as could be made against the great majority who remained in the Branch. It will be seen, therefore, that Mr. Ward and his colleagues did not "choose to say nothing in public about the matter then"; and one rather smiles at his air of taciturnity now.

I regret to say, finally, that these gentlemen do not appear to appreciate the gravity of what they have done and are still doing. A heavy responsibility rests upon those who divide and weaken the small forces of Freethought. It will probably take years to recover the ground lost in Liverpool by this deplorable schism.

G. W. FOOTE.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 21, Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow; 12, noon, "What has Christianity done for Russia?"—6.30, "The Morality of Nature: and the Nature of Morality."

January 28, Manchester.
February 4, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 21, Forest Gate; 28, Merthyr Tydvil. February 11, Liverpool. March 25, Glasgow.
- H. G. SELLARN.—A good idea.
- W. PARKER.—We do not see any sign of our visiting Dundee in the near future.
- H. VOIGT.—Glad to hear that now W. H. Smith and Sons have disappeared from the North London Railway bookstalls you find no difficulty in getting the *Freethinker* obtained to your order.
- MAJOR G. O. WARREN, sending cheque for the Ridgway Fund, says that all of us "owe much to the veterans who have borne the brunt of the fight," and hopes we shall have "no difficulty in raising enough to render this brave old man's few remaining years as free from discomfort as possible."
- R. H. ROBERTSON.—Pleased you think our article on "The Blasphemy Laws" was "the very article required," and that you found it very interesting.
- G. ROLLEFS.—Thanks; see "Acid Drops."
- F. D.—Thanks for the extracts.
- F. S.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks—also for your new year's good wishes.
- F. W.—AIREY.—Much obliged; see paragraph.
- W. H. SPIVEY.—Sir James Woodhouse's reply, at Huddersfield, was "ambiguous," as you say. His abstract opinions are not of much importance; what you wanted, and he did not give, was his definite attitude towards the Blasphemy Laws.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for your welcome cuttings.
- W. A. H.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- W. ROWLAND.—There doesn't seem much to criticise in the Bishop's observations. You can't build on slush.
- DAVID WATT.—Shall be pleased to see you at our Glasgow lectures. Glad to hear that Mr. John McCallum (Liberal) at Paisley promised to vote for a Bill repealing the Blasphemy Laws.
- G. LACK.—Thanks for your letter. Pleased to hear from an eight-years reader of the *Freethinker*, who still looks forward to it every Thursday.
- H. H.—We noticed it in last week's "Acid Drops."
- F. J. GOULD.—Accept our best thanks, though we know you do not need them, for the trouble you have taken in the matter. The only perfectly satisfactory answers, from our point of view, are the second and the eighth. Many years ago, during Bradlaugh's presidency, the N. S. S. Conference, after a long and thorough discussion, rejected the idea of amending the Blasphemy Laws, and decided that it would be preferable to leave them as they are. The only wise, safe, and dignified policy is total abolition.
- J. W.—Will try to find room for the verses.
- R. T. F.—Pleased to receive your friendly and encouraging letter. We take as much care of our health as possible.
- R. M. (Bolton).—Thanks; see paragraph.
- Some correspondence has necessarily to stand over till next week.
- 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.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (Jan. 21) in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow. His subjects are quite fresh and attractive; the noon lecture being new to Glasgow, and the evening lecture now altogether. Unfortunately the Election fight will play the deuce with the posters announcing Mr. Foote's meetings; and this, of course,

was not foreseen what the date was fixed. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the local "saints" will do their utmost to advertise the lectures amongst their friends and acquaintances, and make a special effort to bring some of them along to the Hall.

Liverpool "saints" will please note that Mr. C. Cohen lectures for the local N. S. S. Branch to-day (Jan. 21) at 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. On January 28 there will be two lectures by Mr. J. M. Robertson, who is at present fighting for a seat on the Tyneside. Mr. Foote follows with two lectures on February 4, and Mr. J. T. Lloyd will be coming later in the month.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, at the Holborn Restaurant, on Tuesday, January 9, was a great success,—and we regret that the pressure upon our space this week prevents us from doing it justice. It must suffice to say that there was a gratifyingly large attendance; that the dinner and the musical entertainment were very good; that brief speeches were delivered by the Chairman (Mr. G. W. Foote), Mr. C. Cohen, and Mr. J. T. Lloyd; and that the company broke up at 11.30 with three cheers and "He's a jolly good fellow" for the President.

Pour encourager les autres—as Voltaire said. A correspondent who sent us the address of a friend to whom we might forward the *Freethinker* for six consecutive weeks, now sends us a note that has reached him from the recipient, who says: "The *Freethinker* has done good. They all read it at home. But don't send any more, as we have ordered it at our newsagent's. We all thank you very much." This suggests a simple word to our readers: more addresses, please.

We are glad to correct an error of ours in a recent answer to a correspondent. We stated that Charles Bradlaugh's part of the *Freethinkers' Text Book* was out of print. Our shop manager, Mr. W. A. Vaughan, informs us that he can supply copies bound in cloth at 2s. 6d., with 3d. extra for postage if it has to be forwarded.

The *Star* printed some paragraphs about Mr. George Jacob Holyoake the other day, which we hope are not to be taken as a fair sample of the accuracy of the "Mainly About People" column. Mr. Holyoake is represented as having gone to Italy on some Garibaldian adventure, and it is stated that "on his return to England" he edited the *Reasoner*. This imaginative effort is followed by the announcement that Mr. Holyoake "was the last person in England to suffer imprisonment for free thought." This, it is said, was in 1840. As a matter of fact, it was in 1842 that Mr. Holyoake was sentenced to six months' imprisonment under the Blasphemy Laws. Mr. G. W. Foote was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment under the same Laws in 1888. Since his release from Holloway Gaol no one has been imprisoned under the Blasphemy Laws in England.

Mr. Foote's *Prisoner for Blasphemy*, relating the story of his prosecution and imprisonment, has been for many years out of print. A new generation has arisen and the facts of the case are not as well-known as they should be. It is high time that a new edition of Mr. Foote's book, slightly revised to suit the progress of time and the minds of fresh readers, were accessible. We think of issuing a very cheap edition in the immediate future.

Mr. Rowland Barran, one of the Leeds M.P.'s, being asked at a public meeting whether he would support the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, replied that he really did not know what the Blasphemy Laws were, but he certainly would not vote for the increase of blasphemy. This extraordinary answer was very little to the taste of one of our readers who was also an elector in the division. Accordingly he addressed Mr. Barran a letter of remonstrance, and enclosed with it our *Freethinker* article on "The Blasphemy Laws." Mr. Barran replied as follows: "I have read the history of the Blasphemy Laws as given in the paper you forward. It appears from this that they are a remnant of a period of intolerance which has passed away, and, so far as I can see at present, there is no reason they should be kept upon the statute book. Obviously in an Empire containing so many diversities of creeds and beliefs they could not and ought not to be put into force at the present day. I should have no hesitation in voting for their repeal."

Mr. Gill, the Labor candidate at Bolton, being asked whether he would vote for the abolition of the Blasphemy

Laws, replied that "he was not very well conversant with those laws, but if they were brought before them he would give them consideration." We hope he was supplied with a copy of our article on "The Blasphemy Laws"

Mr. Murray, Liberal candidate for the Govan division, Glasgow being heckled as to Secular Education, turned out to be almost ignorant of what it meant. Being questioned as to the Blasphemy Laws, he wanted to know if the questioner meant "free swearing." Such are some of the men on whom the liberties of British citizens may depend! Mr. Hill, the Labor candidate, having our questions *re* the Blasphemy Laws submitted to him, replied emphatically "Yes" to both. Mr. McKinnon Wood, the Liberal candidate in the St. Rollox division, was reported in the *Evening Times* as replying that: "Regarding the Blasphemy Laws, he was not well up in them, but he believed some of them were rather out of date, and he would be in favor of abolishing everything which tended to make blasphemy that which was not blasphemy in reality."

Mr. W. C. Schweizer questioned both candidates for the Bootle division of Liverpool *re* the Blasphemy Laws. Col. Sandys, the Tory candidate, refused to answer. Dr. Thomas, the Liberal candidate, wrote: "I think the Act to which you refer should be repealed. It is obviously a survival from an age in which freedom of opinion was not respected." Freethinkers will know whom to vote for on January 24, the day of the election.

Mr. J. Branch, the Liberal candidate at Enfield, said he was in favor of Secular Education. He also held that no man should be locked up on account of his opinions, but if any man offended the religious feelings of others he should be prevented from doing so. Mr. Branch has brains enough to see the silliness of this when he is able to look at it coolly. Why are "religious" feelings to be protected more than other feelings? Are the feelings of Atheists to be protected as well as those of Christians? And should a Christian who offends the religious feelings of many "believers" by preaching hell be "shut up?" Mr. Branch hasn't thought it out yet.

One of the successful Manchester candidates, Mr. G. D. Kelley, replying to a letter from Mr. J. Brough, who sent our article and questions on the Blasphemy Laws, said: "I am much obliged for the paper you were good enough to send, and in answer to your questions my reply is, Yes."

Mr. J. F. Remnant, the Conservative candidate in Holborn, in reply to Mr. Calvert, who submitted to him our Blasphemy Laws questions, stated that he was "a Christian candidate in a Christian country."

Mr. F. J. Gould, on behalf of the Leicester Secular Society, wrote to all the local parliamentary candidates asking if they would support the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws; and he has tabulated their replies in the following manner:—

"Mr. Henry Broadhurst says:—'I expect I should be able to say "Yes," but I confess I am unacquainted with those laws.'

Mr. J. R. MacDonald says:—'I shall do everything I can to get the Blasphemy Laws removed from the statute book.'

Sir C. McLaren says:—'I consider that the Blasphemy Laws are objectionable, because they can be twisted so as to be an instrument of the greatest injustice, as we have seen in many cases, e.g., Mr. Bradlaugh's.'

Mr. Maurice Levy's secretary says:—'So far as he (Mr. Levy) knows, the Blasphemy Laws have been a dead letter for years. He certainly disapproves strongly of any Act of Parliament which infringes the liberty of conscience of any person.'

Mr. R. C. Lehmann says:—'I have always been, and I still am, firmly opposed to any attempt to suppress by law the free expression of opinion in religious matters. If any such attempt were made, I should resist it to the utmost extent of my power.'

Mr. W. B. du Pre says:—'No useful purpose would be served by the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. These laws cause no injustice to anyone, and are a guarantee that the decencies of life and debate will be maintained.'

Sir John Rolleston says (after confessing his ignorance of the existence of such laws):—'If these might be, as you say, used in any sense oppressively against any association such as yours, I should be in favor of their repeal.'

Mr. H. de R. Walker says:—'I will certainly support the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.'

Sir A. Hazelrigg says:—'I will certainly support either their amendment or repeal, as seems most likely to be best for the interests of the nation. I do not think that any reasonable man has any desire to use them unjustly against you, and I would support anything which provided that no unreasonable man could deal unfairly with you.'

Mr. Thomas Lough, the Liberal candidate for West

Islington, continued to answer our two questions half-heartedly or evasively. Being pressed with regard to Secular Education, he replied at last that he "would certainly not" vote for the abolition of religious teaching as part of the curriculum of the public elementary schools. Mr. Lough, of course, is pledged to the Nonconformist policy—whatever it is, or whatever it may be. We lived in West Islington formerly, and the Liberal committee was made up of Chapelites.

Mr. J. Barry, a member of the N. S. S. Executive and of the Board of the Secular Society, Limited, wrote to Mr. Reed, the Liberal candidate in the Wandsworth division of London, asking him our two questions as to the Blasphemy Laws. Mr. Reed answered both questions in the affirmative. A lady canvasser had called saying she had heard that Mr. Barry was dissatisfied, and that his vote depended on the answer to certain questions—which were answered in an indifferent way at a public meeting. Mr. Barry offers this as another proof that "to obtain our rights we have to show that our votes can only be obtained by those who are willing to give justice to Freethinkers."

Mr. A. Parker Smith, the Liberal candidate in the Partick division of Glasgow, being asked our two questions *re* the rights of Freethinkers, did not reply to the first at all, but instructed his daughter to reply, with regard to the second, that "he would not be in favor of the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws if returned to Parliament." Mr. Parker is no doubt a good Christian. Clearly he is also a bigot. But we may as well withdraw the "also." Christian and bigot have generally been convertible terms.

A number of answers from parliamentary candidates to our questions *re* the Blasphemy Laws arrived on Tuesday morning, too late to be dealt with in this week's *Freethinker*. They will be dealt with next week.

Mr. Malcolm Quin, of the Church of Humanity, Newcastle-on-Tyne, has issued the eleventh of his Political Tracts on "The Issues of the General Election." It is written, of course, from a Positivist standpoint; and from that standpoint it is very powerful and eloquent. Any of our readers who would like to see a copy should send a penny stamp to Mr. Quin, at the Church, in Eskdale-terrace. In pointing out the great inconsistencies of English political parties, Mr. Quin does not forget the Nonconformists and the Education struggle. "We have advocates of the separation of Church and State," he says, "who would yet place the whole education of the country under the control of the Government. We have advocates of religious education and spiritual independence who yet clamor for support from the rates and taxes, imposed and controlled by secular bodies." Mr. Quin urges the impolicy of "identifying ourselves with the contending sects or parties of the present time, in their attempts to secure an exclusive ascendancy." He counsels withdrawing from "the conflicts and entanglements of the moment," and laboring for "the formation and diffusion of such conceptions of national and civic duty as shall deliver us from our existing confusion, and lay the lasting foundations of a nobler public life."

Mr. J. Partridge writes on behalf of the Birmingham Branch thanking us for reopening the Ridgway Fund, and begs to acknowledge the following fresh subscriptions: A. G. Lye 3s., D. T. Bullows 1s., J. C. 1s., Friend 6d., T. Evans 10s., H. G. 1s. We have also received the following: H. Voigt 2s. 6d., W. S. M. 2s. 6d., H. Barber 2s. 6d., Major G. O. Warren £1, A. Bookman 1s.

"A touch of nature makes the whole world kin." And a Freethinker might say, in the words of an older (Roman) poet, that "nothing human is alien to me." That is why we refer to the fate of the *Calliope*, one of Britain's ships of war. She has just been sold to the Spanish Government, and will be used as a training ship. In 1889 she was one of five men of war in the harbor at Samoa. When the hurricane drove the sea in so madly, and everything afloat seemed doomed, Captain Kane put his ship's nose into the teeth of the storm, and faced his way out inch by inch—the splendid new engines holding good to the very last round of the fight. The four other warships, belonging to other nations, all perished. But the finest thing happened on the American warship. Her crew were perfectly aware that she was doomed, but with death staring them in the face they stood up and cheered the Britisher as she slowly won her way to the open sea. It was one of the things that give the lie to the poisonous old doctrine of original sin.

Several things are crowded out from this week's *Freethinker*; amongst them, we regret to say, "Abracadabra's" article, which could not be fitted in, and must therefore stand over till next week.

Mr. W. Mann's Rationalism.

I THINK some Freethinkers are awfully afraid of Freethought, and I think Mr. W. Mann is one of these timid souls. He is not the only one by a long way; for I have met a considerable number of such persons during my more than twenty years' connection with the Freethought movement. An article on "The Failure of Christianity" which I wrote for the *Freethinker* of last October 22, contained a tribute to the good influences of Christianity. Mr. Mann does not like this passage. He says it is the sort of thing which the orthodox pass round as "An Infidel's testimony to Christianity." He classes me among "these gentry" who "wear the livery of Freethought," and are only "pseudo-Rationalists," and "half-and-half Rationalists." Also he gently tickets one of my statements as "trash." These indications point decisively in one direction. They betray jealousy of any praise accorded to Christianity by a professed Freethinker. For my part, I have so serene and unshakeable a faith in the modern humanist (and atheistic) movement, that I even take a pleasure in finding and admitting the good qualities in the Christian and other theological cults. When I accuse Mr. Mann of timidity—as I do—I mean that he takes the comparatively easy position of irreconcilable enmity to Christianity in preference to the attitude which acknowledges merits in the Christianity and yet retains perfect confidence in the validity of Freethought. He is afraid to give points to his opponents, and perhaps even afraid of being called a "half-and-half Rationalist" by gentlemen who contribute to the same Freethought paper as himself.

Mr. Mann endorses the emphatic view of Nietzsche that Christianity is the "one great intrinsic depravity of mankind." It will, I suppose, be allowed by Mr. Mann that Christianity has been a very vigorous factor in European history; he will say a vigorous factor for evil, no doubt. Excluding the religion of the first Christians (with which my article did not directly deal), and regarding historic Christianity as having endured say, from the fourth century to the nineteenth, we are confronted with fifteen centuries of European life, practically dominated (according to Mr. Mann) by an evil factor. I presume my friend believes in evolution. Certainly I do myself, most rigidly. I imagine, also, that he rejoices in the marked progress of Rationalism, as represented by Mill, Lewes, and others. I notice, moreover, that he refers with satisfaction to the moral level reached by Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius—Pagans who stood for the last ages before the rise of the Christian Church. We are apparently asked to believe that the evolution of culture stopped for fifteen centuries while the "one great intrinsic depravity" was doing its bad work, and then arrives the blessed era of Thomas Paine's Deism and Ingersoll's Agnosticism and Nietzsche's curses scribbled on walls. Where is the evolution? Whence did the beneficent science and liberalism and humanitarianism of to-day emerge? Only the God of the Church apologists can create something out of nothing. Civilisation cannot produce its best achievements out of an evil past. Mr. Mann makes a mistake similar to that made by the Christian Church. The Church would not admit the moral grandeur of antiquity. It laid its ban on Pagan religion and history; and yet the finest elements of classical politics, art, and thought were destined to mingle with Christianity itself, and gloriously affect the life we live in the twentieth century. I believe that the modern age also affiliates with the Christian period, and is evolved immediately from it, and owes it many debts. I look upon the Greek and Roman religion and mythology with the deepest admiration, and yet surely Mr. Mann would not say I am therefore a pseudo-Rationalist, and he would not suspect me of a sneaking desire to offer a pig to the Earth-goddess or to drink water flavored with penny-royal at midnight Mysteries. So likewise, I cordially render

homage to Christian saints and statesmen—St. Augustine, St. Bernard, Alfred, Innocent III., Cromwell, and a whole host more. And yet I strictly and strenuously repudiate the name of Christian, and I have not a particle of belief in God or the supernatural. Mr. Mann would deny me the honest and manly joy of recognising goodness in creeds which I reject. I hope I do not wrong him when I say he belongs to a school of Freethinkers with whom I am always at war, and who display an anti-theological intolerance thinly disguised under a gospel of enlightenment. In the name of Freethought I refuse alliance either with theology or with an anarchic theory which denies Christianity a place in the development of culture.

Now let us look at Mr. Mann's specific criticisms of my poor, half-baked Rationalism.

1. As to John Howard, St. Elizabeth, and St. Francis.

So far as Mr. Mann's remarks imply that the natural spirit of humanity is a deeper and more permanent force than Christianity, I agree with him. I agree that men like Howard would have arisen in the course of evolution, whether the Christian religion had appeared or not. The tender quality of Buddhism sufficiently proves that. I also agree that the miserable state of European prisons was a disgrace to Christianity in so far as that religion claimed to be divinely inspired. But I know of no example in Greece or Rome (the parents of Western civilisation) which reaches the level of Howard in strength of pity and energetic devotion to the relief of sorrow. And I do think a man is entitled to speak for himself as regards his inner life. It is perfectly clear from Howard's own letters and records that he measured his actions and motives by a Christian standard. Nor can I conceive why I, as a non-Christian, should hesitate to register a frank acknowledgment of Howard's Christian virtue.

Mr. Mann adopts the method of the worst class of Christian Evidence lecturers (this being the severest form of rebuke I can invent!) when he selects morbid details from St. Francis's career as if they adequately represented that heroic saint's character. Any reader who desires to get a view of St. Francis as presented in the best literary sources should go to Mrs. Oliphant's biography, or to the charming volume in the Temple Classics—*The Little Flowers of Saint Francis of Assisi*. In any case, the general attitude of Francis towards lepers and his habits of penance do not disgust me when I consider that he lived in the Middle Ages. Every man should be judged in relation to his time. It seems to me that this courageous spirit which fraternised with ulcerous beggars was precisely one of the things which Europe needed. Nor do I see in it any essential difference from the noble enthusiasm which led Mazzini or Bradlaugh to endure hardship and persecution for the sake of the common people.

And so with St. Elizabeth, whose portrait has been beautifully penned by the Comte de Montalembert. The "Miracle of the Roses" always delights me—Elizabeth descends a rocky path from the castle to the village, her apron laden with food for the poor; her husband meets her, and, genially suspicious of her self-sacrifice, challenges her to open her apron, whereupon her burden is changed to roses—a poetic idealisation of kindness which would put to shame the modern British Poor-law. Perhaps I had better tell Mr. Mann that I believe neither in this miracle nor in any of the miracles reported in the pages of the estimable Alban Butler.

I should like to follow up the question of St. Francis and St. Elizabeth's relation to the Crusades, etc., but the topic is largely irrelevant, and would demand too much space.

2. As to the book of the *Imitation of Christ*, for recommending which I suppose I am to be warned off the Freethought premises! Mr. Mann does not approve of Thomas à Kempis's wasting his affections "upon a dead Jew who perhaps never existed." I should think not, for the Jew must have been a singular person if he could manage to die without

having previously lived. Mr. Mann prefers Ingersoll to A-Kempis—which is like a man saying he prefers an Atlantic liner to an Athenian galley. Each must be estimated in relation to its time and environment. I admire the brilliance and virility of Ingersoll, and I am not going to abjure my *Imitation*, even though I am utterly careless as to whether "Jesus" existed or did not exist. Mr. Mann's lack of literary appreciation right down staggers me. I suppose he would despise Homer's *Iliad* because the gods were all Greek myths! To the writer of the *Imitation* the term "Christ" stands for the ideal, and his loyalty to this conception is supreme. Take one of the texts which offend Mr. Mann—"Thou oughtest to leave thy dear ones for the Beloved; for Jesus will be loved above all things." Substitute any word which, to you, symbolises the Best and Purest—let us say, Humanity; and then read again, "Thou oughtest to leave thy dear ones for Humanity; for Humanity will be loved above all things"—and then you have the temper which animates the worthiest Freethinkers themselves. They are prepared to subordinate personal ties to the claims of the social whole.

3. As to the check which the Catholic Church placed upon brutal princes and the like. Mr. Mann complicates the issue by adducing the horrors of the Inquisition. That is a separate question, like the case of the Crusades, and I cannot here discuss such an immense historical problem. Let me illustrate my theory of the work of the Church in bygone centuries. To-day we see two forces in conflict—the force of commercialism and callous exploitation of labor, and the force of social sympathy which seeks to defend the cause of the proletariat. A moral power checks the material power. In the Middle Ages and later days (before the rise of modern Free-thought) the material power was aristocratic and feudal, and a terrible menace it often was to the weaker classes. What power checked the excesses of feudalism? What institution existed for expressing the protest of the social conscience against tyranny? There was then no institution but the Church. I will briefly point to several widely-different instances—the effective way in which Pope Innocent could terrify such a cad and bully as the English King John; the intrepidity of Savonarola, the monk of Florence, in reproving the misdeeds of princes; and the influence of the priest (as represented by Father Christoforo, in Manzoni's classic novel of *I Promessi Sposi*, or "The Betrothed") in defying the swashbucklers who kept a whole countryside in fear.

4. As to slavery. I cheerfully agree with Mr. Mann that the Roman empire and the Pagan moralists were tending to the amelioration of slavery. All I claim for historic Christianity (my article of October 22 not embracing the subject of the New Testament doctrines) is that it assisted a movement already begun by non-Christians. The whole question calls for careful and discriminating study. Such a fact, for example, as that the emperor Constantine seemed to retard the movement, is no proof against the steady and practically continuous change from slavery to serfdom. I may refer inquirers to an excellent work by Dr. Ingram on the *History of Slavery*, which impartially states the available information, and which is not written by a Christian. Negro slavery in America belongs to a different sphere of political and industrial life from that of the slavery and serfdom of Europe. Most assuredly, negro slavery testified to the frightful incapacity of the modern Christian Churches. But it did not arise till the power of the Church had begun to decline, and it was produced by the lust of economic gain which I fear will not abate simply because theology is dissolving. The humanism which is now emerging in strength must oppose both theology and the economic exploitation of the weak.

The real difference between Mr. Mann and myself amounts to this. He believes that, for a long period, Europe was cursed by a Christianity which actually hindered progress. I believe that Christianity continued the evolution commenced by the more ancient

cultures, and that the French Revolution and modern Secularism and Positivism develop to yet nobler issues the work initiated by the Pagan and Christian past.

F. J. GOULD.

Correspondence.

THE LIVERPOOL TROUBLE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the current issue of your paper under the heading "The Liverpool Trouble," untrue and misleading statements are made. I select two with which my name is particularly connected and trust you will allow me to make this correction.

The particular statements are, first: "Messrs. Ross and Hammond, being on the Hall Company's directorate, used their accidental powers (as far as the quarrel was concerned) to jockey the Branch out of its use of the Alexandra Hall."

Mr. Ross is not, and never has been, a member of the directorate, so that, so far as he is concerned, the statement is inaccurate. As regards myself, while it is true that I am a director, I deny that anything was done to justify the term "jockey," if it is meant by it that unfair and unwarranted methods were adopted. I claim that the action of the Hall's Company was in every way justified, if all the facts are taken into consideration. You speak of the "wretched stratagem" of depriving the Branch of the use of the Alexandra Hall, when, as a matter of fact, steps had already been taken by the Branch some months ago to find other premises. In the *Freethinker* for Nov. 12, 1905, there is a "Sugar Plum" announcing your lectures in the Alexandra Hall, which concludes by saying: "We can only hope now that the negotiations going on for the use of a large handsome hall for future meetings will be successful." A committee of investigation had been appointed to find a suitable hall and I was invited to join this committee, but declined on the ground that it was inconsistent with my duty as a director of the Hall's Company, to act on a committee, the success of which, would mean depriving the Hall's Company of a tenant.

The state of affairs was, then, that another hall was being sought when the quarrel within the Branch culminated. The agreement between the Hall's Company and the Branch (consequent upon a change in the terms of tenancy) had not been completed. The Hall's Company would, therefore, have been unable to sue for rent if it had been withheld, as there was no one whom they could hold legally liable.

At my instigation an agreement was prepared and presented to the Branch Secretary and Treasurer for signature. A clause in that agreement stated that the tenancy was terminable by a month's notice on either side. This clause was advised by the Company's solicitor, on the ground that it is inadvisable, where individuals have to be responsible for societies, to have tenancies terminable only at long notice. This clause, by the way, is contained in other agreements held by the Company. The agreement was read to the Branch Committee and accepted by them, consequently its terms were well known.

With my full knowledge and consent (I have no wish to evade any responsibility in this matter) a letter was sent to the Directors by the "City of Liverpool Secular Society," offering to take over a tenancy of the Alexandra Hall at a higher rental than the N.S.S. Branch were paying. The Directors, knowing that the Branch had been looking for other premises, naturally accepted the offer. They were not likely to await the convenience of the Branch after their avowed intention of leaving the hall—when they were ready. It was a question of which side was ready to give the other notice first, and it happened to be the Hall Company's. So much for the "wretched stratagem."

The second statement to which I refer is the following: "They [Messrs. Ross and Hammond] were also legal trustees for the small sum standing to the Branch's credit at the bank, and I am informed that they would not sign a cheque drawn by the Treasurer towards payment for the rent of another meeting-place. This is bad—shockingly bad. Nothing can justify it; nothing can excuse it." Unfortunately for your comment, however, the statement, is absolutely false.

No such cheque has ever been presented to me for signature, and those who inform you that it has have lied to you. For your information I enclose you copies of the only two letters I have received concerning cheques.

They are both from Dr. Niven, the Branch Treasurer. You will note that in the first I am asked to sign a cheque for £1 15s. 9d., which Dr. Niven states is for the purpose of paying the rent of the *Alexandra Hall*.

This cheque, however, was not drawn in favor of the Hall's Company, but of Dr. Niven personally; and I, therefore, returned it to him, pointing out that I could not, as trustee, sign a cheque so drawn, and also reminding him that cheques intended for the payment of rent should be drawn in favor of the parties to whom the money is due. In the second letter Dr. Niven sends me another cheque for the same sum drawn in favor of "The Secretary of the Alexandra Hall Company," but not signed by the "Treasurer," as required by the Society's rules. I call your attention to the tone of Dr. Niven's letter; you will see that he "dares" me to refuse my signature on pain of something terrible—but vague. I ventured, however, to disregard Dr. Niven's threats, and returned him the cheque, pointing out that in respect to the signature the rule had not been complied with. I have not since had any communication from him respecting the matter.

In conclusion, I would draw your attention to the spirit of Dr. Niven's letter and ask whether this is the kind of language in accord with "olive branches?"

Trusting you will do me the justice of inserting the above.

J. HAMMOND.

[We insert Mr. Hammond's long letter just as he wrote it, with the exception of five lines at the end which have nothing to do with the matter in hand, and would only lead to further ill-feeling.—EDITOR.]

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your article headed "The Liverpool Trouble" in the *Freethinker* of to-day's date you make two statements regarding myself which are *wrong*.

The first is that "Messrs. Ross and Hammond, being on the Hall Company's directorate," etc. I am neither a director or on the Committee.

The second is that "I am informed that they would not sign a cheque," etc. I have never refused to sign a cheque, for so far I have never been asked to sign one.

As you have publicly made these statements through the *Freethinker*, I shall feel obliged if you will publicly withdraw them through the same medium, and oblige.

JOHN ROSS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reply to your two articles upon the Liverpool Trouble, two courses are open to me—to give a full account of the affair or to remain absolutely silent. The former course would, I feel sure, justify my conduct and that of my associates. It is questionable, however, whether Freethinkers do any good to their cause by publicly discussing their private quarrels. Therefore, even at the cost of being misunderstood and misrepresented, I choose to say nothing in public about the matter, believing that thereby I shall best serve Freethought.

H. PERCY WARD.

Ingersoll's First Lecture.

PROGRESS.*

It is admitted by all that happiness is the only good, happiness in its highest and grandest sense and the most..... springs.....of.....refined.....generous.....

Conscience.....tends.....indirectly.....truly we.....physically.....to develop the wonderful powers of the mind is progress.

It is impossible for men to become educated and refined without leisure and there can be no leisure without wealth and all wealth is produced by labor, nothing else. Nothing can.....the hands.....and.....fabrics.....service of civil..... and crumbles..... of all, and yet even in free America labor is not honored as it deserves.

We should remember that the prosperity of the world depends upon the men who walk in the fresh furrows and through the rustling corn, upon those whose faces are radiant with the glare of furnaces, upon the delvers in dark mines, with the workers in shops, upon those who give to the wintry air the ringing music of the axe, and upon those who wrestle with the wild waves of the raging sea.

And it is from the surplus produced by labor that schools are built, that colleges and universities are founded and endowed. From this surplus the painter is paid for the immortal productions of the pencil. This pays the sculptor

for chiseling the shapeless rock into forms of beauty almost divine, and the poet for singing the hopes, the loves and aspirations of the world.

This surplus has erected all the palaces and temples, all the galleries of art, has given to us all the books in which we converse, as it were, with the dead kings of the human race, and has supplied us with all there is of elegance, of beauty and of refined happiness in the world.

I am aware that the subject chosen by me is almost infinite and that in its broadest sense it is absolutely beyond the present comprehension of man.

I am also aware that there are many opinions as to what progress really is, that what one calls progress, another denominates barbarism; that many have a wonderful veneration for all that is ancient, merely because it is ancient, and they see no beauty in anything from which they do not have to blow the dust of ages with the breath of praise.

They say, no masters like the old, no governments like the ancient, no orators, no poets, no statesmen like those who have been dust for two thousand years. Others despise antiquity and admire only the modern, merely because it is modern. They find so much to condemn in the past, that they condemn all. I hope, however, that I have gratitude enough to acknowledge the obligations I am under to the great and heroic minds of antiquity, and that I have manliness and independence enough not to believe what they said merely because they said it, and that I have moral courage enough to advocate ideas, however modern they may be, if I believe that they are right. Truth is neither young nor old, is neither ancient nor modern, but is the same for all times and places and should be sought for with ceaseless activity, eagerly acknowledged, loved more than life, and abandoned—never. In accordance with the idea that labor is the basis of all prosperity and happiness, is another idea or truth, and that is, that labor in order to make the laborer and the world at large happy, must be free. That the laborer must be a free man, the thinker must be free. I do not intend in what I may say upon this subject to carry you back to the remotest antiquity,—back to Asia, the cradle of the world, where we could stand in the ashes and ruins of a civilisation so old that history has not recorded even its decay. It will answer my present purpose to commence with the Middle Ages. In those times there was no freedom of either mind or body in Europe. Labor was despised, and a laborer was considered as scarcely above the beasts. Ignorance like a mantle covered the world, and superstition ran riot with the human imagination. The air was filled with angels, demons and monsters. Everything assumed the air of the miraculous. Credulity occupied the throne of reason and faith put out the eyes of the soul. A man to be distinguished had either to be a soldier or a monk. He could take his choice between killing and lying. You must remember that in those days nations carried on war as an end, not as a means. War and theology were the business of mankind. No man could win more than a bare existence by industry, much less fame and glory. Comparatively speaking, there was no commerce. Nations instead of buying and selling from and to each other, took what they wanted by brute force. And every Christian country maintained that it was no robbery to take the property of Mohammedans, and no murder to kill the owners with or without just cause of quarrel. Lord Bacon was the first man of note who maintained that a Christian country was bound to keep its plighted faith with an Infidel one. In those days reading and writing were considered very dangerous arts, and any layman who had acquired the art of reading was suspected of being a heretic or a wizard.

It is almost impossible for us to conceive of the ignorance, the cruelty, the superstition and the mental blindness of that period. In reading the history of those dark and bloody years, I am amazed at the wickedness, the folly and presumption of mankind. And yet, the solution of the whole matter is, they despised liberty; they hated freedom of mind and of body. They forged chains of superstition for the one and of iron for the other. They were ruled by that terrible trinity, the cowl, the sword and chain.

You cannot form a correct opinion of those ages without reading the standard authors, so to speak, of that time, the laws then in force, and by ascertaining the habits and customs of the people, their mode of administering the laws, and the ideas that were commonly received as correct. No one believed that honest error could be innocent; no one dreamed of such a thing as religious freedom. In the fifteenth century the following law was in force in England: "That whatsoever they were that should read the Scriptures in the mother tongue, they should forfeit land, cattle, body, life, and goods from their heirs forever, and so be condemned for heretics to God, enemies to the crown, and most arrant traitors to the land." The next year after this law was in force, in one day thirty-nine were hanged for its violation and their bodies afterward burned.

(To be continued.)

* This is the first lecture delivered by Col. Ingersoll. The ellipses indicate the words missing in the manuscript. It was delivered in Pekin, Ill., in 1860, and again in Bloomington, Ill., in 1864.

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, F. Gobert, "Poe's 'Eureka.'"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Do We Need a Religion?"

COUNTRY.

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

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): G. W. Foote, 12 (noon), "What has Christianity done for Russia?" 6.30, "The Morality of Nature and the Nature of Morality."

HETTON-LE-HOLE BRANCH N. S. S. (Miners' Hall): H. P. Ward, 3, "The Dream of Heaven and the Nightmare of Hell"; 7.30, "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secular Platform."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): C. Cohen, 3, "The Shadow of the Gods"; 7, "Christianity at the Bar." General meeting of members after evening lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, J. R. Ferrey will recite Dickens' "Christmas Carol."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, Jan. 25, at 8, J. Bryce, "The Priest in History."

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, J. Colton, "Crime of Capitalism."

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

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