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*For of waves
Our life is, and our deeds are pregnant graves
Blown rolling to the sunset from the dawn.*

—GEORGE MEREDITH.

Are the Clergy Honest?

It is a sign of the times when the question placed at the head of this article is asked by a clergyman of the Established Church, and in a high-class religious magazine. For it may be taken for granted that when the clergy put such a query a large number of other people must be asking the same question, and answering it in a more or less effective manner. How the clergy themselves answer such a question matters very little. It is certain that there must be an uneasy feeling abroad, and that some are awakening to the fact that a great many people, by no means deficient in ability, have come to regard the clergy as, in the main, a body of intellectual trimmers, whose last concern is to find out what really is the truth and to express it at all costs.

It would indeed be passing strange were it otherwise. Although the clergy represent an educated body of men, new ideas on all subjects make less headway among their ranks than that of any other class in the community, and originate with them hardly ever. And this is not only true of social, political, or scientific subjects; it is true also of the subject on which they stand forward as official representatives. The past hundred years has witnessed an enormous revolution of opinion in relation to religion. Yet this revolution has been forced upon the clergy from the outside; they have opposed it as long as it was possible to do so, prevaricated when opposition was no longer possible, and ultimately, with an impudence born of a kind of historic heredity, asserted a bastard form of an unconquerable truth as their own discovery. To resist as long as may be, to denounce the investigator as an enemy to all that is worth preserving, and to minimise the importance of new ideas and discoveries when total resistance can be offered no longer, has been, and is, the policy of the clergy of all the Churches. If people are now ceasing to look to the pulpit for either guidance or truth-speaking, the clergy have but to thank themselves for the position. The mass of the people learn but slowly, yet time tells even with the dullest.

The attitude of the clergy towards the theory of Natural Selection and the general hypothesis of evolution is a crucial illustration of their general conduct. At the outset Darwin's work was greeted by them with universal vituperation. And the broad ground taken was, not that the theory was untrue—on that point they were quite incompetent to express an opinion—but that it was unscriptural. It deposed God and established Atheism—which was the mouse of truth issuing from a mountain of clerical Billingsgateism. But when a very few years saw the acceptance of the general theory by the scientific world, the clergy saw the game was up, and made a new discovery. This was that evolution was implied in Christianity; Darwin was doing a service to religion; he placed theology on a scientific basis, while science was shown to be the true handmaid of

theology. But like those converted Spanish Jews of the sixteenth century who were said to hurry from a forced attendance in a Catholic church to celebrate Jewish ceremonies in their own home, the real feelings of the clergy is easy to discover. For let any scientific worker challenge any of the details of evolution, and he is nowhere so secure of a welcome as in a Christian pulpit. No matter how obscure he is, elevation to the rank of a "great scientist" and a "profound thinker" is assured, while none are so ready to greet the admissions of the limitations of scientific knowledge as are the clergy. Elsewhere a confession of ignorance is made with humility and accepted with sorrow. In the pulpit it is accepted with a shriek of delight, and trumpeted forth as glad news. The conduct of the clergy shows that now as ever they recognise ignorance as the surest guarantee for the perpetuation of their own interests.

Gibbon's famous statement that in the later days of ancient Rome no two augurs could pass each other without a smile, can only fail to apply to our modern clergy on the assumption that the lapse of years has either deadened the sense of the ludicrous or intensified the art of hypocrisy. One still hears the clergy in the pulpit referring to all the old beliefs, to prayer, to miracles, to inspiration, to creation, etc., as though not one of these things had been called in question, and as though, in any honest sense, they were not rejected by the majority of thoughtful and educated people. Yet it is tolerably certain that the majority of the clergy do not believe in these things. Press them to explain what they mean by a miracle and they will reply that ancient miracles were either magnified or misunderstood natural causes. Press them as to what is meant by an answer to prayer, and the reply is that prayer is answered, not by any alteration in the course of objective nature, but by a strengthening of the mind of him who prays. Inspiration is, in a similar manner, toned down until it implies no more than is meant by the inspiration of a poet or a painter; while creation is a mere poetic phrase without pretence to scientific exactitude.

Now, if there is one thing certain it is that had these phrases never meant any more than the modern clergy—on compulsion—make them mean, they would never have been of the least religious significance. Religiously, people prayed because they believed their petitions would have the effect of altering the course of events. What is the meaning of all the prayers for good harvests, safe voyages, the success of armies, or the cure of disease, if it is not this? The human animal may have a genius for absurdity, but he was never ridiculous enough to expect to secure a good harvest by a self-administered mental tonic. Religiously, too, a miracle meant nothing more nor less than the interference with the normal course of nature by a supernatural being. Inspiration meant, to the Christian, that the Bible was *sui generis* distinct from all other books; and creation meant, what the Westminster Confession says it means, a making of something out of nothing. Men may believe these things and be honest—though stupid. But to profess a verbal adherence, and when pressed put on them an interpretation quite destructive of their religious value, while still claiming to remain religious, is a form of mental dishonesty that is characteristic of nineteen clergymen out of every twenty. Even in politics men do

not usually interpret Conservatism so as to mean Liberalism while still claiming to be a Tory. But the pulpit has a code of ethics peculiarly its own—a code that if practised outside would ostracise a man from decent society. After an election political leaders repudiate unfair attacks on opponents made by enthusiastic supporters. One has yet to hear of this being done by the clergy.

Now although I am a firm believer in the hypocrisy of the modern clergy, yet I do not for a moment believe that this hypocrisy is wholly of a conscious and deliberate kind. Some of it may be, but human nature is not so organised that it could sustain so elaborate a humbug were all who practise it conscious of their parts. The hypocrisy and dishonesty of the modern clergy is sustained because it is inevitable to the profession, it springs from a class bias, and is therefore largely unconscious. In fact it takes on the nature of a class ethic. If the Christian religion, as at present existing, were fed by contemporary knowledge and responded to contemporary needs its profession might be unaccompanied by either hypocrisy or dishonesty. There would then be no necessary antagonism to new ideas, since all would be welcomed as an addition to the general stock and as meaning greater knowledge and efficiency. But when a body of men find themselves committed to a religion springing from and rooted in a dead past, the great object is not to find new formulas for fresh facts, but to twist fresh facts into harmony with old formula. Facts are estimated in terms of a theory, instead of a theory receiving all its value from its conformity with facts. And for this reason new ideas are obstructed or attacked not on the real ground that they are new and threaten the interests of a class, but because they tend to disturb sacred truth, injure the established morality, rob man of his dearest possession, degrade humanity, etc., etc. In this way stupid bigotry and self-interest shelters itself behind a cloud of moral phrases, and does it so effectively as to impose upon the clergy themselves. To see numbers of clergymen solemnly discussing whether the church is, or is not, the place in which to tell people the truth about the Bible, or objecting to a fellow clergyman who has had the courage to let cut a little of the truth in a building in which it is at best but a casual visitor, are examples of mental obliquity that could only result from a long operating unsound class ethic.

Practically the same cause explains why the conduct of the clergy is inevitable under the given conditions. Ideas are like organisms in as much as adaptation to environment is the condition of their existence. Under healthy conditions beliefs being more or less a product of the environment stand in little need of protection, they protect themselves in virtue of their "fitness." But with religion in a civilised community the case is far otherwise. If these beliefs are to live some sort of an artificial environment must be created. Primarily this is created by the clergy in the maintenance of religion in the schools, and in working through the parents on the plastic mind of childhood. The oft-made statement, that if a child is allowed to grow up without religious instruction it will develop into an Atheist, is, properly considered, an admission that a modern environment is fatal to religious beliefs. With adults the attempt to maintain an environment favorable to religion takes the form of a boycott of non-religious or anti-religious literature, and the multiplication of religious agencies and organisations. But throughout all, and dominating all, is the distrust of new ideas and developing knowledge, and the desire to keep the present as far as possible in line with the past. In fact, given a religion such as Christianity, with a numerous priesthood, a profession serving as a means of advancement in life for thousands, and intellectual straightforwardness is a practical impossibility. Conscious dishonesty there may not always be, indeed the condition of its permanency is that it shall be largely unconscious. But it is there; and the more unconscious it is, the greater is the degradation inflicted by Christianity upon its votaries.

G. COHEN.

Mystery.

THERE is an impression abroad that Freethinkers do not believe in the existence of mystery. It is alleged that they claim the ability to explain all the phenomena of Nature to the entire satisfaction of all intelligent and fair-minded people. But this is a totally erroneous idea. It is the advocates of definite religious beliefs, not Freethinkers, who ignore mystery. To the Christian, God is the full and final interpretation of all things. The Divine Being solves all problems and clears away all mysteries for those who have a living faith in him. How often have we heard it declared from the Pulpit, in the firm tone of infallibility, that given a material Universe we are bound to admit that the only reasonable exposition of it is—God. In reality, however, such a declaration is essentially false. Is it not a palpable delusion to imagine that one mystery can be removed by the introduction of another and greater? It is admitted by all that, without God, the visible Universe is an inscrutable mystery; and it is also universally admitted that the greatest of all mysteries is God. But is it not the height of unreason to attempt to account for incomprehensible Nature by imagining the active existence of a more incomprehensible Being behind and above Nature?

The fact that Christians speak of God as if they knew all about him does not in the least alter the case. Although theologians undertake to tell us what the Almighty thought, and planned, and did before the Universe was created, what purposes and desires are nearest and dearest to his heart during the course of time, and what grand fulfilments shall be his rewards in the eternity that is to come, they are yet compelled to admit that, in the last analysis, He is both unknown and unknowable and his ways are past finding out. "Behold God is great and we know him not," is a Biblical statement which no one can challenge. Commenting on that text the late Dr. Parker characteristically explained: "Unknown, unknowable! Thanks, I am tired of the known and the knowable." That cry was intelligible and perfectly sincere. It is the natural cry of every human being. On other occasions, however, Dr. Parker seemed to be on wonderfully familiar terms with this unknown and unknowable Deity. The same thing is true of all divines of whatever creed. They confidently preach God as the only explanation of all the facts of existence; but when you press them for an explanation of God they are completely nonplussed. They are obliged to confess that their knowledge of him is purely imaginary; and, of course, imaginary knowledge is not knowledge at all. It is simply belief, and this belief is based upon what is contained in a book called the Bible.

Now, Freethinkers are convinced that nothing is gained by the introduction of an unknown and unknowable Being as an explanation of the phenomena of Nature. Not only is nothing gained by it, but it also greatly complicates the problem. We have no data upon which to deny the existence of God, but neither have we any data on which to believe in and assert it. Our only contention is that one mystery cannot explain another, especially when the explaining mystery is deeper than the one it seeks to explain.

Freethinkers do not even attempt to explain existence. They have not the slightest idea what the object of it is, or whether it has any object or not. It is therefore utterly untrue to say that they endeavor to explain the Universe without God: they do not seek to explain it at all. They merely take it as they find it, and try to make the most and best of it in so far as it is related to themselves. When and why it came to be, if it ever did, they do not know, nor care, their one concern being to discover how to reap the greatest harvest of good to themselves from it.

This by no means implies that Freethinkers are not zealous students of Nature. It only means that to understand a thing is a radically different thing from accounting for it. Being ourselves products of

nature it behoves us to make every possible effort to understand her; and the only way to understand her is by observing her methods or laws of working. This is what Science has always been doing. Scientists are observers, students, interrogators, not philosophers and theologians. They confine themselves to the sphere of Nature's activities; and in dealing with these their object is to ascertain, not the *why* or *wherefore* of them, but the *how*. Professor Haeckel, in his *Riddle of the Universe*, is careful to inform us that no solution of the enigma has yet been found, and that he is discussing it as a philosopher, not as a scientist. As a scientist he is concerned only with the facts of the Universe, not with the *riddle* behind the facts. These facts are in themselves intensely interesting; and the more we study them the more interesting they become.

It is permissible to philosophise to our heart's content. I suppose every living man is more or less of a philosopher, at times. The thing to be borne in mind is that the conclusions of philosophy are at best but hypotheses, and that it is never justifiable to take hypotheses for truths. The existence of God is a pure hypothesis, and his non-existence is equally a hypothesis. The fault of religion is that it treats hypotheses as if they were facts. They may or may not be facts; but as to whether they are or are not we have no means of determining. Therefore, in practice, the best thing we can do is to gain as much knowledge as we can, and do our utmost to turn it to good account. What the object of existence is we cannot tell; but it is clear that man's chief object ought to be to acquire harmonious correspondence with his environments, to study Nature in order to "walk within her laws and have her light." Theology asks, "What is man's chief end?" and answers, "To glorify God and enjoy him for ever." The absurdity of this teaching is patent the moment we ask, "How can man glorify and enjoy an unknown and unknowable Being?" Now, the fact of Nature is both knowable and known; and it is by diligently knocking at the door of this fact that we can hope to learn the art of living a complete and useful life. Why we are here no prophet is wise enough to tell us; but being here, we experience no great difficulty in finding out how to live the best life, the best life being the most rational.

But what about the mystery, the riddle? Well, in practical life ignore it. Treat it as if it were not. The most powerful intellects this world has ever seen have been hard at work on it. All the giants from Plato and Aristotle downwards have seriously tackled it, and suggested innumerable readings of it, all of which differ from and contradict one another. And yet we of to-day know just as much or just as little about it as did the first man that ever lived. The mystery is still with us in all its grim grandeur, and as insoluble as ever. This is a fact that cannot be burked. Neither philosophers nor theologians have anything better than vague guesses, plausible speculations, or empty dogmas to offer the world. But while the philosophers and the theologians have been guessing, and speculating, and dogmatising, the scientists have been sitting patiently at the feet of Nature, watching her operations and recording them in their note-books, with the result that we understand our Mother much better than did any of our ancestors; and this superior knowledge which we possess ought to prove of inestimable value to us in daily life.

A book of over 600 pages, entitled *Cambridge Theological Essays*, has just appeared; and in it we are informed that "theistic belief is not inconsistent with a loyal acceptance of the assured results of either physical or philosophical research." It is true that many of our modern divines have accepted the assured results of scientific research; but it is also true that they have done so at the expense of sacrificing many of the essential contents of orthodox Theism. Their faith in God is not identical with that of their fathers. But the contention of Free-thought is that no Theistic belief is of any assistance in the attempt to solve the riddle of the Universe.

In every shape and form it is a hindrance rather than a help. The theologian has two mysteries to explain: the mystery of Nature and the mystery of God; and he is incapable of explaining either. There are many theories of explanation, but no actual explanation, satisfactory to head and heart. The theologian himself admits that God is no explanation of the Universe to the intellect. He says:—

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense;
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

Theology leaves the mystery unrelieved, admits it and makes lame excuses for it, and recommends all who suffer from it to be resigned, trusting that all will be well by-and-bye. But if God does not explain the mystery, but is himself a far greater mystery, why believe in him at all? Why not make the most and best of life without him? The mystery of Nature is not harmful unless complicated by the mystery of God. Ignorance of the object of existence does not detract from the joy of living. If it be maintained that the purpose of existence is to reveal a God of love, the question naturally arises, "Has it answered that purpose?" and the answer of the Reason is, "It has not." Faith's answer is in the affirmative; and the business of theology is to justify faith's answer. Conscious of its inability to make the justification acceptable to the intellect, theology appeals to the emotions, and says:—

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

But this appeal to the emotions is cowardly because the emotions ought to be under the guidance of intelligence; and intelligence knows of no reliable grounds on which to hope for future explanations.

How boundlessly happy children are when allowed to be natural. The object of existence to them is to enjoy themselves. Mysteries do not trouble them in the least. They have a keen sense of curiosity and they ask endless puzzling questions; but their curiosity causes them no disquietude until religion begins to trade upon it. If religion did not interfere, and if Science were duly utilised in their education, they would grow up to manhood undisturbed by the knowledge that their lot is cast in a mysterious world. Life has its sufferings and sorrows, its disappointments and discouragements even for children; and happily it has also its delights and raptures, its successes and inspirations; but, under given conditions, all are equally natural and inevitable. Now, if children are wisely trained in the art of complete living, the knowledge that the background of existence is occupied by a deep and as yet impenetrable mystery will occasion them no uneasiness or discomfort, but will rather add a new zest to life. To them the object and the reward of life will be Life. We know of nothing else. Our business is to live in ever-increasing conformity to the law of Life; and our happiness shall always be in proportion to that conformity.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Atheist Shoemaker.—II.

I AM bound to tell Miss Hughes—and I am sorry to have to tell her—that, even if an umpire had to be chosen by both parties, Mr. Holyoake was one of the very last men in whom Freethinkers would have placed confidence. And I am bound to add that I believe this is the chief reason why Mr. Hughes selected him.

Mr. Holyoake's fondness for paying compliments to eminent Christians, and receiving compliments from them in return, was too well known to the Freethought party. They would never have trusted him on such a commission.

That was a sufficient reason to begin with. But there were others. Mr. Holyoake was an old man

his eyesight was affected, so that he could not really watch the faces of the persons he was talking to—which everyone knows is of the highest importance when the persons are witnesses; he had been living for many years at Brighton; he had long been out of active association with the Freethought party, and he was unfamiliar with the younger propagandists in London.

It would have been difficult to find a Secularist more unqualified than Mr. Holyoake was for the task he undertook.

But there was a supreme disqualification which could only be hinted at the time, and is now clearly disclosed by Miss Hughes herself. Mr. Hughes and Mr. Holyoake were on terms of friendship and mutual admiration. They had met at Lady Aberdeen's receptions. Mr. Holyoake had even gone to one of Mr. Hughes's meetings at St. James's Hall, and drawn up a *résumé* of his address and forwarded it to Mr. Gladstone. They appear to have been for some time on terms of considerable intimacy. A letter from Mr. Holyoake to Mr. Hughes is printed in the "Life" as early as March 22, 1892, in which the writer begins with "Dear Mr. Hughes" and ends with "Yours very sincerely" and in which he says: "After I return from the North a week or two hence, I will report myself at Taviton-street"—Mr. Hughes's private residence. Miss Hughes mentions his "dining with the family."

Mr. Hughes, as we have already seen, knew Mr. Holyoake "to be a gentleman and one devoted to fair play." Mr. Holyoake, in his report on the Atheist Shoemaker case, described Mr. Hughes as a gentleman "entitled to be implicitly believed upon his word." Thus, to use a Scotticism, they scratched each other; and an "investigation" entirely arranged between these two gentlemen, and under such auspices, was really too ridiculous for polite description.

V.

Mr. Holyoake's fault was one of the worst a man could commit. He arranged to "give away" his own party. Bradlaugh was then dead, but he had challenged the Atheist Shoemaker story, and his reputation was to that extent at stake. I had succeeded Bradlaugh as President of the National Secular Society; my challenge of the Atheist Shoemaker story had attracted wide attention, and to that extent my reputation was at stake. Mr. Holyoake agreed to write a report, giving no more names and facts than Mr. Hughes had given—a report whose conclusions, therefore, could only rest upon his own authority; and to set forth in this report that Mr. Hughes had told the truth, and (by implication) that Bradlaugh and I, and all the other Freethinkers who sided with us, were either bleary-eyed fools or something a great deal worse.

Anyone who acted like that in military warfare would have been led out and shot.

VI.

The "investigation" thus arranged was carried out with profound secrecy. Neither I nor any other Freethinker was informed of what Mr. Holyoake was doing. The first news I had of the matter was an announcement in the *Daily Chronicle* of January 11, 1894, that a report by Mr. Holyoake on the Atheist Shoemaker case would appear simultaneously in the next issues of the *Methodist Times* and the *Freethinker*. I had to learn from foreign sources what was to appear in my own paper. And I think my readers will agree with me that the situation was extremely interesting.

Miss Hughes says that Mr. Holyoake "sent the report of his investigations to the *Freethinker*." She says nothing about its publication in the *Methodist Times*. Which shows that she has inherited some of her father's characteristics.

Mr. Holyoake did not send his report to the *Freethinker*. He sent it to the *Methodist Times*. All he did was to ask them to pass me over a proof. This they did, but they kept it back as long as they could,

and I had the greatest difficulty in getting it printed in my own paper.

Miss Hughes goes on speaking of that report (sent to the *Methodist Times*—that is, to Mr. Hughes) as Mr. Holyoake's "contribution to the *Freethinker*." Mr. Hughes printed what he called Mr. Holyoake's "Vindication" in the *Methodist Times* with a portrait of the vindicator. Mr. Holyoake, he said, had been put in possession of the real name of the converted Atheist Shoemaker, he had made a "careful" inquiry, and he had declared his belief in the "substantial truth" of the story. Mr. Hughes was in raptures. He benevolently hoped it would be "a lesson" to me. He piously trusted that "Mr. Foote will now, for his own sake, withdraw his accusation."

Behind that "vindication" Mr. Hughes sheltered himself till the day of his death; although, as we shall presently see, I was luckily able to make another "investigation," which let in a flood of real daylight upon the whole affair. But not a gleam of that daylight was allowed to appear in the *Methodist Times*, and not a gleam of it is allowed to appear in Miss Hughes's "Life" of her father. Which is another illustration of the law of heredity.

VII.

I have said that Mr. Holyoake went to work in profound secrecy. We will now see what he did.

Mr. Hughes produced the converted Atheist Shoemaker's wife, and "Sister Beatrice" and "Sister Ethel" who took part in his conversion. Mr. Hughes also produced himself. There were four witnesses in all. Mr. Holyoake interviewed them, and believed in the Sisters' "entire veracity." Had he been a better investigator he would have seen that their veracity was irrelevant; for they had not known "John Herbert" when he was a popular Atheist lecturer. Yet on the strength of the word of those four witnesses—the four persons who, between them, were the authors of the Atheist Shoemaker story—Mr. Holyoake wrote out a certificate of its substantial truth. It did not occur to him to pursue his inquiries any further. He never asked to see any members of the dead man's family. He never asked the working leaders of the Freethought party in London whether any lecturer at all like "John Herbert" had been known to them. He wanted to oblige Mr. Hughes, and he took the only proper way of doing so. Most of his report, indeed, was beside the purpose; but the profuse compliments to Mr. Hughes were very much to the purpose. They showed what Mr. Holyoake was driving at. And they deprived his report of all judicial character.

VIII.

Mr. Holyoake had the real name of "John Herbert" confided to him, but he took care not to publish it. By this means he baffled further investigation, as Mr. Hughes had done before. Thus the "investigation" and the report were entirely in the interest of the writer of the Atheist Shoemaker story. The interests of all other persons were absolutely ignored.

Christians were naturally jubilant. Mr. Holyoake's "vindication" of a Christian narrative challenged by Freethinkers was advertised and rejoiced over throughout Great Britain. Freethinkers knew how absurd it was; they saw that Mr. Holyoake's "investigation" was damned by the single sentence in which he had indiscreetly spoken of Mr. Hughes as "entitled to be implicitly believed on his word"; and they pointed out that the real question at issue was not whether some young man had been under the influence of the West London Mission during the last months of his life, but whether the young man was a Freethought advocate as Mr. Hughes described him. The Christians, however, and especially the Wesleyan Methodist Christians, were not troubled with logical niceties. They declined discussion. They simply pointed to Mr. Holyoake's "vindication" and laughed triumphantly.

Had the matter ended there the Freethought party in general, and myself in particular, would

have suffered for a long while from the effects of an underhanded blow administered by one whose power to strike us lay in the fact of his supposed friendliness. Had he been an open antagonist he could have done us no injury. His report would have been so much waste-paper. His blow would only have beaten the air.

When I succeeded in getting to the bottom of the whole matter; when I was able to publish the real name of "John Herbert" myself; when I produced the testimony of his father, his mother, and his brothers, as well as undeniable documentary evidence; when I blew the whole cloud of deception publicly to the four winds—no one was more mortified than Mr. Holyoake. He was not repentant, but angry. He rebuked me for calling a Christian gentleman a *liar*—a word I had never used. He wrote as though it were my manners, and not Mr. Hughes's veracity, that was at stake. His anonymity was obvious in every sentence. But all he could say of a substantial character was this: that I declared the Atheist Shoemaker story to be "pure, unadulterated falsehood," whereas it had been established that "John Herbert" was an actual personage, so that there was *some* truth in the story after all.

It was pitiable to see a man like Mr. Holyoake reduced to such devices. But it is the nature of one false step to lead to another.

Certainly there was a young man who had been called "John Herbert" in the Atheist Shoemaker story. In the same way, there was a man called Thomas Paine, and another man called Robert Ingersoll; so much, at least, was true in the Rev. Dr. Torrey's slanders. Nevertheless his whole utterance about those two great Freethinkers was a lie. They were not the men he represented them to be. What he said about them was false. Neither was "John Herbert" the young man he was represented to be. What Mr. Hughes said about him was false.

Freethinkers would not have bothered about the statement that Mr. Hughes and his friends of the West London Mission had converted a young man. What was that to them? They challenged the statement that this young man was a well-known Freethought lecturer. This was the only point in dispute—and it was the only point of the slightest importance.

IX.

Once in his "report" Mr. Holyoake stumbled on this point. He said that he had seen "John Herbert's" widow, whom he described as "an interesting person"—and if he had been a real investigator he would have found her a good deal more interesting than he imagined. She reported that she had often heard her husband speak in Victoria Park. How obviously, then, it was Mr. Holyoake's duty to ask the National Secular Society's Branch in Victoria Park if they knew of this speaker. But he did nothing of the kind. In other words, he stumbled on the one important point at issue, but he could not or would not recognise it.

Twenty lines or so further on Mr. Holyoake said something positively childish on this subject—unless it was designed for the intellectual acumen of the readers of the *Methodist Times*. "He was an enthusiast," he said of Mr. Hughes's dead convert, "entitled to the respect of his former colleagues, since he shortened his life by zeal which exceeded his strength." His former colleagues! Why, the Freethinkers repudiated him as a perfectly imaginary character. Yet the "Father of Secularism" invited the Wesleyan Methodists to behold the ingratitude of Secularists towards one who had killed himself in their cause.

It was an amazing spectacle, and I would gladly have let it remain behind the curtain of oblivion, if the Christians, in their reckless and mischievous zeal, had not compelled me to unveil it to the gaze of another generation.

X.

Miss Hughes says that Mr. Holyoake told her that, in his opinion, her father had been "shamefully and

unfairly treated." My readers will have a full opportunity of testing the accuracy of this opinion. In the meanwhile I wish to say that, in my opinion, Mr. Holyoake himself was treated neither "shamefully" nor "unfairly." I rather believe that he was treated with too much consideration. He had deliberately thrust himself in between me and Mr. Hughes. He had virtually said, "You can no longer attack Mr. Hughes except through *me*." I should therefore have been justified in treating him as an enemy. But I did not do so. On the contrary, I stood between him and a public affront at the next Annual Conference of the National Secular Society, when it was proposed, seconded, and evidently would have been carried, that his name should be dropped out of the Society's list of Vice-Presidents. I implored the Conference not to take that step. Mr. Holyoake had once been imprisoned for Freethought, and that fact should cover a multitude of faults. Besides, we had won all along the line in the Atheist Shoemaker affair, and we could afford to be generous. So I said, and the Conference deferred to the President's wish, although with unmistakable reluctance. But in looking back now I am not at all sure that I was right. If I erred, it was on the side of generosity; but nature does not discriminate between blunders and crimes, and she never lets you off the penalty because you "meant well." The fact that Mr. Holyoake was *not* "warned off the course" was used against me by his Methodist friends for all it was worth. I had scruples, but they had none.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

"Father" Adderley, we see by the *Christian World*, has been praising and appropriating Mr. John Burns. "Mr. Adderley," our contemporary says, "is sorry John Burns cannot be claimed as an orthodox Christian, but it is certain, he says, that one who can do so much good apart from the Christian society cannot lightly speak evil of the Lord and Master. He has always been on the side of moral reform as essential to social progress. He has never had part or lot with Atheists." This utterance displays the historic vices of Christian advocacy—malice, impudence, suggested slander of intellectual opponents, and childish illogicality. "Father" Adderley might learn, if he pursued his inquiries far enough, that John Burns was once in association "with Atheists." He might also find that John Burns is still a believer in natural morality and natural progress, as opposed to supernatural morality and supernatural progress.

The list of "things that one would wish to have said differently" is a long one. That posturing self-advertising person, the Rev. W. Carlile, of the Church Army, preaching on Sunday night in his church near the Monument on "Mr. John Burns's Gold Lace," took the opportunity to offer up the following prayer: "Endue thy ministers and Cabinet Ministers—particularly our good friend the Right Hon. John Burns—with righteousness." The inference is that "Honest John" stands in special need of that endowment. Of course he doesn't. It was only the reverend gentleman's clumsiness.

John Burns had to wear the regulation Gold Lace in appearing as a Cabinet Minister before the King. He tried to get out of it; but the King insisted, and after all the King was right. When a great Spanish nobleman was told by a Spanish King that he made too much of a ceremony, he replied, "Your Majesty's self is but a ceremony."

That ridiculous person, the Bishop of London, has burst out in a new place. He has issued "Intercessions for February" to his diocese, in which a lot of things are set down that God Almighty ought to be informed of and worried about. This is the first one:—

"To grant to the new Parliament the guidance of the Holy Spirit that in all things it may seek to know and to do such things as are agreeable to Thy Holy Will for the good of the country."

There now! Isn't that choice? A little worm called Ingram, on this little Dutch cheese of a planet, begs of God Almighty that our House of Commons may do what is agreeable to his will. How on earth (or elsewhere) could they do otherwise? Where there is an Almighty will, everything *must* happen according to that will. For the rest, however, his right reverend lordship is the biggest ass in London if he imagines that anything he can say will add one grain of wisdom to what is already possessed by our noble legislators.

Bishop Ingram's next intercession is as follows:—

"To grant that for all time the children of this country may be virtuously and Christianly brought up to a God-fearing manhood and womanhood."

The prayerful right reverend father in God apparently did not perceive the shocking insult he was paying to his own religion. "Virtuously and Christianly" implies that Virtue and Christianity are different things. Which, indeed, we do most potently and powerfully believe, yet the good Bishop ought not to have set it down thus plainly.

The only other "intercession" we shall trouble about is this:—

"To bless efforts being made to preserve to our country the priceless inheritance of the Lord's Day."

What does this mean? Simply this. Bishop Ingram, like many another wrestler with God, tells the Deity what he really means for the ears of other beings. That is to say, under the pretence of a prayer, he advertises the necessity of standing up for the blessed Sabbath. Well, we are glad to see that he thinks the danger is so serious.

Rev. Dr. Horton, President of the Free Churches' Council, is not going to be behind any Bishop of the Church of England. He also has issued a call to prayer. After referring to the great result of the recent general election, he says that it constitutes "a new call for prayer." "We must use our privilege as Christians," he adds, "to wait upon God, that the new era dawning may not be marred by human passion, folly, and unbelief." Of course the reverend gentleman was bound to bring in "unbelief." We quite understand that he dreads it most of all. It would spoil his trade.

Sunday, February 11, was the day of "special intercession" on the part of the Free Churches. Dr. Horton considers that the new parliament was "won by prayer"—including, we suppose, the return of Mr. J. M. Robertson for the Tynside. But what is won by prayer must be maintained by prayer. So Dr. Horton says—and it flatters his holy profession. Politicians are not to be trusted absolutely. "We know," he says, "that there must be elements of godlessness and self-seeking, with the accompanying blindness and perversity, in the new House. And we can only counteract these elements by prayer." There you are! The country is safe now. Dr. Horton's clerical squadrons have prayed, and the Bishop of London's clerical squadrons have prayed too. So it will be A1 with us.

"God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world."

Next business!

Rev. F. B. Meyer protests against the approaching marriage of Princess Ena with the King of Spain. Reared a Protestant, she is going to marry a Roman Catholic. What is more, she is going to join the Roman Catholic Church herself. The reverend gentleman is disgusted. He says the marriage ought not to take place. That is *his* view of the matter. *Our* view is that the religion, which the classes have imposed upon the masses, is a thing which the classes themselves put off or on as it suits their convenience.

But are the clergy—the *teachers* of religion to *all* classes—any better? Judging by history they are not. During the violent and repeated changes in Church doctrine and discipline under Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, the clergy lurched from side to side every time. They were Catholic one day, Protestant the day after, Catholic the next day, and then Protestant again. Out of all the thousands of them only about a hundred and twenty kicked at the changes. The rest were true Vicars of Bray.

Someone has favored us with a copy of an extraordinary handbill printed at Plumstead. It announced a Special Prayer Meeting on Tuesday, February 13, in the Wesleyan Great Central Hall; the object being "To pray for the Conversion of Mr. Robert Blatchford." The Rev. Stanley

Parker was down to "lead the meeting and give a brief address"—which we suppose the Almighty was also expected to listen to. Evidently this gentleman (we mean Parker) believes that Mr. Blatchford is past arguing with. Perhaps he will learn that "Nunquam" is past praying for.

It was once said by an American that there was more than one sort of Baptists; there were Particular Baptists, and not very particular Baptists. Something like this might be said of Manxmen; the inhabitants of that beautiful island, where the people have three legs, and the cats no tails. During the winter Manxmen are distressingly pious; during the summer they relax so far as to make all the profit they can out of all sorts of visitors. But some of them have qualms about Sunday trading, even in the summer, and they got a Bill brought before the House of Keys making illegal the offering or calling of goods or papers in the streets on Sundays. In the course of the debate upon this Bill (which doesn't seem likely to be carried) the Bishop of Sodor and Man expressed the opinion that shops should be dealt with too, especially those which sold sweets on Sundays, and thus enticed the children to spend the money given them for offertory purposes. The Bishop appears to have spoken feelingly. And so would you, reader, if you were in his line of business. It must be terrible to see a lot of "kids" in church luxuriously sucking away the minister's salary. In fact it bears a very close resemblance to the sin against the Holy Ghost.

William Frederick Edge, the Hanley billiard marker, who was executed at Stafford Gaol for the murder of a child at Newcastle-under-Lyme, appears to have made an edifying end, and we suppose he is now singing the Glory Song. Writing to his sister from the condemned cell, he said: "I shall meet you in heaven"—and added: "What a pleasant world it will be." At the end of his letter he burst into rhyme, the final lines being:—

"Though absent in body I am with you in prayer,
And I meet you in heaven: there is no parting there."

We hope the Christians are proud of this candidate for heaven. Some of them, perhaps, are even proud of his "poetry."

Rev. Dr. Dawson Burns, the well-known Temperance writer, wants the Dedication to King James dropped out of the Bibles printed at the Oxford and Cambridge University Presses. Such a fulsome piece of adulation ought no longer to be associated with the Holy Bible. Perhaps not, but there are worse things *inside* the Bible; dirty things, for instance, that no minister dares read out to a mixed congregation nowadays. And how about the drinking texts? Dr. Dawson Burns should wish to see them cleared out. Here is a pretty sample: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy heart. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." You could get hogsheads out of a text like that.

We like following the Bishop of London. He is such an entertaining nunny. His lordship has just been telling the profession that the motto for all its members should be "I play for Jesus Christ." We suppose he means it for use before the footlights. Behind the scenes the actor's motto is "I play for a salary." And this is equally true of the performers in pulpits.

Bishop Ingram spoke of the clergy and the actors as "brothers in arms." Well, we are glad to hear him say so. Truth slips out now and then, even in a sermon.

When the great Sarah Bernhardt was attacked in a sermon by the late Rev. Dr. Talmage she wrote a witty letter to him which was published in the American papers. She told him that rival entertainers ought not to denounce each other in public. It was bad form, and it gave the game away.

"Guy Thorne," the author of *When It Was Dark*, is reported to be resting in the South of France. This is said to be connected with the "strain" caused by his "success." What is he suffering from? Is it swelled head?

General Nogi, who was left childless by the war, is sitting up late at night complying with the requests for his autograph inscriptions to be placed on the tombstones of the dead Japanese soldiers who fell in the siege of Port Arthur. How touching! How beautiful! Christian generals, when they are victorious, are usually occupied in amassing profits and honors—for themselves.

What a world this is, and how much reason men have to sympathise with and console each other. Sir George Grey becomes Minister for Foreign Affairs; that is to say, he takes one of the most important places in the new Liberal cabinet. As soon as he is in office his wife is thrown out of her carriage and killed, and the poor man's mouth (for we are all poor men when these calamities fall upon us) is full of dust and ashes. Religion will come in, of course, with its plausible comforts; but what do they really amount to when a man knows that half his heart is buried for ever in a woman's grave?

A series of lectures to women is being given at Glasgow University, and a brief report of the first, delivered by the Rev. Dr. Cooper, Professor of Church History, appeared in the *Glasgow Herald*. Dr. Cooper chose for his subject "Women in the Apostolic Church," and his object was to show that "the elevation of woman was a great achievement of Christianity." Unfortunately the report does not state what evidence he advanced in support of this proposition. We have therefore to say but two things in reply; first, that Dr. Cooper's assertion is historically untrue; second, that he would do well to reply to the Rev. Principal Donaldson's learned and candid essay in which it is argued that Christianity tended to lower, rather than elevate, the status of women. It would be far better for the Rev. Dr. Cooper to answer the Rev. Dr. Donaldson, instead of repeating the old statements as though nothing had been said to the contrary. Repetition is really not argument. Many of the clergy believe that it is, but they are mistaken.

"Woman" Dr. Cooper is reported to have said, "owes more to the author of the Acts of the Apostles than to any other writer in the New Testament." This may be quite true, and yet not amount to much. A very short-sighted one-eyed man might have magnificent vision amongst the totally blind. These things are all relative.

What does woman owe to all the writers of the New Testament together? What utterance of Jesus, what utterance of Paul, did anything to help woman to justice and consideration? Paul himself—whose disciple the author of the Acts is said to have been—spoke of woman like a farm-yard rooster. She was to keep silence, she was not to teach, she was to gain any knowledge she wanted from her husband, and she was to obey him as the Church obeyed Christ. He was not made for her, Paul said; she was made for him. How this could lead to the "elevation of woman" is like the proverbial peace of God—it passes all understanding.

Mr. Will Crooks has found a true Latin proverb—"Vox populi, vox dei": The voice of the people is the voice of God." For all we know it may be. But if Mr. Crooks really thinks that the voice of the people is the voice of wisdom, he is bound to admit that the popular vote which put the Tories in is just as wise as the popular vote which has put the Liberals in. And as he doesn't admit the conclusion he must revise the premises. Perhaps it would be better if he dropped God and religion out of his political speeches altogether.

The newspapers must fill up their columns. We understand that. But they must be badly gravelled for matter when they have to devote space to the marriage of a rich old man of eighty-three with a woman half a century younger than himself. The worst of it is that the proceeding was evidently thought to be perfectly proper. The happy pair go off for the honeymoon, after being married in a Roman Catholic Church, where (according to the theory) God joined them together. How beautiful a thing is religion when it aids and blesses these romantic attachments!

Among the latest wills proved is that of the Rev. Edward Rawnsley, of Spilsby, Lincolnshire, who left estate valued at £57,575. "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven."

More poverty-loving men of God. Rev. Henry Timothy Tilley, of Claverdon Vicarage, Warwick, has left £20,614. Rev. Edward Pickard-Cambridge, of Weymouth, has left £15,385. Both of them must be comfortably warm in this cold weather.

Moses Baritz, in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, says that there have only been four conversions effected in England by the Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews during the past four years, and that all the four were children. Yet this Society, we believe, has spent some £150,000 in that period.

Count Tolstoy is in hell. In the church at Tasowo he was painted in a picture, dressed in peasant garb, seated in a huge boiler, under which was a cheerful fire, while demons were dancing around. Fortunately it is easier to paint a man in hell than to put him there.

Ingersoll once said that people prayed for the most impossible things. He once heard a man asking God to give Congress wisdom. This witticism has a parallel in the latest story of a boy whose father took him to the Senate gallery to watch the proceedings. The chaplain being pointed out to him, he said, "Oh, he prays for the Senate, doesn't he, dad?" "No," replied the father, "he gets up and takes a look at the Senate and then prays for the country."

It will be interesting to notice how many of the members of the new House of Commons avail themselves of Bradlaugh's Oaths Act and affirm instead of swearing allegiance. This week's *Freethinker* is made up before the information can be obtainable. We may have something more definite to say next week.

The Bishop of Chester says that "passive resistance is no fit weapon for a Churchman's warfare." This is all very well in its way, but if the Nonconformists carry their policy of establishing "undenominational" Christianity in the nation's schools, the Bishop of Chester will probably find that thousands of Churchmen will become Passive Resisters; and it might even be a good thing if Freethinkers joined in the game, in order to show up the hypocrisy of that wonderful thing, the "Nonconformist Conscience."

The Chief Rabbi, at a recent meeting of the Jewish Historical Society, went out of his way to declare that "the great bulk of the Jews in England would regard universal compulsory secular education as a great peril threatening their dear land." What he meant, of course, was that secular education threatened all forms of supernaturalism, including the Jewish; and in this we have the honor to concur.

Rev. C. E. Adamson, vicar of St. Michael's Church, Westoe, Shields, says in his parish magazine that the General Election has entirely changed the composition of the House of Commons, and that the present Government is hostile to religion in general and in particular to the National Church as the chief exponent of religion. We fear the reverend gentleman is mistaken. The present Government is not likely to do anything against "religion"—although it may, for political reasons, favor Nonconformity as against Anglicanism.

Dr. Clifford declares that the Passive Resistance fight must go on. He bids his followers to dare all the terrors of the law, and to go to prison cheerfully—and he will stand outside and applaud them. "A large body of men of all the Churches," he says, "and of no Church are sympathetic with our aims." This is one of his many mistakes. We know a great deal more about the "no Church" men than he does, and we beg to tell him that they are not sympathetic with his aims. Probably he fell into the obvious blunder of supposing that the late Mr. Holyoake represented the "no Church" men in this matter. Mr. Holyoake's action as a Passive Resistor, playing the game of the Nonconformists, was smiled at by the Freethought party in England.

There really ought to be some kind of discipline in the ranks of the Nonconformists. For months Dr. Clifford has been shrieking to a somewhat sceptical public that their interest in the education question was a citizen's interest—that and nothing more. And now the Rev. A. Rowland declares that the "Education question brought the Free Churches into the arena," and "this with us is primarily a religious question." This is letting the cat out of the bag with a vengeance. And it shows how difficult it is to keep truth completely under—even in the pulpit.

Sir John Gorst, addressing a Church Schools meeting at Manchester, expressed his regret that the Conservative government, while it had a commanding majority in the House of Commons, did not place the religious instruction of the country on a footing from which it could not be removed. Some religion or other *must* be taught; Mumbo-Jumboism, perhaps, in preference to none at all. Indeed, it was "a monstrous piece of tyranny on the part of the Government to insist upon the children being brought up under a system of Secularism." We quite agree with Sir John Gorst. It would be a monstrous piece of tyranny if the State forced Secularism upon the children. But when and where has it

been proposed to do anything of the kind? To confuse Secular Education with Secularism is either mental muddle or moral deception. Secularists do not want the State to patronise their opinions. They want the State to leave all opinions severely alone. And the only way to do this is to teach what all are agreed about. This is the basis of Secular Education.

Vyoyan Henry Moyle, the aged clergyman who has just been sentenced to eighteen months' hard labor for co-operating in a swindle with "Monte Carlo Wells," *alias* Davenport, was formerly sentenced to seven years' penal servitude for forgery—*after* which he was appointed to a curacy in Berkshire. It is said that the Bishop who appointed him knew all about his "trouble." We don't suppose the Rev. V. H. Moyle will get another curacy.

Prophet Baxter gives the world a new "tip." Antichrist, after all, is to be a Napoleon who will "make a religion of Socialism, and himself its god." This party will carry on high jinks till Christ comes and puts him down and starts the millennium. Good old Baxter! We should think him a crank if there were not so much method in his madness. He knows what pays in a land of fools.

We drew attention last week to a wonderful article in the *Southport Guardian* on the late George Jacob Holyoake. Of one statement in it we said that we did not believe a word. "Shortly before his death," the writer said, "Mr. Bradlaugh sent for Mr. Holyoake and made private amends to him for an act of injustice which Mr. Holyoake had suffered at his hands. But the public acknowledgment which was no less his due was never made." Fortunately this allegation was promptly denied by Charles Bradlaugh's daughter. Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner did this, not only through our columns, but in a brief decisive letter to the *Southport Guardian*.

Now it appears that the writer of that article is Mr. W. Ashton. We have not the honor of his acquaintance, and we should not be surprised if he is a Christian minister. Mr. Ashton has to write nearly a column of small type in answer to Mrs. Bonner's few lines. This in itself shows that he has no case. But let us see what he says. First, he admits that Mr. Bradlaugh did *not* send for Mr. Holyoake; it was a third party who brought the two together. And who was the third party? Mr. Josiah Gimson, of Leicester. Well, as Mr. Josiah Gimson died in 1883, this gives the quietus to the second part of the statement, namely, that the alleged interview between Holyoake and Bradlaugh took place shortly before the latter's death, which occurred in 1891. The third part of the statement is of pretty much the same character. Mr. Gimson took Holyoake to see Bradlaugh at the Bell Hotel, Leicester; and in the course of 'a pleasant unrestrained conversation' Bradlaugh said to Holyoake that "had he known what he had come to know, he had never said of me what he did." That is all, even as Holyoake related it; and as nobody knows exactly what it referred to it is hardly worth talking about. And the upshot is that Mr. Ashton's explanation hardly bears the slightest resemblance to Mr. Ashton's original statement.

We take leave of this Mr. Ashton by thanking him for the statement that a certain questionable pamphlet Holyoake wrote about Bradlaugh was "largely written during one of his visits" to Mr. Ashton at Southport. We quite understand, after this, that Mr. Ashton does not understand how anybody, not even Mrs. Bonner, could presume to doubt the accuracy of anything that Holyoake wrote—even when the subject was Bradlaugh. It is a touching spirit of faith. Mr. Ashton surely *must* be a Christian minister.

Various.

We have pleasure in reproducing the following letter, written by a friend of ours, from *The Recorder*, Ilford; and we commend it to the attention of Freethinkers who may be desirous of writing letters to their local papers, as a model of its kind:—

"RELIGIOUS" LITERATURE AT ILFORD LIBERAL CLUB.

"Sir,—I have the honor of being an original member of the Ilford Liberal Club; and, owing to the alterations which those in authority have made during the last year, members can read in quietude, smoke, and drink ginger ale, etc., in comfort, and enjoy a game of billiards in a splendid large room, elegantly fitted up.

But, Sir, thinking that members might sometimes like to turn their attention to what was passing in the world around

them, at the annual meeting of the Club, on the 25th ult., I moved a resolution, 'That members should be allowed to give to the Club any religious newspaper, periodical, or book; or any newspaper, periodical, or book, opposed to the popular theology, provided that they did so at their own cost, that such publications should lie on the table of the reading-room, or be placed in the library; and that I might present to the Club gratis, every month, a copy of *The Ilford Congregational Monthly*, a copy of the *Catholic Times*, and the *Freethinker* every week.' I asked that this resolution might be passed on the principle of civil and religious liberty, a principle dear to old Liberals. Our worthy president (Mr. Grimwood), Councillor Reynolds, and Mr. Norman Lang opposed the resolution. Mr. Grimwood said that a similar resolution was brought before the Club committee five months ago, that it caused a very acrimonious discussion, lasting two hours, and was then rejected. Councillor Reynolds begged the meeting not to pass the resolution, as by so doing they would cause the breaking up of the Club. Mr. Norman Lang said he was a total abstainer, but had refrained from asking that literature advocating the temperance cause should be admitted, on account of the bitterness it might cause. I am sorry to say that my resolution was rejected. I do not complain, for I would not on any account be the means of doing any injury to the Club, an institution which all who know it must believe to be a great addition to the attractions of Ilford, and useful to both old and young men.

The reason I am troubling you with this letter is to ask if you and any of your numerous readers can explain why the mere introduction of religious literature into the reading-room of a good club in Ilford should cause dissension and bitterness—considering that in Ilford we have about twelve different denominations of Christians and twenty places of worship.

R. T. NICHOLS."

Some paragraphs are devoted to this letter in the editorial part of the paper in which it appears. The editor is of opinion that the Liberal Club did wisely in refusing "sectarian literature." And for two reasons: first, because the Club is "not a religious institution"—second, because such literature in a club reading-room "does cause dissension and bitterness." Putting these two reasons together, we venture to suggest that the Ilford Liberal Club should allow only orthodox Liberal papers upon the reading-room table. The contents of all other papers must necessarily be more or less "sectarian" and debateable. And it appears that the Ilford Liberals cannot even *read* such things without quarreling with each other; which shows that they are not quite as civilised as they ought to be. We wish them a little more breadth of mind and equanimity.

Some of the London County Councillors returning from the visit to Paris were interviewed by the *Daily News*. Amongst them was Sir William Collins, who spoke in high praise of the Secondary Schools over there as being "far away ahead of ours." "Our friends across the Channel," the interviewer asked, "do not hinder education by a 'religious' difficulty, I think?" "No," replied Sir William, "they are ahead of us there. They teach no religion at all, but in place of it have moral instruction, in which they teach the great basic principles of good conduct, of rightness of life, and of character." It is curious that the very same morning the *Daily News* had a leading article on Education, in which it said that until "secular education coupled with moral instruction" was frankly accepted, there could never be "any permanent settlement of the education question." We are getting on—aren't we?

Referring to the Rev. F. Hibbert's statement that the Labor movement is largely indifferent, if not hostile, to organised Christianity, the *Newcastle Chronicle* says that if "the majority of the leaders of the new Labor movement are unbelievers" they "do not differ from many of their predecessors," as "a large number of Democratic leaders in the past have been Freethinkers."

Paul Laurence Dunbar, the negro poet, who is reported to have died at Dayton, Ohio, from consumption, at the all too early age of thirty-four, was one of those who were redeeming his much-afflicted race from the evil character fixed upon them by their white oppressors. Some of his poems displayed really fine gifts of feeling, imagination, and intelligence. He had also a delicate sense of humor, which shone most in his pieces written in the negro dialect. A few of his poems showed him to be a decided Freethinker.

The first chairman of the Labor party in the House of Commons is Mr. Keir Hardie. Mr. Hardie came from the bosom of a Freethought family. His father and mother were both members of the Glasgow Secular Society to the day of their death. Sturdier Secularists never lived. Mr. Hardie's family always held that he was still a Secularist himself, although he might think it impolitic to say so.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

March 4 and 11, Stanley Hall.
 April 1, Manchester; 8, Stratford Town Hall; 22 and 29, Queen's Hall.
 May 6, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—March 4, Glasgow; 11, Liverpool; 18, Liverpool; 25, Liverpool.
- RIDGWAY FUND.—B. L. 2s. J. Partridge (183 Vauxhall-road, Birmingham) also acknowledges: W. Kilminster 1s., W. T. Pitt 5s., Collected at Mr. Ward's lecture 7s.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance, secretary, acknowledges: Dr. R. T. Nichols £1.
- GEORGE JACOB.—Is such a "convert" worth troubling about?
- J. BROUGH.—Thanks for cuttings.
- ANTI-BIBLICAL.—Shall be sent as requested. Pleased to hear from you again.
- R. CLARKE.—We dare say the reverend gentleman is right, and that there are "low sneaks, liars, thieves, and lazy, boneless good-for-nothings" in his parish. Is there any Christian parish without them?
- H. B. SAMUELS.—We will try to get a good statement, as you suggest, re the new Church and State affair in France, for the benefit of our readers.
- R. W. ROSS.—All right.
- R. WATSON WILLIAMS.—Mr. H. G. Atkinson, who was a man of independent means, lived for many years at Boulogne, and died there at a ripe old age. Harriet Martineau may have inclined to Philosophical Atheism without grasping the conception that a Great First Cause is really a contradiction in terms.
- P. B. WILLIAMS.—We hope the social gathering at Porth was a success. These functions are useful, but it cannot be expected that a letter from Mr. Foote should be a feature of all of them. Whatever his wishes might be, he is far too busy to be able to write such letters except in very unusual cases. He will try to arrange a visit to South Wales presently.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- E. J. SHEA.—Thanks for the news, though a bit late. Your suggestion shall be considered. Do you mean that a hall could not be engaged in Cardiff for special Sunday lectures by Mr. Foote?
- WELL WISHER.—Glad to know you derive so much pleasure and advantage from reading the *Freethinker*. Your suggestions shall be borne in mind. This journal can be obtained at the bookshop in connection with the Secular Hall, Leicester.
- A. S.—Voltaire was not converted during a rough voyage at sea—nor in any other situation. We do not know the lecturer you mention.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—Sorry to hear that the *Birmingham Mail* refused to print the titles of Mr. Ward's lectures. But should you not temper the wind to the shorn lambs while you have the Town Hall battle on hand?
- L. DESTEFANIS.—George Jacob Holyoake was an Atheist—at least until he adopted the "Agnostic" label late in life; and, after all, he failed to show any real difference between the two terms. Whether he was an "aggressive" Atheist is a quarrel about an adjective.
- C. A. RING asks us whether it is true that Charles Bradlaugh died saying, "God forgive me for my sins." It is not true. Many lies have been told about Charles Bradlaugh. This is the latest.
- G. BROWNE.—Your letter was overlooked. Don't take so much trouble. When a reverend gentleman says that Thomas Paine, or any other *Freethinker*, was guilty of crimes or vices, ask him for his authority. That is the way to begin business.
- CERHUS.—Registered places of religious worship, exempted from rates and taxes, cannot legally be used for other purposes.
- A. C. MYERS.—Thanks; see paragraph elsewhere. Pleased to hear from you as a year-old reader of the *Freethinker* who looks forward every week to its arrival.
- F. S.—See paragraphs; thanks.
- 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.
- 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. 8d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

Another course of Sunday evening *Freethought* lectures has been arranged for at Stanley Hall, Junction-road, North London, during March. Mr. Foote will lead off on the first two Sundays, and will be followed by Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd. Full particulars will be advertised in next week's *Freethinker*. North London "saints" who will circulate

printed announcements of these lectures, in a small convenient form, should apply for same, personally or by post-card, to Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

Another course of Sunday evening lectures is being arranged for in the Stratford Town Hall during April. Mr. Foote will also take two Sunday evenings at Queen's Hall. All these meetings are under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited.

Mr. Lloyd had good meetings at Liverpool on Sunday, he was in capital form, and his lectures were warmly applauded. To-day (Feb. 18) the Branch platform will be occupied by Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, the late Charles Bradlaugh's daughter, and we hope there will be a big rally of the "saints" to greet her. Mr. G. Scott, of Glasgow, our esteemed contributor, lectures for the Branch on March 4, and ought to have a very hearty reception. Mr. Lloyd takes the three following Sundays, and we understand that Mr. Cohen will deliver some lectures in April. On the first Sunday in May the splendid Picton Hall has been engaged for a special lecture by Mr. Foote. These efforts necessitate financial help from outside, of which we shall have more to say presently. Meanwhile the Liverpool Branch is being well supported.

The Coventry Branch held a Concert and Dance in the Clarion Rooms, Broadgate, on Thursday, February 8. Councillor S. G. Poole acted as chairman and more than eighty members and friends attended. A capital program was carried through, special thanks being due to Mrs. Shaw, Mrs. Simpson, Mrs. Clarke, Miss Oliver, and Messrs. Hutt and Weston. The financial result, which was satisfactory, goes in aid of the Branch's lecture-fund.

Reynolds' makes amends in the following handsome fashion for the blunder to which we drew attention last week:—

"The death of Mr. Holyoake inundated us with a multitude of letters which we had not space to print. However, we must make room for one correction. In the special memoir written by our contributor, Mr. A. E. Fletcher, it was stated that Mr. G. J. Holyoake was the last man imprisoned in England for 'Atheism.' 'Nuda Veritas' writes to us, pointing out that Mr. Holyoake was imprisoned for 'blasphemy,' a different offence from the technically legal point of view. That was in 1842. Since then Thomas Pooley, Thomas Paterson, and Matilda Roalf, have been imprisoned for blasphemy. In 1883 George William Foote, the present editor of the *Freethinker*, was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment on a similar accusation. Mr. Foote's prison treatment was much more severe than that of Mr. Holyoake, as he was not allowed to see his friends, to order his own food, or to write letters."

Mr. W. T. Stead had a noticeable article on the "Religious Difficulty" in a recent number of the *Daily Chronicle*. Our readers will be glad to see his straightforward declaration in favor of Secular Education:—

"The way out which would deliver the opponents of denominationalism from the fatal mistake of establishing denominationalism as the State religion of our public elementary schools is clear enough. No 'religion' of any kind can be taught by the authority of a State composed of all 'religions.' State education must be secular. To levy rates and taxes for the payment of religious teaching of any kind, denominational or undenominational, involves the reimposition of Church rates. The Nonconformist has resented the imposition of a denominational Church rate by the organisation of passive resistance. The imposition of an undenominational Church rate would be resented by Anglicans, Catholics, and Agnostics, and if they took to passive resistance it would not lie in the mouths of Free Churchmen to blame them for bettering a good example. Undenominational religion is as sectarian to the sacerdotalist and the agnostic as Anglican and Roman religion is sectarian to the Free Churchman."

This is what we have been saying for twenty-five years, and we are delighted to see that it now has the powerful support of a publicist like Mr. Stead.

Mr. Stead goes on to plead for religious education nevertheless. But what he means by religion is "the embodiment in our lives of the highest ethical ideal which we are capable of conceiving." Well, we have no quarrel with that. And if Mr. Stead likes to call it religion—"what's in a name?" What he wants to see introduced is a good handbook of ethical teaching in "Character, Conduct, and Citizenship." And if we understand him rightly the Bible should only be used in the same way as "the Vedas, the 'Talmud, the Koran, Shakespeare, or John Ruskin.'" But in a Christian country (we think Mr. Stead would agree with us) the use of the Bible would have to be very carefully watched. This, indeed, is the difficulty attending its use in the schools. The teachers cannot regard it as impartially as they regard the other books mentioned by Mr. Stead.

Shelley, who had been expelled from Oxford for Atheism, printed 250 copies of *Queen Mab* in London in 1813. His name appeared on the title-page as author and printer. As the work of a boy of eighteen it was one of the most extraordinary productions in the whole range of English literature. Its philosophy was frankly Atheistic. About seventy copies were privately distributed. Shelley perhaps thought that, by avoiding formal publication, he and others escaped the peril of the Blasphemy Laws. During his later residence in Italy, when he was producing the riper fruits of his genius, *Queen Mab* was pirated and circulated widely in the interest of Freethought propaganda. This edition, while rare, is still to be met with; but the first edition, issued by Shelley himself, is of excessive rarity. A good copy fetched £166 under the hammer in 1903. A particularly fine copy, from the library of the late James A. Slater, will soon be sold by auction, and we shall be interested to see what it fetches. A copy with copious alterations, additions, etc., by Shelley himself, changed hands last year for some £350. What a change since Shelley's masterpiece fell almost still-born from the press! In less than a hundred years original copies of those neglected poems are realising scores of times their weight in gold. And the price is likely to rise instead of falling.

Monday's *Daily News* contained a number of articles by "distinguished persons" on the Education difficulty. A parson represented the "Anglican View," Dr. Clifford gave "The Free Church Case," the Hon. Charles Russell stated "The Catholic View," Mr. Phillip Snowden set forth "The Labor View," and Dr. Macnamara "The Teachers' View." What was left out was "The Parents and Children's View." We might also suggest that it is high time that the *Daily News* took its ostrich head out of the sands and recognised the existence of what it might at first be pleased to call "The Infidel View." For it is a positive fact that myriads of people in this country are absolutely opposed on principle to the teaching of any form of religion in schools they are taxed to maintain.

Mr. Phillip Snowden, however, plainly stated that the Labor party was pledged to Secular Education. He also observed that "To talk of 'simple religious teaching' or of 'the foundation principles of Christianity' as something about which everybody would agree is to talk nonsense." Finally, Mr. Snowden wrote: "There is no logical, and, what is more, there is no practical or possible, settlement of the education question but by the disestablishment of 'religious' teaching in our day schools, and leaving that work to the religious bodies, to do in their own way, according to their own beliefs, and at their own expense, in their own time."

Mr. Snowden said some pretty things about the Bible, but we charitably assume that they were only the coating for the pill he had to offer. We should be sorry to believe that he believes that a satisfactory "liberal education" is impossible without the Bible. Plato and Marcus Aurelius had at least as "liberal" an education as (say) Mr. Snowden;—and they owed nothing to the Bible. Strange, perhaps, but true all the same.

Personal.

A MAN who gives his whole life to Freethought has to pay the penalties. Twenty-two years ago I paid the penalty of imprisonment. I have paid many penalties since then, and I shall have to pay more before I die. And as far as I am personally concerned I do not complain. I count myself a soldier of Freethought, and I take rations, pay, and wounds as they come. I knew all that would happen to me when I began. But I am anxious to stave off the penalties from those I love.

Twelve months ago I thought the way was open to placing my boy where he could learn electrical engineering. That dream is now dissipated, and I am looking out for another opening. Of course I have not the money to pay the heavy premiums which are so often demanded. It occurs to me that there may be someone in the Freethought party who is both able and willing to give my boy a chance to learn the business for which I believe he is most adapted. He is turned sixteen and is anxious to start at once. Is there a Freethinker anywhere who can offer him an opportunity? I should value it more than anything done directly for myself.

G. W. FOOTE.

What is Truth?

TRUTH is a theme on which many variations have been written. Countless generations before Pilate propounded his famous unanswered and unanswerable conundrum man had eagerly pursued the elusive goddess Truth, and the pursuit still continues. In his search for the truth, man has traversed many a barren tract, pressed through many a thorny thicket, stumbled into and crawled out of many a quagmire, met and overthrown many a redoubtable champion of bigotry, superstition and persecution. The search for truth has been the *real* search for the Holy Grail. Has it been altogether a fruitless quest?

During the year which has lately closed Dr. Gregory Smith, M.A. has written—and John Murray, London, has published—a book under the title that heads this article. It is mainly a collection of essays (revised and re-cast we suppose) which have previously appeared in sundry magazines. The volume bears every evidence of its piece-meal composition. The chapters are disconnected and there is much irritating repetition. But it is interesting as embodying one of the numerous attempts being made at the present day to present a view of Christianity that shall be acceptable to the individual who finds the old orthodoxy impossible. This is not to say that Dr. Smith's view displays any originality. Like some other Christians whose writings we have perused he seems willing, at a pinch, to surrender everything to the scientist and the higher critic—everything but the "sublime" figure of Christ. Reliance on Jesus is the keynote of his religious philosophy. The unique, the incomparable, the inimitable personality of Christ is to him the all-sufficing witness of Christ's divinity. With "damnable iteration" he serves up the stale claptrap that never man spake as He spake, or lived as He lived. He harps on the impossibility of Christ having been "invented," as if Rationalist critics had no other explanation to offer of the existence and genesis of the Christ ideal. He maintains that in Christ's earthly life we have sufficient warrant for believing everything that superficially seems incredible in the Christian religion. Only believe in Christ and the rest is easy. No miracle is too stupendous to believe of such a phenomenal being as Jesus of Nazareth. His life and teaching are the supreme evidence of the truth of Christianity. Which is the sort of rant one is accustomed to from Little Bethel preachers, but scarcely expected from anyone who boasts M.A. and LL.D. after his name.

This position of Dr. Smith constitutes a simplification of the everlasting issue between Agnosticism and Christianity, and his attitude has all the boldness of simplicity. It practically means staking the case on a single throw of the dice. And that is always a hazardous proceeding. It is, of course, a common contention of Christian advocates that Christ never had and never can have a counterpart; that he is the one man absolutely without spot or blemish; that he forms the unapproachable model to humanity for all time. But few scholars have had the hardihood or the frankness to say that nothing else really matters but the personality and character of Jesus.

The weakness of Dr. Smith's position, and of the position of those who think with him, is that our actual knowledge of the life and character of Jesus is absolutely *nil*. We have no guarantee that the glorified image of the Son of God which fills the mind of the devout Christian has the slightest relation to facts. We do not know that the Jesus of Christian worship or even the figure dimly limned in the Gospel narratives is other than the creation of fond fancy. In the gospels themselves we have only the fragment of a life. Dr. Smith attempts to forestall this obvious criticism by remarking that as Owen or Cuvier could construct the extinct mammal from the foot only, or the thigh, so from what has been preserved in the gospel records it is easy to see the rest. That might be, could we be sure the gospel records gave us *facts*. The bone which an Owen or a Cuvier made the basis of a reconstructive process was at any rate a concrete

fact. Can as much be said for any incident in the four gospels? Reasoning by analogy requires to be handled with care. Not a few thinkers come to grief with it. And though, perhaps, the "silence and self-effacement" of Jesus for thirty years are "more eloquent than words," they may not tell the same story to us as to Dr. Gregory Smith.

The latter is most unfortunate in his analogies throughout. When he comes to deal with the mistakes and defects of the Bible (which faults he does not deny) he writes as follows:—

"Whenever this or that fault is alleged against the Bible it is because the standpoint of the observer is wrong. He is looking away from that which should rivet his gaze to what is accidental and extraneous, as a commander in a battle who allows himself to be diverted from his real attack by the feint of a cunning strategist."

On which one may remark that the commander in a battle who fails to lay his account with every conceivable feint or machination of the enemy is, to that extent, incapable for his responsible position. But is this attitude of suspicion the frame of mind in which we should approach the Bible? And if God's Word is full of snares and traps for the unwary, who put them there?

Dr. Smith's book is not a bulky volume—it extends to only a hundred and thirty pages—and the author has shed much of the old orthodoxy, yet the passages to which exception might be taken by us are fairly numerous. We welcome the sane confession that "no one who watches the onward progress of physical science will refuse to admit that the dependence of thought and emotion on the material organism, if not yet completely demonstrated, is far on the way to be." But Dr. Smith perversely regards Will power in man as something apart from "the mechanism of the body" (though we have no knowledge of a *dead* man having any Will save the one he leaves behind to be filed at Doctors Commons); something, that dominates thought and emotion or that can act contrary to both. His whole argument shows that the study of such an essay as that of John Anthony Collins on Freewill might do him some good.

So far from being independent of his thoughts and emotions, man's will, when brought into action, is but the static force of his thought and emotion converted into dynamic force. The action of any man's will in given circumstances is a consequent of his ruling thoughts and predominant emotions, always supposing that his will is not balked or hampered by external restrictions over which he has no control. We take leave to quote another passage from Dr. Smith as an example of the hopeless tangle into which even an educated Christian writer gets on the question of the freedom of the will. He says:—

"If the Will is only the result and product of causes which can be gauged, it will not be impossible to calculate beforehand what this result will be in any particular instance. Given, in the case of any person, the intellectual and emotive character, together with the external circumstances, the action, if there can be no interference from the Will, follows inevitably as a matter of calculation. The sum may be difficult, but it is not impossible. Given a knowledge of the laws which regulate cerebration, emotion, etc., as well as of the amount and tendency of the pressure on these from without, you shall be able to estimate adequately, if Will is eliminated, what any one shall do in any contingency. Is this so actually? The contrary is notorious. The wisest people do at times the most foolish things; the fool surprises those who know him by rising above the occasion; the prudent man upsets all his antecedents by a freakish indiscretion; those who are apt to yield evince unlooked-for obstinacy; natures timid and shrinking act heroically; the strong-minded and fearless betray irresolution."

Now one may accept every syllable of the foregoing extract without admitting that it affects the case for determinism a single iota. It is quite indisputable that we can predicate the action of any individual in given circumstances if we are able accurately to estimate the character of that individual and the motives which exercise a predominating influence over him. Given absolute knowledge of the individual and of all the circumstances of the case up to the

last moment of choice, and you can absolutely predict what the individual will choose to do. To know everything is to understand everything, and to foresee everything. The Christian believes that God knows everything that is to happen. How can the Christian account for God's prescience save on the supposition that having an absolute and comprehensive grasp of all that *has* happened and of all that is at present happening, the future, which is the inevitable outcome of all things precedent, is fully unfolded to his view. Man's insight and foresight operate in the same way, though on a necessarily limited scale. When man fails in his judgments and in his prophecies it is because his knowledge is fragmentary and incomplete. And when people do things that surprise us—things that seem to us contrary to their respective natures—what is this but a proof that we have *not* correctly gauged the characters of such people, or that we have overlooked, or been unconscious of, certain determining factors in the problem. Freedom of the Will is not established by the vagaries of individuals, however startling and unaccountable these vagaries may seem. A reason will be found for them if we search deep enough and long enough. A drunkard may become temperate; a sober, steady man may succumb to dissipation; a weak-minded individual may develop strength of character; a once strong-minded person may display vacillation of purpose. Any or all of these things may occur and have occurred, but never without a cause. And our ignorance of the cause in any particular instance is no justification for our ascribing the result to the exercise of man's Freewill.

The difficulties, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the Bible do not trouble Dr. Smith. He glances at some of them in passing, but his is a robust faith that is content to swallow them all until such time as "the shadows shall flee away." To him the supreme importance of the Bible is that it reveals Christ. This, of course, specially applies to the New Testament, for he is candid enough to admit it is not quite so obvious that the purpose of the pre-Christian portion of the Bible is primarily and essentially to declare Christ Jesus. With charming naivete, however, he adds that whoever approaches the Old Testament conscious of his own need of help to be freed from sin, can hardly fail to see Christ there more and more vividly as he ponders what is written. Which is equivalent to saying that if you look for a thing you will generally find it. Carlyle put the matter well in his own inimitable fashion when he said, "The eye sees that which it brings with it the power of seeing." It would puzzle anyone who had never heard of Christ or Christianity to discover either in the Old Testament. We mean, of course, in the *text* of the Old Testament, not the Old Testament in its modern guise, with voluminous notes and manufactured chapter-headings all combining to impart a meaning to the text never contemplated by the original writers. Dr. Gregory Smith is quite right in saying that to believe in Christ is everything. It has been so in this regard at any rate. People begin by believing in Christ and forthwith allow their pious imaginations to run riot. They see him prefigured and typified everywhere, not only in the Hebrew Scriptures but even in the literature, myth, and legend of the Pagan world. And we have Dr. Smith's word for it that even where the so-called Old Testament types of Christ may seem far-fetched we have only to gaze with sufficient earnestness and discernment and we will recognise—the resemblance we are in search of. Which seems highly probable. But is this the way to find out what is truth?

It may appear to some that the sentence we have quoted from Carlyle is one of those dangerous weapons, a two-edged sword. Freethinkers *also* may be guilty of seeing only what they wish to see. And we would be the last to suggest that in the search for Truth Freethinkers have no need to guard against personal prejudice. There is one broad distinction, however, between the Freethinker and the Christian. While the former persistently seeks for a natural explanation of puzzling phenomena whether in the moral or

the material sphere, the latter prefers a supernatural explanation of what perplexes him, even when, as is often the case, a natural explanation is forthcoming. Now it seems a perfectly sound philosophy which says that not until every conceivable natural hypothesis has been exhausted need we call in the aid of that which is above, or outside, or beyond, or apart, from nature. And the possibilities of nature are not within measurable distance of exhaustion.

G. SCOTT.

Woman and the Bible.

IN the present day the clergy and their friends say but little, comparatively speaking, of their dogmas, but much respecting the alleged benefits their religion has bestowed upon mankind; and they most especially parade the pretence that their trade and stock-in-trade have elevated woman. Sometimes Freethinkers appear to me disposed to accord them too much, to almost admit that Christianity has really benefited the world to a great extent, though by no means half as much so as those who run the holy trade pretend. I will not at present go into the general question, but confine my remarks to the case of woman.

When I say that in the Bible the woman has no status at all; that she is owned by father, brother, or husband as fully as a cow or an ass; that she can never claim a divorce for herself, nor legally resist her husband when he resolves to divorce her; that she has no legal right to dispose of herself even in marriage or to refuse a husband chosen for her by father or brother; that she is never treated or considered as a person, with a will or choice of her own—when all this is stated it is at once seen that woman cannot be further degraded than the Bible already degrades her.

The Bible opens badly upon the woman question; at least, the second chapter of Genesis represents her as no part of the original creation-plan, but as an after-thought, a being whose office, or even existence, was not so much as anticipated until the lord of creation felt miserable and knew not what he wanted. The woman was not made for any personal end of hers, but merely as a "help-meet" for Adam. His wants alone were consulted, hers were never thought of. As the Bible boasts, the man was not "created for the woman, but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. xi. 9). This insolent position is taken up from end to end of the Bible; it is not discussed, the male authors of the book everywhere assume it as a principle beyond all question; and the entire Bible is perfectly consistent therewith. Courtship, erotic romance, love (except in its grossest sense) is absolutely absent from the Bible. There is no love-song (except the beastly "Song of Solomon," in which the girl is a slave who, in a sensuous way, is enamored of her future owner, who probably has many wives already). The race that produced the Bible was not deficient in sensuousness, but it never could have produced a little finger of Romeo or a curl of Juliet. Woman is not a woman in the Bible; its writers and its Gods no more understood her than they did modern physics or our highest mathematics. So far does the anti-feminine feeling carry the Bible writers that there is not so much as one woman exhibited in the book with whom a decent man could fall in love. Grace, dignity, charm, or attractiveness they have none. There is not a woman in the Bible whom you would like for mother, sister, or wife, and only one—noble Rizpah (2 Sam. xxi. 10)—you would like as a nurse.

Nor is that all. The woman is always in fault. She first had dealings with the Devil who induced her to eat the forbidden fruit, and thus "brought death into the world and all our woe." Women were the only human beings whose evil courses brought Noah's fabled flood upon the world. Lot's daughters, not "righteous Lot," were solely to blame for what occurred in the cave—they were women.

It was Sarah who tempted holy Abraham with Hagar. It was the woman who prompted Jacob to bamboozle his blind father and cheat his brother. The holy Judah was tempted and ensnared by Tamar; and poor Joseph was the victim of Mrs. Potiphar. And here I cannot refrain from noting, so vile is woman made to appear in the Bible, that not one of the sex ever had modesty or self-respect enough to say no. The sole exception is the case of poor Tamar when assaulted by her own brother. The only spark of modesty apparent in the whole Bible is exhibited by a man who is solicited by a woman! Sex-virtue is otherwise unknown between its covers. The woman has none of it, and as for modesty, no one mentioned in the book ever dreamt that such a sentiment was needed. The woman does not defile herself by adultery, but the man is defiled by her (Levit. xviii. 20).

Those who credit the Bible with elevating woman should read carefully Numbers v. 11 to 31. There the Lord legislates for a jealous husband (the Lord being himself the essence of jealousy). The woman supposed guilty is quite innocent, but her god-like husband and owner condescends to suspect her of the worst. He has not the shadow of fact, proof, or evidence to offer, but, like the Lord, he is jealous, and resolves upon a thorough investigation. The savage brings his wife to the savage priest, who is instructed by his savage God. The priest—well, the reader had better turn up the Bible itself and see how gloriously divine revelation elevates woman. How the Lord reveals to Moses the savage and magical processes by which a guilty woman might be proved guilty as per a recipe drawn from savage lore of extreme antiquity and vogue even then. And if something infinitely better than revelation had not civilised men we should still subject women to the same horrible and holy process.

Nor is this the worst content of the Bible. In that book the woman's chief function in nature is so filthy that she must be purified by the priest (!) before she is fit to re-enter decent society—that is, after being guilty of giving birth to a child. Yes, if she dare to produce a boy—so saith the Lord—she is unclean for seven days; and she must atone for her sin by giving the priest a lamb, a young pigeon, or a turtle dove. Ay!—and, pray, mark it—if a woman should be so audacious as to give birth to a female baby, she is unclean for fourteen days! A girl baby pollutes the mother exactly twice as much as a boy. Who after that can doubt that the Bible is the elevator of woman? (see Levit. xii.). To be a father is honorable—God is a father; but to become a mother is so polluting that neither Lord nor saint can endure the sight or scent of the offender until she has been properly and religiously fumigated. And—can it be believed?—this savage horror is perpetuated in the Common Prayer Book, and mothers have still to atone for their sin by being "churched" after childbirth. The Methodists used limpingly to follow the Act of Parliament Church in this particular.

The Bible writers never dreamt that they were making Ruth or Esther odious by what they say of them. The former solicits Boaz, the latter prostitutes herself, and competes with other girls in that course, in order to become a queen. Still, Christians name their daughters Ruth, and Esther! Holy taste is remarkable. God made Solomon so insanely wise that he collected for himself 1,000 women, and that was his glory. No fault was found with the king until he took to himself heretic or unorthodox woman. His wholesale debauchery was nothing, but the Lord could not endure a worshiper of a rival god.

So vilely did the Lord think of women in Bible times, that is, in the days of his greatest glory, that he speaketh as follows unto David: "I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom.....and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun" (2 Samuel xii. 8 to 11). The "neighbor," in this case, turned

out to be David's son Absalom! (2 Sam. xvi. 20 to 23). The less comment the better perhaps; though one cannot help remarking that that was one way the Lord had of elevating woman. He passes them from man to man, as the fit takes him, never deeming it necessary to consult the woman. Cattle were never treated worse. But, "it is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good"—so saith every pious fool.

The New Testament is no improvement upon the Old regarding the status of woman. The very pretence that Jesus was born of a virgin (which the Luke gospel denies in detail) is a beastly slur upon honest wifehood and motherhood. Here, as in the Old Testament, the wife's and mother's function in life are vile and to be avoided where possible. Better, says Christ, to mutilate yourself than become husband or father (Matt. xix. 9 to 12. Leave your wives, said he to his disciples; ay, to be my disciple you must HATE parents, wives, children, etc. (Luke xiv. 26). Bah! if the Christ—had he been historical—had but loved some nice girl and married her, he might never have been the vagrant loafer he became, and would probably never have mounted the cross. But he misunderstood the best portion of that humanity they pretend he came to save, and did much to damn the race by doing his best to plunge woman to the lowest depths of degradation.

Whoever wrote the epistles called Paul's was a woman-bating fool, who said she was enough to tempt the angels if her head should be uncovered in church (1 Cor. xi. 10); who declared a widow could not marry again till she was wanton; who bade women keep silence in church and to learn from their husbands. What a barbarian!

As to the churches, in them woman is worse than damned. For a woman to go inside the communion rail in a church is a positive profanation of that holy place! In Popery the highest position for woman is one in which she must treat her nature as a sink of pollution. No woman (except an "old woman") may be pope, bishop, or priest; and the Anglican sect is but a trifle less vile.

Lastly. In no place, among no set of men has woman been worse treated than by Bible writers and the Christian clergy. Even prostitution, in all its worst features, is a fruit of the Christian tree and is confined to Christendom and the sphere of Christian influence.

When women understand the Bible and Christianity and have once opened their eyes to the condition in which their religion places them they will assert their independence. And where woman is independent Bible and Christianity and priests will no longer be tolerated. Our only hope lies in the emancipation of woman, in giving her full opportunity to be equal or superior to man.

JOS. SYMES.

Cheltenham, Victoria, Australia.

Obituary.

THE Scarborough *Evening News* reports the death of Mr. R. Murgatroyd, who appears to have been a moderately successful business man and a well-known local character. In a long obituary notice, extending to nearly two columns of small type, the *News* says that he "had a high standard of justice and probity, and his sympathy always went out to the oppressed." Prominence is given to the fact that he was an open Secularist, and a personal friend of George Jacob Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh. He attended Charles Bradlaugh's funeral, and was much distressed by that great man's death. Some nine months ago he left a letter with the editor of the *Evening News*, requesting that it should be published on the day of his death—which was done. In this letter he protested against the burial of Freethought friends of his with religious ceremonies. Such "meddling" was unfair. My burial, he said, must be Secular or nothing; and "in order to secure this object I ask that this shall be made public on the day of my death." Mr. Murgatroyd was seventy-nine years of age.

Correspondence.

THE BRADLAUGH-HOLYOAKE MATTER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A marked copy of your issue of Feb. 11 has been forwarded to me, in which I note that in your "Acid Drops" you give the *Southport Guardian* an advertisement, and against all the ethics of journalism attack a paper when you are finding fault with a signed article published in its columns. The article to which you take exception was signed with the initials of a contributor well known to our readers; indeed, we expressly mentioned him by name in an editorial reference to the second portion of his article in our issue of Jan. 31. Hence your remarks calling upon the *Southport Guardian* to defend its honor by giving the name of the writer are entirely beside the point, and in common fairness ought to be withdrawn. Especially should this be done in view of the fact that we have given equal publicity to Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's letter of repudiation, which we inserted in our next issue immediately after its receipt. I enclose marked copies herewith.

FRED. RILEY.

[We insert this letter in full, as the fairest and most satisfactory way of dealing with it. But we are really unable to understand the writer's indignation. Not being a regular reader of his paper, we could only judge by the marked copy sent us. It was impossible for us to know that the author of the article we criticised so severely was Mr. W. Ashton. We have now to ask *who* he is, and by what right he claims to know of the alleged private interview between Holyoake and Bradlaugh. For the rest, we cheerfully admit that the *Southport Guardian* promptly inserted Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's denial of this alleged interview. And we are glad that it was our own action which led to this malicious absurdity being so decisively refuted.—EDITOR.]

A LIBEL ON MONTREAL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I must enter a protest against the libel on Montreal, by one who does not want his name published, in your issue of January 7. I have been in Montreal twenty years, and I can assure some of those who malign us that there is more real liberty in Montreal than any other city of its size in Europe or America. In the French Catholic section of the city a large amusement resort is open every Sunday, summer and winter. As a Freethinker, born and brought up a very strict Presbyterian, I can assure my friend that I would much prefer living in Montreal than in either Glasgow or Toronto, for in both of these places my liberty would be restricted on Sunday, which it is not in the French Catholic end of Montreal.

NORMAN MURRAY.

TESTING OUR GODS.

A poor man, in our day, has many gods foisted on him; and big voices bid him, "Worship, or be —!" in a menacing and confusing manner. What shall he do? By far the greater part of said gods, current in the public, whether canonised by Pope or Populus, are mere dumb Apises and beatified Prize-oxen; nay some of them, who have articulate faculty, are devils instead of gods. A poor man that would save his soul alive is reduced to the sad necessity of sharply trying his gods whether they are divine or not; which is a terrible pass for mankind, and lays an awful problem upon each man. The man must do it, however. At his own peril he will have to do this problem too, which is one of the awfulest; and his neighbors, all but a most select portion of them, portion generally *not* clad in official tiaras, can be of next to no help to him in it, nay rather will infinitely hinder him in it, as matters go.—*Carlyle*, "Latter-Day Pamphlets."

O God, Lord God of thy priests, rise up now and show thyself God.

They cry out, thine elect, thine aspirants to heavenward, whose faith is as flame;

O thou the Lord God of our tyrants, they call thee, their God, by their name.

By thy name that in hell-fire was written, and burned at the point of thy sword,

Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten; thy death is upon thee, O Lord.

And the love-song of earth as thou diest resounds through the wind of her wings—

Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things.

—*Swinburne*, "Hymn of Man."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, H. E. Dodson, "Open Letter to the Clergy of all Denominations."

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

COUNTRY.

FAIRSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, F. B. Grundy's Concert Party.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): Joseph McCabe, 12 (noon), "The remaining conflict of Science and Religion"; 6.30, "Our Prehistoric Ancestors, II, The dawn of Art and Religion," with Lime-light Illustrations.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): 7, "At Home." Monday, Feb. 19, at 8, B. H. Shaw, "Labor Representation."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, 3, "Morality Without Religion"; 7, "Religious Intolerance."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints'): 6.30, L. Marsden Walter, "Esperanto," the New Universal Language.

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, Feb. 22, at 8, J. W. Wakinslaw, "The Licensing Question."

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, E. J. Shea, "The Wherefore of Existence."

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

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