

# THE Freethinker

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*One hour in the execution of justice is worth seventy years of prayer.*—MOHAMMEDAN PROVERB.

## The Freethought Attack.

No one, said Anthony Collins, doubted the existence of a God until the Boyle lecturers began to prove it. Historically, the statement is accurate; but its inaccuracy may be forgiven for the sake of the general truth it expresses. For it is certain that among the causes of the growth of unbelief apologies in favor of Christianity rank high. If for no other reason, because mere existence of a defence of Christianity advertises the fact that there are some who do not believe. And the doubt, of which the existence is thus advertised, is likely to become implanted in other minds when the defences are studied in detail. So many weaknesses must be exposed, so many admissions made, and so many fresh interpretations attempted, that the sense of security is destroyed, and the way is at least prepared for a rejection of beliefs that have hitherto been looked upon as unquestionable. Religious apologetics, it may safely be said, convince none who do not already believe. They may reassure some, or retard the enfranchisement of others; but they convert no one. And meanwhile the Freethought attack goes on developing in accuracy and in deadliness.

It is probably this feeling of the hopelessness of these defences of the faith that is responsible for the way in which Christian writers deal with Freethought attacks. The favorite policy is, of course, to ignore them, and by a rigorous boycott protect Christians from their influence. But when this cannot be done another method is to sneer at them as being weak, old-fashioned, and generally ineffective. A religious contemporary, for instance, declares that present-day attacks on Christianity are far less formidable than they were a century or so ago. "Voltaire, Bolingbroke, Hume, and Paine were colossal dialecticians of disbelief." But "their campaigns were triumphantly followed by the missions of Whitfield and Wesley, and a splendid revival of Evangelicalism laid Rationalism in the dust. No greater success rewarded the attempts of sceptics led in the last century by Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, to erect an icy barrier against the current of popular faith. Agnosticism, whether of the Huxleyan or the Spencerian type—the scientific or the metaphysical—fell flat, with all its cultured polish, on the minds of the masses."

I should be loath to say that the attacks on Christian belief by the eighteenth century Deists were not formidable; but it is to lose all sense of historical proportion to say that they were more so than current criticism, or that the present criticism is weaker because it no longer follows the old lines. The best work of the Deists constituted a really powerful, and a successful, attack on Christian belief, and its popularisation by Paine formed a fitting close to a century of critical work carried on in the face of tremendous difficulties. But the success of the attack was the condition of its modification. As old beliefs were discarded or modified, the attack became modified accordingly; and if Freethinkers no longer fight with precisely the same

weapons it is because, first, precisely the same beliefs no longer exist, and, second, because more recent thought has furnished Freethinkers with far more powerful weapons. It is true, for instance, that the attack on the Bible does not bulk so largely in Freethought criticism as it did when Paine wrote. It is still there, and still of use among the less developed section of the Christian public; but other things have to-day assumed a greater importance. But the old attack is not so prominent for the simple reason that the old view of the Bible is no longer held. All the substantial points of Paine's criticism are now conceded by intelligent and educated Christians. It took a deal of fighting to bring them to this point; but they have reached it at last, and their position is an admission of the soundness and the success of the old Freethought attack.

Moreover, the main points of the eighteenth century attack was directed against the Christian theology. Fundamental religious ideas, God and a future life, were left intact. But the principle noted at the outset operated here. People who were induced to doubt one set of beliefs were insensibly led to question others; and the very criticism of the Christian Deity led to a discussion of the general belief in God. In this respect no single book, perhaps, did more to rid Freethought of its swaddling clothes than Butler's *Analogy*. Butler's work was a very powerful piece of pleading as regards the controversy between Deist and Christian. But its power did not stop there. As was said, it suggested more doubt than it removed, and the fact that Freethought that went into the fight Deistic emerged Atheistic was in part, at least, due to Bishop Butler's work.

Freethought to-day, therefore, not only questions all that the Freethinkers of a hundred years ago questioned, but a great deal more. It challenges the fundamentals of religious belief, and by doing so can afford to place in the background many of the questions that were once to the fore. And it is of infinite importance to bear in mind that the attack is conducted from a new and stronger standpoint. Modern science has placed in the hands of Freethinkers weapons that our forerunners necessarily lacked. It is no longer a question of discussing whether certain views of a Deity are ennobling or degrading, but whether the conception of a Deity is or is not a wholly illegitimate one. Nor is it entirely a question for debating the reasons for or against the existence of a God. For the whole question has been lifted above this by what we know of the evolution of the God-idea. It admits of little question nowadays that both the conception of a God and a future life had their origin in the ignorance of primitive man. Had our earliest ancestors been possessed of the knowledge of nature that we have, it is certain that the idea of a supernatural agency ruling nature would never have existed. Being what they were, having to acquire knowledge by slow experience and infinite guessing, the gods were born, and their whole development—in its main stages, at least—now lies before all who care to make an intelligent acquaintance therewith.

It is from this higher vantage ground that Christianity is now being fought; and although the attack may be, in a sense, more restrained, it is more solid and infinitely more deadly.

The same transformation has taken place in relation to the existence of Christianity as a historic phenomenon. The growth of Christianity, of which so much is made by the apologist, offers nothing perplexing to the modern Freethinker. There is nothing in it that is inexplicable, only problems of social states and intellectual conditions. The Freethinker traces the existence of all the Christian doctrinal ideas in pre-Christian times. He sees how the practical tolerance of the Roman Empire gave to the various creeds the opportunity of struggle, while the prevailing social conditions gave to superstition an occasion of ascendancy. He sees further that a synthesis being inevitable, Christianity, thanks again to political and social conditions, emerged as that synthesis. He sees nothing perplexing in all this, nothing to suggest the supernatural, but, given the conditions, Christianity emerges as an inevitable result. All the details of the process we may not be acquainted with, but the main lines are clear. And although precise knowledge of all the steps may be wanting, there can be no doubt that the rise and development of Christianity is a question substantially on all fours with the rise of mormonism.

Moreover, a scientific study of the origin and development of Christianity, at the same time that it gives the conditions of its rise, gives the conditions and the inevitability of its decay. The intellectual atmosphere, of which the supernatural formed a normal part, no longer exists. People then believed in the supernatural because they were, so to speak, born to it. Today they disbelieve in the supernatural because there is little in their environment that supports its credibility. Throughout the Roman Empire Christianity could appeal to large numbers with nothing stronger to fight against than attachment to another superstition of a substantially identical kind. The same phenomenon is to be seen to-day in the development of certain religious fads, which selects at once almost all of a certain type of mind, and then remains stationary or decays. But under present conditions Christianity can only appeal to those who are influenced most by custom and to a mental type that is manifestly on the decline. Naturally the decline is a slow one, although now proceeding with comparative rapidity. Still habits are not outgrown in a day, nor is a fairly prevalent type suppressed in a generation. It is enough for the scientific Freethinker to note that Christianity appeals to a relatively smaller number, generation by generation, and to recognise in this the promise of its ultimate disappearance as a factor of importance.

On the social side, there is the same promise of Freethought's ultimate triumph. Whatever are the evils of modern industrialism in some directions, it has certainly had one good effect. It has familiarised whole classes of men with a sense of causation as perhaps nothing else could. Their daily employment has divested their lives of all the encouragements to a belief in supernaturalism and hap-hazard happenings. Definite labor for definite results is the keynote of their occupations, and this must have had an enormous influence in creating a pre-disposition to reject the supernatural. Much has been said of the rise of a Labor Party in the new Parliament, but there is one aspect that has not been noted. The Parliamentary Labor Party represents, not only a group of men, the majority of whom recognise in organised priesthoods the hereditary friends of vested interests and the enemies of social progress, but who are convinced that human welfare is so far determined by natural, knowable, and controllable forces, that prosperity is well within the compass of combined and intelligently directed effort. And if this means nothing else it means the ultimate banishment of supernaturalism from sociology as it has been already banished from the exact sciences.

C. COHEN.

If I am to listen to another person's opinions they must be expressed in plain terms. There is quite enough that is problematical in my own mind.—Goethe.

## The Atheist Shoemaker—IV.

### XVI.

THE case against the Atheist Shoemaker story was complete and overwhelming. I followed the track of Charles Alfred Gibson from childhood to the day of his death. I took the testimony of all sorts of persons who knew him—his father, his brothers, his shopmates, and his landlady; they all denied that he had been a lecturer, and not one of them ever heard that he was an Atheist.

Now in my original pamphlet—*A Lie in Five Chapters?*—I had pointed out, not only that Mr. Hughes's principal statements as to the career of his "convert" were demonstrably false, but also that his narrative bore internal marks of its imaginative character. Mr. Holyoake, in his report, referred to the "brilliant coloring" of the Atheist Shoemaker story. This was, of course, a polite way of stating that the narrative had been "worked up" for Christian consumption. The Americans would call it "faked." Even the filial piety of Miss Hughes is compelled to make a certain qualification. She states that the result of Mr. Holyoake's investigation was "entirely favorable" to her father—as it was undoubtedly meant to be; yet she perceives the necessity of adding that Mr. Holyoake considered that her father had described "that last struggle"—meaning the "convert's" rejection of Atheism and acceptance of Christianity—in "a way that might be expected of him" as "a Celt and an ardent Christian."

Surely good phrases were ever commendable. "A Celt and an ardent Christian" is a graceful and considerate circumlocution for a very short and emphatic English word which occurs with considerable frequency in the Bible.

Mr. Hughes, as far as I could make out from his own story and the relation of other persons, only met Charles Alfred Gibson once. It was on the occasion of his visiting the "convert's" lodgings to administer the sacrament. Yet the Atheist Shoemaker story is full of minute details of incident and conversation, although the writer neither saw nor heard the things he described so precisely.

Let us take a supreme illustration. I have said that Charles Alfred Gibson died at Sidmouth in Devonshire. Mr. Hughes was not present; the Wesleyan "Sisters" who figure so much in the story were not present; and Mr. Hughes must have got his information from Julia or the Devil. All his knowledge, therefore, was hearsay. But see how he went to work in the composition of that "true narrative." He devoted several pages to a novel-like account of "Herbert's" death. There were a host of death-chamber touches that must, in the circumstances, have been purely imaginary. And when the curtain had to be rung down over "Herbert's" death-bed, it was led up to by the following description of his final moments:—

"He lay there for a long time so still that the watchers began to think that they would never hear his voice again. But he was yet to speak, and to speak a sentence which was destined to be read in every land in which the English language is spoken.

"He was evidently gathering his ebbing strength together for a great final effort.

"His hand tightened. He opened his lips; and in startling contrast with his previous whisper, in clear, ringing, exulting tones, he exclaimed:

"Tell Sister Beatrice and the Sisters that now when I have come to the end I fear no evil, for God is with me."

When a scene like that is described so minutely, a sensible reader is satisfied of one of two things; either that the writer saw and heard what he describes, or that he is exercising his imagination as a fictionist. And when a sensible reader knows that Mr. Hughes was not present when Charles Alfred Gibson expired, he will also know which of these alternatives he must accept.

## XVII.

"Sister Beatrice" was a double mystification. She was really Sister Lily of the West London Mission. And I was able to publish the fact that her actual name was Miss Lily Dewhurst. She played an important part in the Atheist Shoemaker story. Mr. Hughes appears to have accepted all that she told him as gospel; and she appears to have accepted all that Julia told her as gospel; and Julia—well, she must have done something more than kiss the Blarney Stone, she must have brought it to England with her and osculated it daily.

Mr. Hughes said that "Herbert's" last words were a "touching tribute" to Sister Beatrice who "led him to Christ." And the touching tribute reached her ears through the lips of Julia, who had her own reasons for keeping in Miss Dewhurst's good graces. But when Julia went to Northampton, as she did promptly after going from Sidmouth to London to tell of her husband's death, she told the Gibsons that her husband's last words were: "Go to Steve, he will look after you." "Steve" was Stephen Henry Gibson, a soldier just invalided home from India. But the fact that he was coming home from India was not known to his dead brother. Julia, therefore, made up the "last words" relating to "Steve." She had a reason for it, into which I need not enter. And as she had as good a reason for making up some "last words" relating to Sister Beatrice, I believe with the Gibsons that she made up those too.

But these facts and inferences do not exculpate Mr. Hughes. He took the full responsibility when he wrote and published the Atheist Shoemaker story. The only real name he gave was his own. Upon him, therefore, rests the whole credit or guilt of the performance.

## XVIII.

When the reverend author of the Atheist Shoemaker story saw that the game was up, he looked round for the safest line of retreat. His movement was serpentine. It was the same movement with which he evaded Bradlaugh's questions. In the *Methodist Times* of February 27, 1890—having been stung by a leaderette in the *Daily Chronicle*, the "motive and animus" of which he complained of—Mr. Hughes felt it necessary to say something, and this is what he said:—

"We are at a loss to understand what right either Mr. Bradlaugh or the Secretary of the National Secular Society has to demand the name of 'The Atheist Shoemaker,' which is suppressed for the reason given in the preface of the book. The narrative makes no attack whatever, either on Mr. Bradlaugh or on the National Secular Society. The Secretary of that Society says no professional Atheist lecturer in London has died during the last ten years in the way described in 'The Atheist Shoemaker.' Mr. Price Hughes never said that 'The Atheist Shoemaker' was a professional lecturer of the National Secular Society. He simply said that he had spoken in advocacy of Atheism in public halls and in the open air, and that he had spoken with great eloquence and effect."

This paragraph was both insolent and disingenuous. Mr. Hughes introduced Bradlaugh's name in the book, and when Bradlaugh asked for particulars Mr. Hughes called his request a "demand" and treated it as impertinent. The question whether the Atheist Shoemaker belonged to the National Secular Society had not been raised. The real question was whether he could have spoken to big audiences in London "with great eloquence and effect" without being known to the officials, and even to the rank and file, of the National Secular Society, which was the only Freethought organisation then existing in the metropolis. And this question was cunningly evaded.

Mr. Hughes's policy was to go on minimising the importance of his convert. "My convert," he said in substance, "was not what you say he was." This policy was continued after my drastic exposure of the whole story. Having begun by replying that he had never represented his convert as a lecturer for

the National Secular Society, he ended by declaring that he had never represented him as a "lecturer" at all. He made this declaration—not in the *Methodist Times*, where he thought discretion had become by far the better part of valor—but to a *Morning* interviewer, and he added that I had destroyed a man of straw.

## XIX.

It is perfectly true that Mr. Hughes had not called "John Herbert" a lecturer. But it is equally true that a man who charges another with theft might maintain that he has not called him a thief. Mr. Hughes represented his convert as more than a lecturer. He called him an "orator." And it was really on the mere distinction between such terms that he tried to sail away from his public responsibility.

Mr. Hughes did more than call his convert an orator. He spoke of him as a familiar figure at the Hall of Science—and the Hall of Science was the headquarters of the National Secular Society, with Charles Bradlaugh as its presiding genius. To say that his convert was well-known there, and then to say that he might not have been known to Bradlaugh and all the leading people about the place, was sheer silliness; and no public man could have been guilty of it if he had not felt that his clients were gifted with a bottomless credulity.

The Atheist Shoemaker spoke "amidst continuous cheering" in Victoria Park; he was used to addressing "Atheistic assemblies"; he advocated Atheism "in public halls and in the open air, with great eloquence and effect"; he experienced "the exulting glow of the orator who had conquered his audience." Atheists used to talk of getting up a debate between him and Bradlaugh (God knows on what), but they could never manage it. "Ah," said one of them to Mr. Hughes, "it would have been a fine game if we could have made these two argue with each other. Many of us thought that Herbert would get the best of it." During the process of his conversion "Herbert" had a long wrestle with the Devil, who reminded him of "What you used to say in the Hall of Science." Nor was that all. Mr. Hughes himself introduced what might almost be called the Bradlaugh establishment. "It seemed to us," he wrote, "of such immense importance that he should himself go to his old workshop, and to the Hall of Science, and to Clerkenwell Green, and to all his former haunts, and with his own lips tell the story of his conversion."

Now if this did not mean that "Herbert" had been an orator of Atheism at the Hall of Science, we might as well accept the cynical theory that language was given to man to conceal his thoughts. And if the Hall of Science lecturers, and the Hall of Science officials, and the Hall of Science frequenters, all asserted that "John Herbert" was utterly unknown there, an honest man in Mr. Hughes's position would have concluded that there was a mistake somewhere, and decided to make a satisfactory investigation. That is what an honorable man would have done; but Mr. Hughes did not do it; and every reader can complete the syllogism for himself.

The Atheist Shoemaker did not go to his old workshop and tell the story of his conversion. But I went there and told it, and his shopmates laughed at it. The Atheist Shoemaker did not go to the Hall of Science and tell the story of his conversion. But I went there and told it, and the audience laughed at it. I took the Atheist Shoemaker's family there, and they denounced the story of his conversion as a "damnable lie."

I think my present-day readers will agree with me that the figure cut by Mr. Hughes was positively ignominious. All he could say, when I tore his "true narrative" to shreds; all he could say, when I had demonstrated that his eloquent Atheistic orator was an imaginary character—was that I had destroyed a man of straw. It was true—I had—and the man of straw was "The Atheist Shoemaker."

## XX.

Once more I ask my readers to bear in mind that not a whisper of all that happened after the publication of Mr. Holyoake's report was allowed to reach the readers of the *Methodist Times*. They were kept in absolute ignorance, as far as Mr. Hughes could keep them so. Naturally he was afraid of the facts. He could not prevent my spreading them abroad, but he could take precautions against his Methodist dupes being gratuitously undeceived. That was his first line of strategy, and his second was worthy of it. The book which contained such an invaluable "true narrative"—the book which was to be so powerful in the saving of souls—the book which was to be instrumental in bringing even unbelievers to Christ—the book which contained the dying words of a converted Atheist that were "destined to be read in every land in which the English language is spoken"—this book was withdrawn from circulation, and from that day to this it has never been obtainable for love or money, except in a second-hand bookshop.

## XXI.

My exposure of the Atheist Shoemaker story killed Mr. Hughes's book. That was a sufficient triumph. But I was not quite satisfied. I resolved to make a last effort to corner the reverend gentleman. I scarcely hoped to succeed, but I felt that the effort would be one more proof of my *bonâ fides* and one more nail in the coffin of Mr. Hughes's veracity.

I wrote a letter to the *Daily Chronicle*, which had taken some interest in the Atheist Shoemaker controversy. It was then edited by Mr. E. A. Fletcher, who at least conducted it honorably, and resigned his post some time afterwards sooner than sacrifice a shred of his independence. I proposed a Committee of Honor, consisting of two members nominated by Mr. Hughes and two by myself, with a fifth agreed upon by both sides to act as chairman and umpire. And I pledged myself to prove before such a Committee of Honor that the "John Herbert" of Mr. Hughes's story was Charles Alfred Gibson—that everything was false which Mr. Hughes stated about the young man's early training and privations—that there were many similar inaccuracies and exaggerations in the narrative—that Charles Alfred Gibson was never a lecturer on Atheism, or even against Christianity—that he was never a lecturer at all—that he was never an Atheist or any kind of Freethinker—that he had been in the Salvation Army and the Church Army—that he had no "Atheist brother" at Northampton to be converted to Christianity—that the brother referred to had always been a Christian, and had never held any communication whatever with Mr. Hughes or any Sister of the West London Mission. I undertook to prove these things by documentary evidence, and the testimony of living witnesses, including the members of Charles Alfred Gibson's family, and all sorts of persons who knew him intimately while he was living and working in London—the place which had been represented as the scene of his exploits as a propagator of Atheism.

Mr. Hughes's reply to my proposal was worthy of the author of the Atheist Shoemaker story. He complained that I had for years been trying to force him into "a personal controversy" with me, that I had asserted that he was liar (which, I repeat, was a word I never used), and that I had even offered "similar insults to a Christian lady"—without saying whether it was Sister Beatrice or Julia Gibson. For these reasons he could hold no communication with me. But I never invited him to hold any communication with me. I invited him to hold communication with a Committee of Honor. And as for the "insults," they simply consisted in my statements and demonstrations that the Atheist Shoemaker story was untrue.

The next assertion of Mr. Hughes's was a transparent falsehood. I do not mean that it was

transparent to the readers of the *Daily Chronicle*. I mean that it was transparent to those who were acquainted with all the facts. He said that if I had "simply assumed" that he "was mistaken," or that he had "been misled," I "might have had what" I "wished." Such a statement could only be intended to convey the impression that I might have had the name and address of the converted Atheist Shoemaker if I had asked for them politely. Now the unanswerable reply to this is that leading Freethinkers did ask Mr. Hughes politely for the information and were all refused. Mr. Forder, the secretary of the National Secular Society, was polite enough; that is to say, his language was perfectly parliamentary. Charles Bradlaugh, the unchallenged leader of English Freethought, was polite enough too. We have Miss Hughes's word for it. "Mr. Bradlaugh, in his paper, the *National Reformer*, published a courteous note asking for the name of the shoemaker, which my father refused." Mr. Hughes's policy was one of systematic refusal. However eminent, or however polite, his questioners were he refused them an answer. He would not disclose the Atheist Shoemaker's name to anyone. Yet when I discovered it without his assistance he had the effrontery to say that he would have given it to me if I had not been so impolite.

Falsehood number two was, if possible, worse than falsehood number one; and it was more foolish because it involved an ostrich-like attitude to widely known facts. After referring to Mr. Holyoake's report Mr. Hughes said: "Since his verdict was given, nothing has seen the light which impugns the substantial accuracy of any statements for which the two sisters and I are personally responsible." Of course the last words were intended to cover a further retreat, if it became necessary. Mr. Hughes hinted a distinction between what he was personally responsible for and what he accepted as true on the personal responsibility of others. But he accepted all the responsibility in writing and publishing the Atheist Shoemaker story, and declaring that it was a "true narrative." Even if we let that pass, what a front of brass the man had to make such a public declaration! Nothing had seen the light which impugned his substantial accuracy! Why, his pretended "convert's" father had stood up before fifteen hundred people and called his story "a damnable lie."

## XXII.

Mr. Hughes must have known all along that his "Atheist Shoemaker" was mainly a romance. I judge by what he did. Had he been sure of its truth he would have courted investigation. He would not have evaded it for years, and then have tried to frustrate criticism by a sham investigation, arranged in private between himself and a person of his own selection. That is not the way in which conscious truth comports itself. It invites criticism, it challenges enquiry. And see what was at stake. The story of the converted Atheist Shoemaker was written, ostensibly, for the salvation of other souls; and it could only serve that object if the readers understood it to be true. How much, then, would its efficacy have been heightened if its truth had been demonstrated. But every cunning shift was resorted to in order to render a demonstration impossible; and the trick of a secret enquiry which was to reveal nothing was perhaps the most contemptible of all.

## XXIII.

It must not be supposed that I was the only person who accused Mr. Hughes of what we may "politely" call inaccuracy. A sub-committee of the Wesleyan body, in 1890, investigated his charges against Wesleyan missionaries in India. Their report was dead against him. They sarcastically remarked that he had to "deal with a public more logical than himself." The Rev. Mr. Allen said that he had "exaggerated to an enormous extent," and that this was "characteristic of the man." Another significant thing was said by the Rev. George

Patterson, "The mode of elucidating the truth adopted by the *Methodist Times*," he said, "consisted chiefly in the deliberate suppression of everything on the other side." Enormous exaggeration!—and the deliberate suppression of everything on the other side! It sounds almost prophetic of what I had to say of this gentleman four years afterwards.

## XXIV.

And now I have done. This ungrateful task was forced upon me by the Christian friends of George Jacob Holyoake and by Miss Hughes as her father's biographer. If I am attacked from the shelter of dead men's coffins I must defend myself. Few duties could be more disagreeable. I have tried to do it with as little acrimony as possible. But I hope I shall always consider, as I do now, that in matters of this kind the supremely important thing is the truth.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Apologetic Delusions.

THE readers of popular religious newspapers are not, as a rule, well versed in the history of the intellectual development of the race; and their prevailing tendency is to accept the various declarations of the editors as authoritative and final. Such editors are not usually first-rate scholars, competent to deliver reliable judgments on philosophical, critical, and theological problems. And yet, alas, the readers generally are completely at their mercy; and the inevitable consequence is that much false information on many important subjects gets disseminated broadcast among the Churches. The leading article in the *Christian Commonwealth* for February 22 furnishes a notable case in point. It is entitled "How St. Paul Grows," and unfortunately contains several inaccurate and misleading statements. The article opens by affirming that "the new attacks on Christianity in our own time are certainly far less formidable than the assaults of the three previous centuries." The writer is undoubtedly mistaken, and his error evidently arises from ignorance. I will refer him only to two modern works, *Christianity and Mythology* and *Pagan Christs*, by Mr. John M. Robertson, M.P., each of which contains a much more powerful and telling argument against Christianity than any advanced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and I would further remind him that the theory of Evolution triumphantly established during the latter half of the nineteenth century is the most formidable opponent the Christian religion has ever had to face.

The article proceeds to pay a left-handed compliment to four eighteenth century Deists: "Voltaire, Bolingbroke, Hume, and Paine were colossal dialecticians of disbelief." Granted. This is about the only wholly accurate statement in the whole of the leader. But its purpose is to emphasise the following assertion, which is wholly false: "Their campaigns were triumphantly followed by the missions of Whitfield and Wesley, and a splendid revival of Evangelicalism laid Rationalism in the dust." I contend that Rationalism has never been laid in the dust. Let us look the facts boldly in the face. George Whitfield died in 1770 and John Wesley in 1791. Hume died in 1776, Voltaire in 1778, and Paine in 1806; Bolingbroke, who died in 1751, being the only one of the four that predeceased Whitfield. The first portion of Paine's *Age of Reason* was not published till 1794. With these dates in mind, on what ground can it be maintained that the campaigns of these four Deists were "triumphantly followed by the missions of Whitfield and Wesley?" Paine's campaign against Christianity did not really begin until Whitfield had been twenty-four years in his grave, and Wesley three years. And with reference to Bolingbroke it must be borne in mind that his writings against Christianity were not published till after his death. The second part of the *Age of*

*Reason* did not appear till 1796, five years after Wesley's death.

The *Christian Commonwealth* informs us that "a splendid revival of Evangelicalism laid Rationalism in the dust." Waiving the question of dates, let us take this confident assertion as it stands. We have no hesitation whatever in characterising such a contention as grossly untrue. For one thing, while the Evangelical Revival was in full progress Infidelity was rampant. In 1797, six years after Wesley's death, the Rev. D. Simpson, "addressed to the Disciples of Thomas Paine" *A Plea for Religion*, in which he complained that "Infidelity is at this moment running like wild-fire among the common people." In 1799, Andrew Fuller published *The Gospel Its Own Witness*, at the end of which there was a solemn address to Deists. Indeed, for a full generation after Wesley's death fresh books on Christian Evidences literally flooded the country. But had Rationalism been laid in the dust such treatises would have been worse than useless.

But let us be fair. At first Paine's *Age of Reason* had a very large circulation, and "Replies" to it were exceedingly numerous. But after 1797 its sale was considerably checked, not because all the people had turned evangelical Christians, but in consequence of brutal persecution. There was a Society for the Suppression of Vice, at the head of which stood the Bishops of Durham and St. Asaph and the world-famed philanthropist Wilberforce. This Society discovered that a poor bookseller named Thomas Williams had been guilty of disposing of a few copies of the *Age of Reason* to people who were sinful enough to pay for them, and for this highly criminal action he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment. In 1812, Daniel Isaac Eaton was prosecuted for publishing the third portion of the same work, and condemned to a year and a half's imprisonment, with an hour in the pillory once every month. It was this inhuman sentence that impelled Shelley, in his twentieth year, to issue his famous *Open Letter to Lord Ellenborough*. In 1819 again, the Vice Society sentenced Richard Carlile to three years' imprisonment and a fine of £1,500 for publishing the three parts of this same *Age of Reason*. Later, Carlile's wife went to prison for two years, and his sister Mary Ann was sentenced to one year's imprisonment and a fine of £500, while altogether Carlile himself spent nine years and seven months in the gaols of England. Is this what the *Christian Commonwealth* calls "a splendid revival of Evangelicalism?" Is this the kind of work that Evangelicalism, when triumphant, undertakes and glories in?

But Evangelicalism did not succeed in laying Rationalism in the dust. In spite of all the prosecutions, the *Age of Reason* prospered more and more until at last the Vice Society retired from the field entirely defeated. In 1824, no less than eight of Carlile's shopmen were laid in the dust of Newgate, but the *Age of Reason* went marching on to a glorious victory. So great has been the triumph of this despised *Age of Reason* that substantially all its main positions have been adopted by the Progressive Party—the Higher Critics—in the Christian Church itself.

It must not be forgotten, in this connection, that, as pointed out by Wiseman in his *Dynamics of Religion*, the Evangelical Revival was a movement that touched almost exclusively the working classes, who at that time enjoyed no educational advantages whatever. In one century the industrial population of England was doubled; and it was during the same period that commercialism developed on a gigantic scale; and these two forces, industrialism and commercialism, drove philosophy, for a time, into the background. But Freethought was by no means laid in the dust. As Mr. Robertson so truly observes, it "was rather driven inwards and downwards than expelled." You remember Burke's foolish question, "Who now reads Bolingbroke?" The answer is that "the fashionable world was actually reading Bolingbroke even then, and that the work of the older Deists was being done with new incisiveness and

massiveness by their successors." Indeed at the end of the eighteenth century Deists were numerous, and during the early years of the nineteenth they were a great force both in politics and in literature. Pitt the younger was a pronounced Agnostic, Erasmus Darwin was a Deist, and Robert Burns was scarcely more. For a time there was an upper-class reaction against Freethought, but it soon came to an end.

The *Christian Commonwealth* continues: "No greater success rewarded the attempts of Sceptics, led in the last century by Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, to erect an icy barrier against the current of popular faith..... Still churches were built, and still missions grew. Indeed, in the United States statisticians declare that no fewer than fifteen new Christian churches are opened every day in the year, although pure religious voluntarism prevails in the Great Republic and Christianity owes nothing to the State." How a man who keeps his eyes and ears open can write in such a strain passes all understanding. But nothing daunted the writer ventures on:—

"The wonderful growth of Protestant Christianity is the grandest topic for study that this age furnishes for thoughtful observers. That development assumes a two-fold direction. It takes, on the one hand, a practical pathway of progression; on the other, a theoretical advance. Never has the world witnessed so strenuous a display of applied Christianity."

This is culpable trifling. This is rhetoric run to madness. Where has Protestant Christianity prospered so enormously? Where has it borne such abundant fruit? Where is it to be found in daily application? Name one city in which Christianity has practically triumphed. The building of new churches and chapels proves nothing. There is not a sufficient number of churches and chapels in London to accommodate one-fourth of the population; and yet two-thirds of these are not half-filled. The same is true of Paris, New York, and Chicago; and the same is true of most smaller cities and towns. The *Christian Commonwealth* is hugging a vain delusion and consequently leading its readers astray. Even Dr. Horton, writing recently to the *Daily News*, mournfully admitted that "the bulk of people in our day surrender the old and tried (Christian) ideal, fling it aside, assume that it is discredited, live without it, and make no serious attempt to find a better ideal." The same admission is to be heard from all quarters. How often do ministers bemoan the fact that the working-classes of England are almost completely alienated from the Christian Church and seldom darken its doors. Where, then, is to be seen "the strenuous display of applied Christianity" boasted of? Only in the fancy of the writer of the leader under consideration.

The writer is equally erroneous in his references to St. Paul. That H. Weinel, Professor Extraordinary of Theology in the University of Jena, has written "a new and very superior work on the great apostle" is no proof that the first Christian theologian is on the high road to universal recognition. Even Professor Weinel himself "insists that at the present day the very existence of Christianity is at stake." But if "at the present day the very existence of Christianity is at stake," what about the "wonderful growth of Protestant Christianity" insisted upon in this article? If its growth has been so wonderful as to furnish the grandest topic for study this age can afford, surely its very existence cannot be at stake, as Professor Weinel alleges. Either the Professor or the author of this article is in serious error.

Again, while Professor Weinel has undertaken to champion the apostle Paul we must not overlook the fact that another German scholar of distinction is equally enthusiastic in his denunciation of him. Lagarde describes Paul as "a true child of Abraham, a Pharisee from top to toe, even after he became a Christian," and declares it "monstrous that men of any historical training should attach any importance to this man Paul." Here also the extravagant style of the writer of our article is in full evidence. While Lagarde dislikes Paul the dogmatist, and Nietzsche condemns Paul the man, this author goes into rapture

thus: "It is, notwithstanding such an attitude on the part of some critics, a proof of the increasing apprehension of the true meaning of the Old Testament that the glorious character and marvellous mission of this apostle are more and more engaging the admiring thought of representative theologians." What the exact meaning of that sentence is I cannot tell; but it is evident that by "representative theologians" the writer understands theologians who agree with himself. Orthodox Calvinists and Hyper-Calvinists are not "representative theologians." Such theologians can only give an "absurd travesty" of the apostle's teaching. Orthodox Presbyterian divines would fare no better at his hands. Only such men as Professors Weinel and Harnack can be regarded as "representative theologians." As a matter of fact, however, the progressive divines of the present day show their appreciation of St. Paul by venturing to differ from him on several important points. They only follow him a certain distance, beyond which they find him narrow, prejudiced, mistaken, a mere man of his own day and opinions.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Acid Drops.

Mr. Law, the secretary of the National Free Church Council, told an interviewer a lot of things about the coming Conference at Birmingham. One thing was that they had secured Mr. Will Crooks, M.P., as a Labor lion at one of the meetings. One of these times they will be inviting Mr. Bernard Shaw, who may discourse to them on "The Importance of Atheism to a Proper Conception of Christian Socialism." That *would* be a draw.

It appears that one of the objects cherished by Mr. Law and his colleagues is that of a National Open Air Mission during the coming and succeeding summers. "We want that movement," he said, "to assume national proportions, so that every town-dweller and villager in the land shall have an opportunity of hearing the Gospel." On this we have to say that we should think Mr. Law was joking if we did not know his intense seriousness. But whether Mr. Law is joking or not, what he said is a joke. After all the centuries of Christian domination; after the expenditure of some twenty millions a year on Christian organisation and propaganda; after the capture of the nation's schools, so that all the children are dosed with Christianity unless their parents take the trouble of withdrawing them from the treatment; after the daily opening of the House of Commons itself by prayers from the lips of a Christian chaplain; after all this it is still necessary to devise special means to let the people hear the Gospel. Well, if this isn't a joke, what is?

Another thing that will be considered at Birmingham. Mr. Law says that "the increasing secularisation of the Lord's Day is assuming alarming proportions, and this will receive adequate treatment." No doubt this means that Free Churchmen are going to devise fresh means of legally curbing the desire of the "godless" multitude to enjoy the week end in their own fashion. But the Free Churchmen may take it from us that the time is gone by for such coercion. The people who go to church and chapel are not as numerous as the people who don't, and the majority will know how to deal with the insolence of the minority.

Sir Oliver Lodge was to have obliged the Free Churchmen at Birmingham with his familiar old paper on "Science and Religion," in which he would have told them that Science has nothing to say against Religion as long as religion says nothing about miracles, and virgin births, and resurrections, and nonsense of that kind. But, alas, the great Sir Oliver Lodge finds that he cannot be present, so *his* star-line has to be taken off the bills. In his stead the Conference will have the pleasure of listening to an old performer "J. B."—which does not mean John Bull nor Jabez Balfour, but the Rev. J. Brierley, of the *Christian World*, who is relatively a sensible man, with a minimum of Christianity.

Talking about Sir Oliver Lodge, it is rather odd that he, of all men, should be selected to write the Introduction to the Huxley volume in Messrs. Dent and Co's. "Everyman's Library." The introducer devotes all his space to preaching Sir-Oliver-Lodge-ism. And this is about as alien to Huxley's thought as anything well could be. When the Principal of Birmingham University condescends to be quite confidential he lets us see that what he is aiming at is simply Spiritualism—or, as it ought more properly to be called, Spiritism. Now

it is well known that Huxley looked on this same Spiritualism, or Spiritism, with disgust. He said that the imbecility of it added a new terror to death. Yes, the publishers might easily have found a biologist—which Huxley was, and Sir Oliver Lodge is not—to write a more pertinent Introduction to this volume.

The following extract is from a London morning paper:—

"By permission of the Duke and Duchess of Westminster a concert in aid of the Navy Mission Society will be given at Grosvenor House on Tuesday, under the patronage of Princess Henry of Battenberg, the Ranee of Sarawak, the Princess Alexis Dolgorouki, the Duchess of Hamilton and Brandon, and the Duchess of Sutherland."

Fancy all those titled people being so anxious about the souls of navvies! We hope the navvies have the sense to see through it.

That learned and distinguished Christian, the Rev. George Wise, of Liverpool, has been discoursing on "The Weakness of the Labor Movement." A report of his wise observations appeared in the local *Evening Express*. After referring to "several glaring political and social weaknesses" of the Labor movement, he said that "there were others of a more serious character." For instance, it displayed "a supreme callous indifference to religion." We hope this is quite true, and we understand how it must distress the gentlemen of Mr. Wise's profession; but, much as we pity them, we trust it will continue. The second "weakness" of the Labor movement seems to us to be of a similar character to the first. It does not "allow the greatest moral character in history, Jesus Christ, to occupy his rightful place in their midst." In other words, the Labor movement does not show itself a docile victim to the arts by which the clergy, when they are losing Jesus Christ as a god, try to recover him as a man. Mr. Wise himself ought to be ashamed to speak of Jesus Christ as "the greatest moral character in history." This is blasphemous language in the mouth of one who believes in the deity of Jesus Christ. And it is logically as well as morally objectionable, for if Jesus Christ was God he was not a "character in history" at all. Such a description can only apply to pure and simple human beings. As for the third weakness of the Labor movement—namely, that it "allows matters of a purely physical character to hold a disproportionate position," we can only say that this is, rightly understood, one of its virtues. The people have had enough promises of mansions in the sky; they begin to think that they had better have decent dwellings on earth. And they will not be frightened away from their object by gentlemen like Mr. Wise who tell them that "man doth not live by bread alone." "Quite so," they will reply, "we will have a little butter with it."

Quite an amusing story is told in the *Daily News*—though it is not meant to be amusing—of the conversion of another public entertainer, Mr. Walter Leslie. He belonged to the Moore and Burgess troupe of colored minstrels, which was disbanded some time ago, and since then he "has fallen on evil days, and has been more than once on the verge of destitution." Evidently he wanted a steady job again, so he went to the Wesleyan Chapel at Romford, got converted, and was soon "set to work in helping the mission by singing at several of the meetings." It also appears that he relates his experiences and testifies to "the genuineness of his amendment of life." We are left to guess at what this means. Does he repent in sackcloth and ashes of having lampblack his face? Or was he guilty of some greater enormity?

The daily organ of the Nonconformist Conscience refers to "Walworth where the old age pensions movement originated with the Browning settlement." This is rather a cryptic utterance. It may mean that the Browning settlement gave birth to the old age pensions movement, or that it gave birth to the Walworth section of the movement. If the latter is meant, we have no more to say; but if the former is meant, we beg to observe that the old age pensions movement was really started in the immortal *Rights of Man*. Thomas Paine was the first man with the heart and brain to conceive the idea. He also sketched a scheme by which it might be realised.

Pity the poor clergy! Bishop Gore, of Birmingham, at a recent meeting of the Queen Victoria Clergy Fund, drew attention to the "startlingly inadequate remuneration" of the clergy of the Church of England. Six thousand of them had less than £200 a year. Some of the others, about whom he was dumb, have a great deal more—running up in many cases to thousands of pounds. We admit, however, that this does not alter the lot of the six thousand; and perhaps, in ordinary circumstances, we ought to pity them; but the circumstances are not ordinary, and we present them our congratulations. Six thousand clergymen, anyhow, are

compelled to follow Christ, at least to a certain point. One of his really distinctive utterances was "Blessed be ye poor." He also uttered the logical antithesis, "Woe unto you rich." It is good, therefore, to see so many of his English apostles, even if involuntarily, in the way of earning the blessing and avoiding the curse.

Pity the poor clergy! Rev. Edward Spencer, of Tavistock, Devon, left estate valued at £12,363. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Another poor soul-saver was the Rev. Frederic Watson, late vicar of St. Edward, Cambridge, whose estate is valued at £10,340.

A terrible Welsh villain got into the witness-box at Abercynon Police Court, and his name was Ishmael. He was only eight years of age, but already ripe in wickedness. Before he began the kissing business, the clerk asked him: "Do you know that book?" He didn't. "Have you ever heard of the Bible?" He hadn't. "Do you go to chapel?" He didn't. The awful creature's evidence was not taken. He really ought to have been committed for trial at the next Assizes.

The Bishop of Asaph deplores that no improvement has taken place in Wales and Monmouthshire since the issue of the 1895 Blue Book, which recorded that in 128 of the 336 School Board districts the Bible was not read. Is this why Evan Roberts and the Welsh Revival were so necessary?

That pious Jingo, the Rev. W. H. Fitchett, treated the readers of the *Tribune* to a long account of "Australian Education." He stated that "in all the States of Australia education is not only free and compulsory, it is secular." Then he went on to say that true secular education is given in New South Wales, where it includes "general religious instruction." This, of course, is nonsense. What the reverend gentleman should have said is that the Christians have interpreted "secular education" in their own fashion in New South Wales. Mr. Fitchett reveals his animus by calling real secular education—the secular education of Victoria—as "Secularism gone mad." What this pious Jingo is after is perfectly plain. He doesn't mind the phrase "secular education." What he objects to is *the thing*. He sees that it is a danger to his own profession. So he does his little best to bamboozle the people of England into accepting the New South Wales policy. But he won't succeed.

We have again and again said that the Church party will go in for Passive Resistance if the Nonconformist policy of religious education is legally established in the elementary schools. This idea has been pool-pooed, but we were right after all. Lord Halifax, speaking from the President's chair of the Church Union—the largest and most important organisation of clergymen within the Church of England—has just declared that he and his friends will resort to Passive Resistance sooner than submit for an hour to the Nonconformist policy of "undenominationalism." And the declaration was greeted with enthusiastic cheers.

When the Church of England begins to play the game of Passive Resistance it may be good policy for Freethinkers to play it too—if only to show that the Nonconformist is the worst enemy they have to face. The Church policy is wrong, but it is straightforward. The Nonconformist policy is just as wrong, and is hypocritical.

Dr. Bourne, the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, in his Lenten pastoral, deals with the Education question. Naturally he objects to the "simple Bible teaching" which the Nonconformists seek to establish in every school in England. To Catholics, he says, that would be the establishment and endowment of Protestantism in its simplest form, and they will have none of it. The Catholic claim is as follows: "A Catholic education which implies Catholic schools, Catholic teachers, and effective Catholic oversight over all that pertains to religious teaching and influence." This is a legitimate demand while religious teaching is legalised in the elementary schools. On that point our sympathy goes with Catholics and Churchmen. But it would not go with them if they objected to Secular Education; for Secular Education would not prejudice religious education, but would leave it to its proper agencies—that is to say, to the Churches themselves.

The Catholic Church in England is perfectly serious on this matter. Students of its history can have no doubts on that point. We are sure that Dr. Bourne speaks the truth when he says that the Passive Resistance of the Nonconformists will be as nothing to the resistance, both active and passive, which will be aroused if other Christian parents are forced to send their children to schools which their conscience

abhors. They would be bound in conscience, he says, to use to the utmost every legitimate means of resistance, which they possessed.

This is quite delightful. We shall rejoice to see the dear good Nonconformists, the guardians of religious liberty, as they profess themselves, sending other Christians to prison "for conscience sake." It will be worth living to witness. But perhaps it will never come to that. The impossibility of agreement amongst the Christian denominations may drive the Government into adopting Secular Education.

The Bishop of Birmingham told the Upper House of Convocation recently that "anything like an attempt at the present moment to establish undenominationalism in the schools would be a step that would lead down most easily and rapidly to secularism." He pointed out that undenominationalism could not survive attacks from three quarters. A number of Nonconformists regarded it as inexpedient, Churchmen would not accept it on any terms, and "the great and growing Labor body were strongly in favor of secularism." Dr. Gore might have added a fourth quarter to the attack—that of the large body of Non-Christians, who are beautifully lost sight of by the Christian disputants in this controversy.

The Bishop of Stepney is at present delivering a course of lectures on Religious Education. The first one of the course very neatly and very effectively knocks the bottom out of that miserable Nonconformist subterfuge, undogmatic Christianity. What is called a statement of simple Christian truths is, he points out, the most dogmatic statements. Such statements as "God so loved the world," the hymns that Nonconformists wish to have sung by the children, are intensely dogmatic—much more so than such statements are when accompanied by a lengthened exposition. The Bishop fails to note, however, although he is probably aware of the fact, that the Nonconformist objection is not to dogmas being taught in the schools, but only to dogmas in which they do not believe. Nothing could be more intensely dogmatic than the Lord's Prayer, which is one of the things the Free Churches wish to retain. And neither Churchmen nor Dissenters face the fact that any compromise between Christians cannot avoid inflicting an injustice on all other sections of the community.

It is pleasant to note that all Nonconformists are not of the Dr. Clifford type, but are willing to act honestly in the matter of education in State schools. Mr. W. Edwards, writing from the Baptist College, Cardiff, to the *British Weekly*, declares that "True Nonconformist principles exclude religious teaching in State-supported schools," and that "Biblical teaching" means to the majority dogmatic teaching. Mr. Edwards asks Parliament to devise a national system of secular education, and leave religious and Biblical teaching to the Churches. We are glad to record Mr. Edwards' straightforward plea, and at the same time to offer the opinion that Dr. Clifford will find that there is a serious inconvenience in preaching honest principles without meaning anything by them—people are apt to take them up and act in accordance therewith.

When will a *Christian journal* learn to act fairly towards Freethought? The *Christian World* is evidently disturbed at the large number of M.P.s who affirmed instead of taking the oath. It suggests, as an explanation, that members saved a little time in affirming, and so sacrificed the older form for the newer one. Of course, it would never do for the *C. W.* to admit the truth, that the new Parliament includes an unusually large proportion of Freethinkers. This might lead to some very awkward reflections on the part of its readers. Nor does the sapient *Christian World* writer see that he is paying but a poor compliment to the Christian conscience that is ready to give up a religious ceremony for the sake of saving a few minutes.

According to Mr. Bernard, K.C., Mr. Arthur Alfred Smith, from whom his wife asked and received a divorce, was "a most religious man," who "used to have religious meetings in the house." This, however, did not end Mr. Smith's accomplishments. He also—

1. Carried indecent photographs, taken by himself, in his pocket.
2. Threatened his wife with a knife.
3. Threw a music-stool at her.
4. Stood his trial on a charge of assaulting a young girl.
5. Threatened to shoot his wife if she appeared at the trial.
6. Was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment for the assault."

"A Banker" held forth in the *Islington Gazette* the other day on "The Breath of the North." It was really a sermon

in disguise. The banker's object was to say a good word for the old faith, which "so many of the human race" have lost. "Enchained in the cold hard grip of irreligion, and without a ray of hope for the Hereafter," he said, "their existence must be but a dreary winter of uncertainty and disquietude." This is just like a banker. Rich people try to make poor people believe that life is a poor thing at best; otherwise poor people might try to get their share of heaven here—which would be very awkward. As a matter of fact, those who don't swallow the bait (and hook) of superstition are happier than those who do.

Without a word of comment, which would spoil it, we quote the following report of a law case from the *Daily Chronicle* of February 23:—

"Judge Gwilyn Williams, of the Glamorgan County Courts, looks with strong disapproval upon the quotation of scriptural texts in cases that come before him. 'This sort of thing,' he remarked during litigation in a Bridgend case yesterday, 'disgusts me more than anything else in the world.'

The action was one in which Alfred Love was sued by William Veryard for £20, money lent. Veryard said that in 1902 he 'gathered' with the Plymouth Brethren, a religious sect, of which he was a member, and for whom he used to preach. Love was building two houses, and needed money to complete them. Veryard advanced him £20 from his savings.

'My dear brother in Christ,' wrote Love, acknowledging the receipt of the money which was sent by post, 'I have just received your welcome cheque for £20. Dear brother, you know we will not be long before we shall, by God's help, be able to repay you, and blessings from the Lord will rest upon you for this. The Lord's blessing maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow.'

On Christmas Eve last Veryard sent Love a printed form preliminary to county court proceedings.

The Judge: That was your Christmas message to your dear brother in Christ.

'To that notice,' continued counsel, 'Love replied in a letter, in which he said: "Referring to your ungodly threats of going to law with me, I am sorry that you should go to such measures. Who shall lift his hand against the Lord's anointed and the innocent?"'

'Then he goes on to quote Scripture,' added counsel.

His Honor: Don't read it to me. This kind of thing disgusts me.

Counsel said Love referred Veryard to the twenty-seventh verse in the fourth chapter of Ephesians.

His Honor: Oh, refer me to a law book! (Laughter).

Counsel: The verse has reference to 'shunning the devil.'

'Do you think,' said his honor, raising his eyebrows, 'that he was referring to me then?'

Counsel: Then he quotes another verse, sir.

His Honor: Yes, yes; but does he say anything about paying?

Veryard, in his evidence, expressed regret that it had been necessary to bring such a case into court. He, too, quoted scriptural phrases.

His Honor (impatiently): Don't. I hate you bringing these religious phrases into business. I must tell you that people who use these phrases most are generally the most dishonest. They say that the Devil himself can quote scripture.

Judgment for Veryard was given."

While refraining from comment, we may wonder what the judge thinks of "kissing the book."

Rev. Forbes Phillips, vicar of Gorleston and playwright, addressed a large audience at the Lyceum Theatre, London, on Sunday evening, his subject being "The Resurrection—Restated." The reverend lecturer claimed that the Church did not require him to believe anything more than in a living and personal Savior, who overcame death. He declined to believe in a physical resurrection, and he declared that insistence on this doctrine was keeping intelligent people away from the Church. Mr. Phillips is evidently in the path pursued by Sir Oliver Lodge, though he does not go so far. If he only keeps on the road he will find all his faith in New Testament supernaturalism disappearing. For it is impossible logically to pick and choose amongst miracles. The principle of one is the principle of all. So that the Incarnation is no more credible, or incredible, than the Resurrection.

A young Catholic deacon has been arrested at Dunkirk on a charge of stealing his aunt's cash-box containing money and bonds to the value of £600. When taxed with the crime he declared that he had never crossed his aunt's threshold. This was true. He got in through the attic window.

"Providence" has joined hands with the Czar in plaguing the Russian people. A famine is afflicting twenty-five provinces of European Russia. Want of fodder has cleared vast areas of every kind of beast. Another famine has broken out in the rich grain lands of Siberia. The outlook is said to be "appalling."



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, March 4, Stanley Hall, Junction-road, London, N. (near "The Boston"): 7.30 p.m., "Robert Blatchford and the 'Bottom Dog.'"

March 11 and 18, Stanley Hall; 25, Coventry.

April 1, Manchester; 8, Stratford Town Hall; 22 and 29, Queen's Hall.

May 6, Liverpool.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—March 25, Stanley Hall. April 1, Stratford Town Hall; 8, 22, and 29, Liverpool.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—March 4, Glasgow; 11, Liverpool; 18, Liverpool; 25, Liverpool.

RIDGEWAY FUND.—R. H. Side 10s., T. T. Is., H. Voigt 2s. 6d. J. Partridge (183 Vauxhall-road Birmingham) also acknowledges: J. Wilson Is., A. Reeves Is.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

W. A. HEWETT.—Thanks for cuttings. You could order a photograph of Charles Bradlaugh through our publishing office—price 1s.

G. A. A.—Sorry it is against journalistic etiquette.

G. ROLEFFS.—We should have been pleased to note it at the time, but we cannot recur to the subject now.

A. S. COLEMAN.—Certainly the Christians don't look happier than Freethinkers. The latter have no hell—and who ever wanted to go to heaven until he was obliged to? For the rest, thanks, and see "Acid Drops."

W. B.—A fuller account of the prosecution, trial, and execution of Aikenhead was written by J. M. Wheeler in our old magazine, *Progress*.

J. BROUEN.—Thanks for cuttings.

V. PAGE.—The Nelson Branch has our best wishes.

G. ELLIS.—See "Acid Drops."

LEVI WOOD.—You ask us to deal with Mr. Robert Blatchford's new book, *The Bottom Dog*, in the *Freethinker*. We have already announced our intention of doing so. Perhaps it escaped your notice.

H. P. K.—Very glad to hear from you as a convert to Freethought after eighteen years' membership of a Christian body and fourteen years' service as an accredited local preacher; and interested to know that our *Bible Romances* and *Bible Handbook* helped you so much after you had been set thinking by Paine's *Age of Reason*. Thanks also for your hearty good wishes. For the other matter, see "Sugar Plums."

H. W. J.—We have not Mr. W. W. Collins's present address, but "Christchurch, New Zealand" would doubtless find him.

W. WILLIAMS.—No complete edition of Thomas Paine's works, except the expensive one edited by Dr. Moncreux D. Conway, has been published for the last sixty years. The *Age of Reason*, the *Miscellaneous Theological Works*, and the *Rights of Man* are all published at the *Freethinker* office. A small volume of the minor political writings would make a complete collection. The only complete Ingersoll is the Dresden Edition in twelve volumes.

E. HINTON.—Miss Vance has shown us your letter. We think your view might be right if the Freethought movement were always in funds and could cover any deficit; but, as a matter of fact, the deficit, when there is free admission all over the hall and there is nothing but the collection to trust to, is always heavier than can be afforded. This is a case in which theoretical considerations are less important than practical experience. Meanwhile there are free seats at Stanley Hall, and plenty of them; and anyone who stays away because other seats are charged for seems to us fantastic.

FREETHINKERS whose names and addresses appear from time to time in this journal, and who receive scurrilous postcards addressed to Mr. Foote, with the addition of "please forward," are requested to drop the things into the fire, instead of wasting postage stamps on them. The names and addresses given by the writer are, of course, always fictitious.

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SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

### Sugar Plums.

After a few weeks' abstention from platform work, in the interest of other labors, Mr. Foote resumes lecturing this evening (March 4), taking the first of the new course of Sunday lectures at Stanley Hall. His subject will be "Robert Blatchford and 'The Bottom Dog.'" The chair will be taken by Mr. Victor Roger. After the lecture and discussion are over Mr. Foote will hold a private meeting of "saints" with a view to forming an active Branch of the National Secular Society in the neighborhood. We hope there will be a strong rally of North London Freethinkers. The advertising, which is being done on an extra scale, should bring a large attendance of the general public to the lecture.

The Stanley Hall lectures are under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited. Under the same auspices, with the co-operation of the West Ham N. S. S. Branch, there will be three Sunday evening lectures at the Stratford Town Hall on April 1, 8, and 15—the lecturers being Messrs. Foote, Cohen, and Lloyd. Bills and smaller announcements of these lectures are in the press, and local "saints" who can exhibit or put them into circulation should apply for copies to Miss Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. A postcard will do.

Also under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited, two special lectures will be delivered by Mr. Foote at Queen's Hall on April 2 and 29. Further details will be published in due course.

Liverpool "saints" should go to Milton Hall, Daulby-street, this afternoon and evening (March 4) and give a most hearty welcome to our esteemed contributor, Mr. George Scott, of Glasgow, who is to deliver two lectures there, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Branch. Mr. Scott is a valuable convert from Roman Catholicism, and his lectures on that system, and on why he left it, will have all the salt of personal knowledge and experience.

Mr. John T. Lloyd begins a course of three Sunday "services" for the Liverpool Branch next Sunday. He will lecture, afternoon and evening, for the three Sundays. His abilities and eloquence are well appreciated in Liverpool, and this special effort ought to be very successful. On the first Sunday in May the Great Picton Hall has been secured for an evening lecture by Mr. Foote.

Mr. Foote has had the pleasure of sending the Liverpool Branch £20. This sum was handed to him for the purpose by Mr. F. Bonte, who last year made a handsome donation of £100 to the Secular Society, Limited.

The Liverpool Branch holds a "social" on Tuesday evening (March 6) from 8 to 12 o'clock. The tickets are 9d. each. The Branch's annual meeting takes place early in April, and all nominations of new officers must be sent in immediately.

Mr. John Lloyd lectures in the Secular Hall, Glasgow, to-day (March 4), and the "saints" will doubtless see that the place is crowded.

Correspondents ask us from time to time about affirming under Bradlaugh's "Oaths Act, 1888." A leaflet on "The Right to Affirm" is printed by the National Secular Society, and can be obtained on application to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. The leaflet was written for the Society by Bradlaugh himself and is therefore in the highest degree authoritative. Witnesses or jurors can claim to affirm under the Oaths Act, on the ground that they have no religious belief. Having said that, in the terms of the Act, they should refuse to answer any further questions or to be drawn into any controversy. The form of affirmation is as follows:—"I, A. B., do solemnly, sincerely, and truly declare and affirm that the (then follows the rest of the form of the Oath, without the final "So help me God")."

Mr. F. Helliard, the secretary of the Kingsland N. S. S. Branch, having taken a berth abroad, the Branch is losing his valuable services with very much regret, although glad that he is bettering his position. A set of Sheffield cutlery being subscribed for by the members, it was presented to him by Mr. W. Davy as a token of their appreciation and thanks.

The new Nelson N. S. S. Branch is making headway, and

has engaged Mr. Joseph McCabe to deliver two lectures on March 5 and 6 in the Weavers' Institute.

We are glad to see Mr. J. W. de Caux continuing his letters in defence and illustration of Freethought in the district newspapers. His latest effort in this line is a letter in the *Eastern Daily Press* pointing out, in respect to the Education controversy, that the Nonconformists, who talk so much about justice in their quarrel with the Church, are themselves "utterly regardless of the rights of the eighty per cent. of the population who never enter church or chapel."

A gathering of "Liberal clergy and others" was held recently at 34 Crawford-street, London, W., under the presidency of the Rev. H. Russell-Wakefield, to discuss certain resolutions drafted by a committee on the Education question. The second resolution ran as follows: "That in the existing circumstances of English life, the State must confine itself to providing secular instruction at which alone attendance shall be compulsory." On this there was a difference of opinion. It was vigorously supported, however, by the Rev. Stewart Headlam, who laughed at the cry of "banishing God and ousting Christ from the schools," and urged that the State should confine itself to its proper work. Mr. D. C. Lathbury spoke in a similar vein. He maintained that if the State were allowed to give one kind of religion and no other, it would be conceding the principle that it had a right to determine what kind of instruction was necessary. Eventually the resolution was carried by a majority of four votes. Thirty years ago the idea of carrying it at all would have been an absurdity. Which proves, as Galileo said, that the world does move.

The suspension of flogging in the Navy will probably lead to its abolition. A brutal practice like that can hardly be dropped for twelve months and picked up again. We congratulate the Humanitarian League in particular on its contribution to this reform. Mr. Joseph Collinson, its honorary secretary, has been indefatigable in advocating it, and his pamphlet, *Flogging in the Navy*, is a classic on the subject. Mr. Collinson is himself (by the way) a Secularist, and the General and Executive committees of the League include Freethinkers like G. W. Foote, Edward Carpenter, George Bernard Shaw, J. M. Robertson, H. S. Salt, Howard Williams, and Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner.

Friends of this journal are once more desired to send us the names and addresses of persons who might become regular subscribers if it were only introduced to them. We undertake to send a copy of the *Freethinker* post-free, at our own expense, to all such addresses for six consecutive weeks; at the end of which period the recipient would order it for himself if he wished to continue reading it. We have already made several fresh subscribers in this way.

#### JULIUS CÆSAR—ATHEIST.

"The foremost man of all this world."—SHAKESPEARE.

From cant of all kinds he was totally free. He was a friend of the people, but he indulged in no enthusiasm for liberty. He never dilated on the beauties of virtue, or complimented, as Cicero did, a Providence in which he did not believe. He was too sincere to stoop to unreality. He held to the facts of this life and to his own convictions; and as he found no reason for supposing that there was a life beyond the grave he did not pretend to expect it. He respected the religion of the Roman State as an institution established by the laws. He encouraged or left unmolested the creeds and practices of the uncounted sects or tribes who were gathered under the eagles. But his own writings contain nothing to indicate that he himself had any religious belief at all. He saw no evidence that the gods practically interfered in human affairs. He never pretended that Jupiter was on his side. He thanked his soldiers after a victory, but he did not order *Te Deums* to be sung for it; and in the absence of these conventionalisms he perhaps showed more real reverence than he could have displayed by the freest use of the formulas of pietism. He fought his battles to establish some tolerable degree of justice in the government of this world; and he succeeded, though he was murdered for doing it.—*J. A. Froude.*

#### LIFE'S PHILOSOPHY.

Of human life the time is a point, and the substance is in a flux, and the perception dull, and the composition of the whole body subject to putrefaction, and the soul a whirl, and fortune hard to divine, and fame a thing devoid of judgment. And, to say all in a word, everything which belongs to the

body is a stream, and what belongs to the soul is a dream and vapor, and life is a warfare and a stranger's sojourn, and after-fame is oblivion. What then is that which is able to conduct a man? One thing and one only, philosophy. But this consists in keeping the dæmon within a man free from violence and unharmed, superior to pains and pleasures, doing nothing without a purpose, nor yet falsely and with hypocrisy, not feeling the need of another man's doing or not doing anything; and besides, accepting all that happens, and all that is allotted, as coming from thence, wherever it is, from whence he himself came; and, finally, waiting for death with a cheerful mind, as being nothing else than a dissolution of the elements of which every living being is compounded.—*Marcus Aurelius.*

#### UNIVERSAL INTERACTION.

Wherever men are gathered, all the air  
Is charged with human feeling, human thought;  
Each shout and cry and laugh, each curse and prayer  
Are into its vibrations surely wrought;  
Unspoken passion, wordless meditation,  
Are breathed into it with our respiration;  
It is with our life fraught, and overfraught.

So that no man there breathes earth's simple breath,  
As if alone on mountain, or wide seas;  
But nourishes warm life or hastens death  
With joys and sorrows, health and foul disease,  
Wisdom and folly, good and evil labors  
Incessant of his multitudinous neighbors;  
He in his turn affecting all of these.

*B. V. "City of Dreadful Night."*

#### UNIVERSAL INTERDEPENDENCE.

Those will come to whom it will be given to see the elementary machinery at work: who, as it were, from some slight hint of the straws, will feel the winds of March when they do not blow. To them will nothing be trivial, seeing that they will have in their eyes the invisible conflict going on around us, whose features a nod, a smile, a laugh, of ours perpetually changes, and they will perceive moreover, that in real life all hangs together: the train is laid in the lifting of an eyebrow, that bursts upon the field of thousands. They will see the links of things as they pass, and wonder not, as foolish people now do, that this great matter came out of that small one.—*George Meredith.*

#### RECONCILIATION.

Word over all, beautiful as the sky!  
Beautiful that war, and all its deeds of carnage, must in time be utterly lost;  
That the hands of the sister's Death and Night incessantly, softly wash again, and ever again, this soiled world.  
For my enemy is dead—a man divine as myself is dead.  
I look where he lies, white-faced and still, in the coffin,—I draw near;  
I bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

—*Walt Whitman.*

#### STUPIDITY.

The one enemy we have in this Universe is Stupidity, Darkness of Mind; of which darkness, again, there are many sources, every *sin* a source, and probably self-conceit the chief source. Darkness of mind, in every kind and variety, does to a really tragic extent abound; but of all the kinds of darkness, surely the Pedant darkness, which asserts and believes itself to be *light*, is the most formidable to mankind! For empires or for individuals there is but one class of men to be trembled at; and that is the Stupid Class, the class that cannot see, who alas are they mainly that will not see.—*Carlyle.*

I am now convinced, that no great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought. The old opinions in religion, morals, and politics, are so much discredited in the more intellectual minds as to have lost the greater part of their efficacy for good, while they have still life enough in them to be a powerful obstacle to the growing up of any better opinions on those subjects.—*John Stuart Mill.*

Before you exist for others it behoves you to exist for yourself; before giving you must first acquire.—*Maeterlinck.*

The spirit of ridicule seems to be necessary for the progress of the world. Many an evil belief, such as witchcraft, has been laughed out of existence.

—*W. R. Paterson ("Benjamin Swift").*

## Ingersoll's First Lecture.—V.

(Continued from p. 125.)

## GEOGRAPHY.

In the 6th century a monk by the name of Cosmas wrote a kind of orthodox geography and astronomy combined. He pretended that it was all in accordance with the Bible. According to him, the world was composed, first, of a flat piece of land and circular; this piece of land was entirely surrounded by water which was the ocean, and beyond the strip of water was another circle of land; this outside circle was the land inhabited by the old world before the flood; Noah crossed the strip of water and landed on the central piece where we now are; on the outside land was a high mountain around which the sun and moon revolved; when the sun was behind the mountain it was night, and when on the side next us it was day. He also taught that on the outer edge of the outside circle of land the firmament or sky was fastened, that it was made of some solid material and turned over the world like an immense kettle. And it was declared at that time that anyone who believed either more or less on that subject than that book contained was a heretic and deserved to be exterminated from the face of the earth. This was authority until the discovery of America by Columbus. Cosmas said the earth was flat; if it was round how could men on the other side at the day of judgment see the coming of the Lord? At the risk of being resome, I have said what I have, to show you the productions of the mind when enslaved—the consequences of abandoning judgment and reason—the effects of widespread ignorance and universal bigotry.

I want to convince you that every wrong is a viper that will sooner or later strike with poisoned fangs the bosom that nourishes it. You will ask what has produced this wonderful change in only three hundred years. You will remember that in those days it was said that all ghosts vanished at the dawn of day; that the sprites, the spooks, the hobgoblins and all the monsters of the imagination fled from the approaching sun. In 1441, printing was invented. In the next century it became a power, and it has been flooding the world with light from that time to this. The Press has been the true Prometheus.

It has been, so to speak, the trumpet blown by the Gabriel of Progress, until, from the graves of ignorance and superstition, the people have leaped to grand and glorious life, spurning with swift feet the dust of an infamous past.

When people read, they reason, when they reason they progress. You must not think that the enemies of progress allowed books to be published or read when they had the power to prevent it. The whole power of the church, of the government, was arrayed upon the side of ignorance. People found in the possession of books were often executed. Printing, reading and writing were crimes. Anathemas were hurled from the Vatican against all who dared to publish a word in favor of liberty or the sacred rights of man. The Inquisition was founded on purpose to crush out every noble aspiration of the heart. It was a war of darkness against light, of slavery against liberty, of superstition against reason. I shall not attempt to recount the horrors and tortures of the Inquisition. Suffice it to say that they were equal to the most terrible and vivid pictures even of Hell, and the Inquisitors were even more horrid fiends than even a real Perdition could boast. But in spite of priests, in spite of kings, in spite of mitres, in spite of crowns, in spite of Cardinals and Popes, books were published and books were read. Beam after beam of light penetrated the darkness. Star after star arose in the firmament of ignorance. The morning of Freedom began to dawn. Driven to madness by the prospect of ultimate defeat, the enemies of light persecuted with redoubled fury.

People were burned for saying that the earth was round, for saying that the sun was the centre of a system. A woman was executed because she endeavored to allay the pains of a fever by singing. The very name of Philosopher became a title of Proscription, and the slightest offences were punished by death. About the beginning of the sixteenth century Luther, and Jerome, of Prague, inaugurated the great Reformation in Germany, Ziska was at work in Hungary, Zwinglius in Switzerland. The grand work went forward in Denmark, in Sweden and in England. All this was accomplished as early as 1534. They unmasked the corruption and withstood the tyranny of the church.

With a zeal amounting to enthusiasm, with a courage that was heroic, with an energy that never flagged, a determination that brooked no opposition, with a firmness that defied torture and death, this sublime band of reformers sprang to the attack. Stronghold after stronghold was carried, and in a few short but terrible years, the banner of the Reformation waved in triumph over the bloody ensign of Saint Peter. The soul roused from the slumbers of a thousand years

began to think. When slaves begin to reason, slavery begins to die. The invention of powder had released millions from the army, and left them to prosecute the arts of peace. Industry began to be remunerative and respectable.

Science began to unfold the wings that will finally fill the heavens. Descartes announced to the world the sublime truth that the Universe is governed by law.

Commerce began to unfold her wings. People of different countries began to get acquainted. Christians found that Mohammedan gold was not the less valuable on account of the doctrines of its owners. Telescopes began to be pointed toward the stars. The Universe was getting immense. The Earth was growing small. It was discovered that a man could be healthy without being a Catholic. Innumerable agencies were at work dispelling darkness and creating light. The supernatural began to be abandoned, and mankind endeavored to account for all physical phenomena by physical laws. The light of reason was irradiating the world, and from that light, as from the approach of the sun, the ghosts and spectres of superstition wrapped their sheets around their attenuated bodies and vanished into thin air. Other inventions rapidly followed. The wonderful power of steam was made known to the world by Watts and by Fulton. Neptune was frightened from the sea. The locomotive was given to mankind by Stephenson; the telegraph by Franklin and Morse. The rush of the ship, the scream of the locomotive, and the electric flash have frightened the monsters of ignorance from the world, and have left nothing above us but the heaven's eternal blue, filled with glittering planets wheeling through immensity in accordance with Law. True religion is a subordination of the passions and interests to the perceptions of the intellect. But when religion was considered the end of life instead of a means of happiness, it overshadowed all other interests and became the destroyer of mankind. It became a hydra-headed monster—a serpent reaching in terrible coils from the heavens and thrusting its thousand fangs into the bleeding, quivering hearts of men.

## SLAVERY.

I have endeavored thus far to show you some of the results produced by enslaving the human mind. I now call your attention to another terrible phase of this subject; the enslavement of the body. Slavery is a very ancient institution, yes, about as ancient as robbery, theft and murder, and is based upon them all.

Springing from the same fountain, that a man is not the owner of his soul, is the doctrine that he is not the owner of his body. The two are always found together, supported by precisely the same arguments, and attended by the same infamous acts of cruelty. From the earliest time, slavery has existed in all countries, and among all people until recently. Pufendorf said that slavery was originally established by contract. Voltaire replied, "Show me the original contract, and if it is signed by the party that was to be a slave I will believe you." You will bear in mind that the slavery of which I am now speaking is white slavery.

Greeks enslaved one another as well as those captured in war. Coriolanus scrupled not to make slaves of his own countrymen captured in civil war.

Julius Cæsar sold to the highest bidder at one time fifty-three thousand prisoners of war all of whom were white. Hannibal exposed to sale thirty thousand captives at one time, all of whom were Roman citizens. In Rome, men were sold into bondage in order to pay their debts. In Germany, men often hazarded their freedom on the throwing of dice. The Barbary States held white Christians in slavery in this, the 19th century. There were white slaves in England as late as 1574. There were white slaves in Scotland until the end of the 18th century.

These Scotch slaves were colliers and salters. They were treated as real estate and passed with a deed to the mines in which they worked.

It was also the law that no collier could work in any mine except the one to which he belonged. It was also the law that their children could follow no other occupation than that of their fathers. This slavery absolutely existed in Scotland until the beginning of the glorious 19th century.

Some of the Roman nobles were the owners of as many as twenty thousand slaves.

(To be continued.)

## "The Little Flowers of St. Francis."

As few Freethinkers read the books of devotion of the Roman Church, and as it is the fashion with certain Agnostics such as the late George Eliot and the living Robert Blatchford to affect to find an extraordinary depth of "mentality," as the Americans call it, in them, I give a short

description of one of the most celebrated: *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*, for the benefit of the readers of the *Freethinker*.

The edition I have is a translation published under the patronage of Dr. Manning in 1863. It consists of four distinct sections or works: the first of fifty-eight chapters, the second a "Life of Brother Juniper," the third a "Life of Brother Giles," and the fourth a collection of sayings of Brother Giles.

Of the fifty-eight chapters of the first part, only about thirty narrate anything done by Francis. According to the table of contents, they start by describing how, having allowed an unkind thought to arise in his mind against a brother, he ordered him to place his foot on his mouth. In the chapters which follow are described how he fasted forty days and forty nights on a half of a small loaf; how he made Brother Masseo turn round and round like a child; how he prayed to St. Peter and St. Paul to make him greatly love poverty, and how St. Peter and St. Paul appeared to him; how the Lord appeared to him; how he preached to the birds and reduced to silence the swallows; how a vine that was trodden down by the multitudes who came to see him produced a greater quantity of wine than usual, as Francis had promised. They relate that he miraculously tamed a fierce wolf and wild doves, and converted the Sultan of Babylon. Then that he healed a leper and induced robbers and assassins to join him as monks.

The remaining chapters depict Francis as wholly occupied with conventional life; and, therefore, for my part, I am absolutely incredulous of the gushing admiration which professing *Rationalists* have expressed for him and his character. It relates that Francis at first was treated as a madman, was despised by his relations, and that strangers threw mud at him in the streets; while for two years he was an object of contempt and rejected by all; that he practised humbug, for when one of the richest noblemen of Assisi invited him to supper and to sleep in his house he accepted the invitation; but, when instead of being taken into any day-room for supper he was introduced immediately into the noble bachelor's bedroom, he, *in order to conceal his sanctity*, threw himself on the bed and pretended to fall asleep. His host, forgetting that a gutter tramp would be hungry, also omitted supper, and came also to bed—there were two beds in the room—and also soon appeared to be sleeping soundly; when Francis got up and began to pray, exclaiming "My God! My God!" at the same time weeping bitterly. He remained on his knees all night, repeating the words "My God! My God!" and none others. After this edifying night, naturally, this nobleman in the morning made over to Francis *the whole of his property*, which Francis assisted him to distribute to the poor with such an air of proprietorship that he was immediately called on for the money for some stones he had bought to build a church, and had forgotten to pay. This plutocrat not only gave Francis his whole wealth the first thing that morning, but became his slave and promised to obey him in all he should command him.

This is the manner in which this extravagantly praised Order of St. Francis was founded. Francis in course of time became purblind—almost blind outright; *The Little Flowers* say "with weeping"; which led to some eye-opening experiences. In short, the ex-plutocrat, Bernardo, became afflicted with a holy deafness when Francis called—being held in conversation with no less a personage than God Almighty himself. This led to a pious contention which should obey the other. It ended in Francis having to lie down while Bernardo stood on him with one foot on his neck and the other on his mouth, exclaiming: "Shame upon thee! be humbled, son of Peter Bernardino, for thou art but a vile wretch. How darest thou be so proud, miserable servant of sin?" This was done three times; whereon Francis promised obedience to Bernardo on the understanding that he was to reprove Bernardo's defects "with great severity." Nevertheless Francis most judiciously, from fear he *might* be obliged to reprove Bernardo, avoided being much with him; moreover, when he was obliged to see or speak with him, parted from him as soon as possible! "And it was most edifying to hear with what charity, with what admiration and humility, St. Francis spoke of Brother Bernardo."

This is the start. When the Order was founded the friars "sought shame and contempt, out of love of Christ"; "they rejoiced to be despised and were grieved when honored"; but it is clear that it was this rich man of the world, Bernardo, and not the blear-eyed gutter snipe, Francis, who built up the great Order. Francis is given as praying in the woods, while Brother This and Brother That are making laws and giving orders. Bernardo went off to Bologna to extend the order—not Francis. His method of procedure was singularly charming. It consisted in sitting day after day in the market-place, while the street arabs

pushed him here and there, put dirt in his hat, and threw stones at him. Naturally, a rich man seeing this go on for several days said within himself "This man must be a great saint," and the convent was founded.

The next chapter commences with the assertion that the holiness of Brother Bernardo shone forth so brightly that St. Francis held him in great reverence; yet God revealed to him that Bernardo would sustain many powerful conflicts with the Devil; but Jesus intervened and assured him that all the temptations which assailed Bernardo would increase his virtue. This so filled Francis with joy that throughout his life Bernardo became "even dearer to Francis, and many proofs of affection did he give him, and died blessing him; and made him the head of the Order in succession to himself."

It appears there was a lake at Perugia; and Francis happening on the last day of the Carnival to find himself on its shores in the house of "one of his devout children, with whom he had passed the night"—(Let me digress, as the old novelists used to say. The Franciscan Order included citizens of all kinds, who continued their ordinary life)—and having spent the night with this devout child, he begged him "out of love of God" to take him in the night, so that none might know where he was, to an island uninhabited by man. This he did, and left him for six weeks, when he found that Francis had lived the whole while on the half of a loaf in a hut of brambles. But the bloom of the miracle is taken off by the fact that Francis appointed the day on which he was to be fetched; and the other that a lake on which populous cities were built would not be deserted by fishermen during the six weeks of Lent.

Here the readers of the *Freethinker* have an unsophisticated description of some of these charming flowers of holiness; a few pure petals of the sloe blossoms which heralded the flowers, both "little" and big, grown by this great order of worshipers of "poverty."

GEORGE TREBELLS.

### The Priest in History.

As down the vista of the years that mark the history of time,  
We gaze with studious eyes to trace the progress of "the life sublime";  
There rises over to our view a figure, whose dark shadow cast  
A spell upon our struggling race—on freedom blew its withering blast.  
The Priest! whose hands are stained with blood; whose soul is smeared with foulest crime;  
Whose ruling passions—wealth and power—are stamped on every age and clime.  
The kings and princes of the earth, before him bow with bended knee;  
With subtle stealth he moves and moulds a nation's life and destiny.  
At altar, temple, grove and shrine, with endless ceremonial show,  
He panders, with his mysteries, to human lust—and direful woe.  
To Moloch's fires the children casts, exulting in their dying yell;  
He drives the car of Juggernaut, and gloats upon the Christian hell.  
When infant man, with mind dismayed, at fearful portents in the sky,  
Crouched to the earth in abject fear, this fiend prepared his first great lie.  
He said the gods above were wroth and thirsting for some human blood;  
And lo! the precious life-stream flowed down countless ages like a flood.  
When growing thought at last rebelled against his human sacrifice,  
He said a lamb or turtle-dove, to turn heaven's anger, would suffice.  
He never followed in the wake of human progress, human thought;  
And as to moral heights man rose, with furious zeal he blindly fought.  
When frenzied prophets cried aloud against the sacrifice of beast,  
A fierce protracted struggle waged between the prophet and the priest.  
When balked of bloody sacrifice that did the priestly coffers fill,  
A web of jargon words he wove to keep the mind in bondage still.

By title and by outward garb, he sought himself to dignify;  
And for his self-made rank he claimed relationship with  
gods on high.

He talked with utmost confidence of things beyond all  
human ken;  
And thus imposed, by force of cheek, on his deluded  
fellow men.

This priestly parasite presumed to teach to man the ways  
of life;

But ever was the secret cause of social and of family strife.  
The sacred ties of life he claimed to sanction or to abrogate;  
And ruled with domineering hand, the individual and  
the state.

The poor, to labor and submit, he taught was heaven's  
fixed decree;

The while he wallowed at his ease, in idleness and luxury.  
He credit gained for sanctity, by his exterior unctuous  
smile;

And used his polished guise to hide a life of wickedness  
most vile.

This arch-deceiver claimed to know the whims and fancies  
of the gods;

Whose will to him was oft revealed by secret signs and  
*winks and nods.*

He knowledge everywhere suppressed, as menacing his  
priestly power;

And taught that ignorance was bliss—on which the gods  
would blessings shower.

When through the mists of ignorance that long had held the  
mind in bond,

The light of truth, with quickening force, on human reason  
clearly dawned,

The priest in all his vengeful might to crush the new-born  
thought arose,

With fire and faggot cursed and burned, who dared his  
ill-used power oppose.

The enemy of all mankind in every age and every place,  
Opposing every true reform to help uplift the human race;

With haughty mien and selfish end, to human rights entirely  
blind,

He sought to warp and to reduce to childishness the human  
mind.

The axe with purpose sure is laid to root of this fell  
Upas tree;

And with its fall the sons of men from priestly bondage  
shall be free.

Some future Madoc yet may rise the priests to vanquish  
and expel;

And viewing all his past declare, "No priest among us  
now shall dwell."

JOSEPH BRYCE.

### National Secular Society.

MONTHLY Report of Executive Meeting held at 2 Newcastle-  
street, E.C., on Thursday, February 22. The President, Mr.  
G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:  
Messrs. J. Barry, C. Cohen, H. Cowell, F. A. Davies, W. Leat,  
J. Marshall, J. Neate, V. Roger, F. Schaller, S. Samuels,  
H. Silverstein, F. Schindel, F. Wood, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed and  
cash statement adopted. Ten new members were admitted  
to the Society.

The International Freethought Congress to be held at  
Buenos Aires was discussed, and it was resolved to make  
arrangements whereby the N. S. S. could be formally repre-  
sented.

An application for assistance for the Hetton-le-Hole  
Branch was granted.

It was unanimously resolved to issue a Manifesto on  
Secular Education, which the President kindly undertook to  
prepare; and arrangements for a Public Demonstration at  
an early date were also discussed.

It was moved by Mr. Cowell, seconded by Mr. Roger:—

"That in view of the fact that much progress in mental  
liberality has taken place since forty-five members voted for  
Charles Bradlaugh's Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy  
Laws, this Executive believes that the same Bill would meet  
with very much larger support to-day, and ventures to hope  
that Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P., who is a well-known Free-  
thought propagandist, and was once associated with Charles  
Bradlaugh on the *National Reformer*, will see his way to intro-  
ducing that Bill again, and at the earliest possible date, in  
the present House of Commons."

This was carried unanimously. The death of Mr. Charles

Watts was referred to, and the following resolution was  
carried:—

"That this Executive regrets to hear of the death of Mr.  
Charles Watts, preceded by much suffering, and places on  
record its recognition of his former services to Freethought  
in connection with the National Secular Society."

The meeting then adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

### Correspondence.

#### DO THE PARENTS CARE?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your paper of the 25th date, you have an "Acid  
Drop" commencing "A Father of Six," and I wish to give  
you a few facts relating to the town of Eccles (where the  
cakes come from). I have these particulars from Councillor  
Grindle, chairman of the Education Committee, an ex-  
schoolmaster and a Nonconformist. When this (to Non-  
conformists) iniquitous Act came into force, they kicked up  
a row at Eccles and got the Town Council to pass a Local  
Act, that if they so desired, the parents could withdraw  
their children from religious instruction. They held town  
meetings and got up a great agitation to explain to the  
parents so that they would take advantage of this exemption  
clause; they also had 10,000 slips printed, worded so that  
the parent had only to sign his name and send his child at  
9.45 a.m. to receive the mark, and no religious instruction  
would be given; they also gave a slip to each of the 7,000  
children attending the schools, and requested the parents to  
return them duly signed, and here is the point of my letter:  
*not one* paper was returned. This is no fairy tale but the  
truth, and can be verified by application to the Chairman of  
the Education Committee.

PENDLETON.

#### THE LATE MR. GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The general misrepresentation of the late Mr.  
Holyoake's Atheistic opinions is really astonishing—even in  
a "Christian" country.

Last Sunday's *Reynolds'* says, in answer to a correspon-  
dent: "The late Mr. Holyoake was a Christian in the true  
sense of the word, but he did not believe that Jesus Christ  
was divine." The correspondent is not likely to infer from  
this that Mr. Holyoake did not believe in "divinity" at all.

The last time I met Mr. Holyoake, about four years ago,  
he said to me: "Parsons and other Christians are quite busy  
telling lies about what they call my changed opinions; some  
of them say that I have given up Atheism, although the fact  
is (laughing heartily) I am at this moment more of an Atheist  
than ever, if such a thing is possible."

These are his own words. I made a note of them at the  
time.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

P.S.—Mr. Holyoake, at the same time, also told me that  
he always enjoyed reading my "*blasphemous verses*" in the  
*Freethinker*.—G. L. M.

### Obituary.

I HAVE to record the death, on the 26th inst., at Lea-  
mington, of William Clarke, a veteran Freethinker, who had  
attained the ripe old age of ninety-five years. Brought up  
a Roman Catholic, he professed that faith till past middle  
life, when he came under Freethought influences; and for  
more than forty years he had been an uncompromising  
opponent of Christianity. His wide reading and excellent  
tact, aided by plenty of leisure time, enabled him to do very  
good work for the cause which he had at heart. The funeral  
will (if possible) take place on Friday (March 2) at Mil-  
verton Cemetery at 2 o'clock, and, at the special request of  
the deceased, a Secular Burial Service will be read.—  
H. R. CLIFTON.

I reverence truth as much as anybody; and when it has  
slipped us, if a man will but take me by the hand, and go  
quietly and search for it, as for a thing we have both lost,  
and can neither of us do well without,—I'll go to the world's  
end with him.—*Sterne.*

Be like the promotory against which the waves continually  
break, but it stands firm and tames the fury of the waters  
around it.—*Marcus Aurelius.*

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

### LONDON.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, F. C. Gobert, "Joseph McCabe on the Origin of Life."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): 7.30, Carl Quinn, "The Blood Religion."

### COUNTRY.

FAIRSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Hy. Harrison, "Can a Socialist be a Free Trader?"

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (110 Brunswick-street): John Lloyd, 12 (noon), "Should Freethinkers be Miserable?" 6.30, "The Latest Peril in the Christian Faith."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST AND ETHICAL ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Monday, March 5, at 8, Ex-Bailie John Ferguson, "Federalism."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): George Scott, 3, "Roman Catholicism: An Impeachment"; 7, "Why I Left the Church of Rome." Tuesday, at 8, Social and Cinderella.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 6.30, G. Willis, "Spiritualist Phenomena: Self-Control versus Spirit Control." With Psychic and Seance Display.

NELSON BRANCH N. S. S. (Weavers' Institute): Monday, March 5, at 7.30, Joseph McCabe, "Religion and Science" (a Reply to the Rev. Frank Ballard). Tuesday, March 6, at 7.30, Joseph McCabe, "The Evolution of Man." With Limelight Illustrations.

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY (Cockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, March 8, at 8, A. Tarn, "The Need of Religion."

PAISLEY (Co-operative Hall, Bank-street): Tuesday, March 6, at 8, J. T. Lloyd, "Christianity Weighed in the Balance."

PORTRH BRANCH N. S. S. (Room, Town Hall, Porth): 6.30, W. Fitten, "How I Became an Atheist."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Mr. Lloyd's Lecture Arrangements.

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