

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

Man and Woman are equal in nothing, and unequal in nothing, but complementary in everything.

—GARTH WILKINSON.

A Yarmouth Comedy.

YARMOUTH has always had a shady political reputation. Once it was disfranchised for many years, and the state of things since it resumed sending a member to parliament has apparently not much improved. According to the last number of the *Yarmouth Mercury* it is a patent fact that "a very large section of the electors of the borough entertain an extremely low standard of morality concerning elections. Anyone who has ever taken part in a contest knows full well that there are hundreds of electors who make no secret of the fact that they expect to be paid for their votes." From which it may be inferred that Yarmouth is a Tory borough with an uncommonly pious character. Religion is "all over the shop" there.

This lamentable prevalence of bribery troubled the minds of some Yarmouth Freethinkers, who resolved to do what little they could to stem the tide of corruption. Accordingly they issued the following placard during the recent general election:—

"BRIBERY.

It is said that bribery is rampant here in Yarmouth. If it be so, who is to blame for such a state of affairs? Why, those who

FIND THE MONEY.

What then should the voter do? Well, he should

TAKE THE BRIBE

or bribes offered to him, and then vote as he pleases. No one will be the wiser, for the

BALLOT IS SECRET.

If asked how he has voted he should reply 'For your man.' The moral law (says Archdeacon Paley) is that a lie may be told to him who 'has no right to

KNOW THE TRUTH.'

This bill is issued by the East Anglian Agnostic Association.—J. W. DE CAUX, *Chairman.*"

The authors of this placard were obviously serious and honest. They neither meant to offer bribes nor to take them. They proceeded on these assumptions: (1) that bribery was an evil, (2) that it was rampant in Yarmouth, (3) that it was useless to appeal to those who offered the bribes, (4) that the only possible appeal was to those who took the bribes, (5) that these voters were often less purchased than intimidated, (6) that they might, after all, have honor enough left to vote according to their consciences, if it were safe to do so, (7) and that if they could be induced to do so bribery would die a natural death by being rendered unprofitable.

The reference to Archdeacon Paley in this Agnostic placard is strictly accurate. Paley, in his *Moral Philosophy*, has a special chapter on "Lies." He specifies many common instances in which a falsehood may be told; and then adds generally that a falsehood may be told "When the person to whom you speak has no right to know the truth, or properly, where little or no inconveniency results from the want of confidence in such cases; as where

you tell a falsehood to a madman, for his own advantage; to a robber, to conceal your property; to an assassin, to defeat, or to divert him from, his purpose." A page further on Paley states the essence of his argument in the sentence that, "It is the wilful deceit that makes the lie."

Those who have read the famous reply of Newman to Kingsley will remember how the great Catholic triumphantly showed him that Protestant moralists had allowed occasions on which a man was not bound to tell the truth. Christians, as well as Freethinkers, when they speak honestly, know that the law of self-preservation justifies every man in defending himself as he can against aggression. If a man's employer, for instance, or his landlord, wanted to know how he voted, and would have an answer—so that no answer at all would necessarily be an answer; such a man has a perfect right to protect himself, his wife, and his family, by means of deception. It is the only weapon his aggressor has left him, and to censure him for using it is a ridiculous absurdity.

A person who has no right to know the truth may be denied it. So said Paley, and so by implication said a very different man, the great Sir Walter Scott. A man of more transparent sincerity never lived, yet on being pointedly asked whether he was the author of the *Waverley* novels he pointedly denied it. The novels were published anonymously, it was to be presumed that the author had good reasons for concealing his identity, the question put to Scott was therefore impertinent, and he dealt with it accordingly.

Now let us go back to the Yarmouth election. Bribery went on, of course, as usual. It was bad enough to justify an enquiry. The result was that the Conservative member only retained his seat by the skin of his teeth—and the favor of Mr. Justice Grantham; and two of the bribers, who were refused a certificate of indemnity during the investigation, were prosecuted, found guilty, and punished; John George Baker being fined £100 and William Morl £20. We understand that the fines have been paid; and it would not be irrational to suppose that the withdrawal was found by those who found the money for the bribery—for it is not pretended that Baker and Morl were two indiscreet philanthropists.

And now the fun begins. Baker was defended by Mr. Wild, and acting on that gentleman's advice he pleaded guilty. All that could be done was to urge something in mitigation of sentence. Mr. Wild conceived the Gilbertian idea of representing poor Baker as a "misguided amateur" at the business of bribery. And who misguided him? Why the authors of that Agnostic poster. They put the notion into his weak head. Bribery had been going on for any number of years, Yarmouth stank of it, but the honest simplicity of John George Baker was proof against everything but the Mephistophelean suggestion of that "infidel" placard.

Mr. Wild may be forgiven for this romantic defence of his interesting client. He is a lawyer, and says whatever is necessary—for the usual consideration. Mr. Justice Lawrence waived the counsel's argument aside. "I cannot suppose," he said, addressing Baker, "that you yourself were misled by that highly ridiculous placard that was issued." This was sensible enough as between the judge and the

prisoner and his counsel. But his lordship was not satisfied with letting well alone. He went out of his way to express his opinion on a matter which was not really before him, and to which he had given very little critical attention. "It was, in my judgment," he said, "a very wrong thing to issue such a placard. Anything which tends to assist, as that must have done, in producing corrupt practices, is a very wrong thing, and the morality of this Agnostic Association, whatever it is, is a morality which I reprehend in the strongest possible way. But as I have not got the Agnostic Association or any of its members to deal with it is no good my considering that in my sentence upon you." Quite so—and why did his lordship waste the time of the court in that way? Certainly he was not dealing with the members of the Agnostic Association. Quite as certainly he never will have to deal with them. We repeat that they neither offered bribes nor invited them. If his lordship had read their placard with a candid mind, and a modicum of intelligence, he must have seen that their object was not to encourage bribery but to frustrate it in the most efficacious manner.

The *Yarmouth Mercury* was even less excusable than Mr. Justice Lawrence. Our contemporary is perfectly well aware that the politics of Yarmouth, including the bribery, is "run" by professed Christians. Our contemporary is also perfectly well aware that Mr. J. W. de Caux, who signed that Agnostic Association placard as chairman, is an absolutely incorruptible citizen, who has steadfastly refused to countenance in any way the corruption that prevails in Yarmouth, and has consequently stood aloof from the present miserable competition for public places. To speak of him, therefore, or his associates, as "encouraging" an ignorant class of men to commit a criminal offence is sheer hypocrisy. The same may be said of the cheap sneers at the Agnostics' "standard of morality," and the equally cheap wonder that Agnostics did not "throw themselves on the side of purity in elections." They did throw themselves on that side—and they failed; but that is because Yarmouth is so full of people who are not Agnostics.

And now for a final word about Paley. Paley was a Christian, he was an Archdeacon of the Church of England, and his *Moral Philosophy* has been used as a text-book in Christian universities. It was he whom the Agnostic placard quoted as declaring that a man who had no right to know the truth might be told a falsehood. But the dear good Christians ignore Paley altogether. They fasten the responsibility of this doctrine, which so offends their sensitive ethical instincts, entirely upon the East Anglian Agnostic Association. They affect to believe that this Association invented the detestable theory. Really the comedy is exquisite. And perhaps it is lucky that Freethinkers, with all their intellectual seriousness, have the sense of humor to enjoy the spectacle. The Christians were solemn when they burnt "infidels" alive; they are farcical in suggesting that it is the "infidel" who tempts his Christian neighbors from the strict path of virtue, and that without him they would hardly know the meaning of wickedness.

G. W. FOOTE.

Dr. Horton on Hospitals.

SUNDAY, June 17, was Hospital Sunday—a day devoted to collecting money for the support of institutions that would be subsidised by the State, were our sense of social organisation stronger and vested interests weaker. The casual and fitful stream of private philanthropy is certainly but a poor foundation on which to build institutions that are, as matters go, essential to the well-being of the people. The money is raised from all quarters and classes, without, of course, the slightest reference to one's political or religious opinions. But, with characteristic honesty, once the money is gathered in, the

Christian preacher smugly refer to the hospitals as *Christian* institutions, without it ever occurring to him that he might just as reasonably affix his sectarian label to sewers or public reservoirs. But Hospital Sunday offers too good an occasion for the clergy to advertise themselves for them to sacrifice it to any such scruple, and so we are treated to a number of annual sermons on how much hospitals and medical science in general are indebted to Christianity.

One of these annual sermons was this year preached by Dr. R. F. Horton. The title of his sermon was "Christian Science," and it dealt very largely with the modern sect of that name. If "Christian Science" could only boast of poor people among its followers it would receive but scant notice from the pulpit. But a large proportion of that body are comfortably off; a number of them are wealthy; in America they have just opened a two hundred million dollar church; expensive buildings are also to be planted elsewhere; there is, in a word, money in it, and it is therefore receiving quite respectful notice from a large number of orthodox preachers. And they find it valuable in calling attention to neglected spiritual truths, although marked by extravagance and exaggeration. It is astonishing the difference of treatment by a Christian clergyman of an opinion that is economically poor and one that is backed by the almighty dollar.

I have no intention of following Dr. Horton in discussing whether Christian Science is scriptural or unscriptural. This may be an interesting and important point to a believer, but to an unbeliever it is like discussing which of two is the better form of folly, neither of which he is anxious to preserve. Dr. Horton's sermon is noticed because of other statements made during his address. Dr. Horton, for instance, subscribes to the good old-fashioned doctrine that "disease was appointed for the service of man," a teaching that may be comforting enough to a hard-pressed apologist, but will not sound quite so cheerful to such as are experiencing the full benefit of the visitation. As a matter of fact, to say that man is benefited by disease is one of the falsest of pulpit falsehoods. Nor would it be tolerated for a moment except by a people whose moral strength had been vitiated by centuries of Christian teaching. Everyone's experience will provide numerous cases to prove that there is no more certain agent than ill-health for the destruction of much that makes for sanity of life and sweetness of living. Here and there the Christian may point to one who bears disease with fortitude, or even cheerfulness. But a little reflection will show that these qualities are neither created nor developed by disease; they are simply inherent to the organism. But, on the other hand, numerous cases might be produced where cheerfulness has broken down and fortitude been undermined by disease. Disease demands patience of the attendant, but it destroys it in the patient; it necessitates cheerfulness on the part of those who visit the sick, but this necessity is in itself a proof of its comparative absence with the diseased. Dr. Horton cites Milton as a proof of the truth of his statement, and says "it was to the calamity of his blindness that we owed 'Paradise Lost' and 'Regained,' and 'Samson Agonistes.'" But this is sheer folly. "Paradise Lost" was no more the outcome of Milton's blindness than was Pope's poetry the result of his crooked spine. It is remarkable that Milton should have composed these poems during his blindness, but there are many indications that the genesis of "Paradise Lost" was laid long before his affliction, and at any rate a great many of his poems and nearly all his finest prose writings were published while he still retained his sight. The world was in all probability a loser, not a gainer, by Milton's blindness. Nor is it clear that even Milton was personally improved by the loss of sight.

"Of all places," says Dr. Horton, "hospitals..... seemed to have most of the atmosphere of heaven..... In the house of sickness the doctor bringing all his strength and skill to the help of the weak and suffer-

ing, the nurse with her patient care and sacrifice, were the most convincing witnesses of the nature of God." I am not, of course, any authority on the atmosphere of heaven, although I should judge it would be a place unusually rich in pathologic cases of a certain type. Presumably what Dr. Horton means is that we can discover the nature of God in a hospital because we see there kindness and skill as the expression of love and wisdom. But this is not all we see in a hospital, and we are logically bound to consider *all* we see in such an institution. Moreover, the qualities admired are only admirable because of other things of an opposite character. The charity that provides hospitals for those unable to purchase medical attendance is only of value because of the poverty of a large section of the population. The kindness shown by nurses and others is only necessary because of the suffering experienced—suffering that is, often enough, undeserved, and generally without any intelligent relation to any wrong committed. Above all, the skill of the doctor is only of value because of an existing evil—disease. Could we abolish disease, we should be only too happy to dispense with human ingenuity in this direction.

But whence comes all this disease and suffering, and what does it indicate? One is bound to take it as quite as much an indication of God's character as anything else. The same reasoning that sees benevolence in one aspect of the phenomenon should see malevolence in its reverse. The indications that one may gather of the nature of God from the breadwinner of a family stricken with an incurable disease through no fault of his own, or of helpless children reaping the fruits of hereditary disease, are sights hardly likely to intensify one's admiration of him in whom "all things move and have their being." On what grounds are we to admire a deity for creating antidotes that can, at best, but partly nullify the effects of poisons he had previously brought into being? If the kindness and skill of nurse and doctor are necessary, it is obviously only because the evil of things demand them. How much better it would have been to have made good health general and impeccable. Or, if Dr. Horton really believes that disease is so valuable an individual and social asset, if blindness can call forth great poetry, and other afflictions produce their corresponding works of genius, why appeal for funds to subdue disease—why not head a movement for its preservation and propagation? Is it not, to put it mildly, rather rough on certain individuals that they shall be afflicted with disease in order to develop the skill or charitable feelings of someone else? Some years ago I saw on a hospital wall the text, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow"; and took it for a piece of satire by some Freethinking official. It is probable I was mistaken, and that it was displayed by someone of Dr. Horton's type.

What, after all, have Christians, as Christians, to do with hospitals, or with medical science? There is no warranty for either one or the other in the New Testament. It is true Luke is said to have been a doctor, but if his treatment was anything like it is described by the Rev. Baring-Gould, the people must have benefited considerably when he gave up medicine for preaching. But the great medicine of the New Testament is faith; the great restorer, prayer. It was by faith that Jesus healed the sick, by faith he promised that the sick should heal themselves, and it is by prayer and faith that the New Testament definitely promises that the sick shall be healed in future. A Christian hospital would be one manned entirely by parsons, with a dispensary stocked with the only article recommended by the Christian Scriptures. And if a hospital was run on these principles, one may safely say that the average Christian would avoid it as he would the plague.

Nor has medical science anything for which to thank Christianity—doctrinal or historical. Such as it is, it has its beginnings in the ancient schools of Greece and Egypt. Dying out, as did ancient science in general, under the oppressive weight of early Christianity, its renaissance was brought about by

the influence of the Mohammedan schools of medicine and surgery. The Churches made a hard fight in defence of its magic-working and miracle cures, as well as to perpetuate the filthy conditions of life, that made plagues such terrible scourges in the Christian ages of the world's history. Surgery was branded as Atheism, medicine as blasphemy. Some of the greatest men in the history of both were treated by Christianity as common felons, or as enemies to their kind. Even in recent times, the use of chloroform as an anæsthetic by Simpson was denounced on religious grounds by fervent believers. Indeed, the treatment of medical men by the Christian Church—largely because they interfered with the profits of the Church—forms one of the most disgraceful and sordid chapters in its sordid and disgraceful history. True, many medical men have been Christians, and Christians have supported medical institutions. But the first were Christians in spite of their science, and the latter human beings before they were Christians. And, in the long run, human nature conquers here as elsewhere.

C. COHEN.

The Art of Living.

How many of us, alas, are the slaves of convention! How few genuine Nonconformists the world contains! The majority of us are too timid to be openly true to our convictions if they happen to differ from those of our neighbors, too weak or cowardly to stand apart from the crowd. For each avowed Freethinker there are twenty unavowed ones. Conventionalism is the ruling fault of the day; and every bold departure from it is severely punished. The truth is that society is a cruel tyrant; and all who oppose it are in torment. This is the reason why the number of out-and-out dissenters is so lamentably small. Intellectual honesty is to most people forbiddingly costly; and the price of it was never higher than it is today. From the popular point of view, honesty is *not* the best policy, nor is it the policy generally followed, although from public platforms we are, either ignorantly or hypocritically, assured that it is both. And yet we are deeply convinced that honesty, though never outwardly the best policy, is the root of all the virtues, and that in its absence nobility of character is impossible. In mental affairs we are absurdly apt to play fast and loose with ourselves, forgetful of the fact that by so doing we inflict an irreparable injury upon ourselves. We study our position, reputation, comfort, income, and what not, not caring to remind ourselves that truth is of infinitely greater value than all else, and that truth can be discerned only in the transparency of an honest heart.

Now, the point I wish to emphasise is that without intellectual honesty true happiness is an impossibility. In Zola's *Lourdes*, *Rome*, and *Paris* this truth is most tellingly illustrated. Pierre was a priest whose faith suffered total shipwreck. Yet, after his faith was gone, he continued to discharge priestly duties. He went up and down the streets of Paris in his cassock, and the people revered him as a saint. But in his own estimation, he was "an empty sepulchre," a thorough hypocrite. "Whilst believing nothing himself he had resolved to watch, in all loyalty, over the belief of others. He would not so lower himself as to forswear his vows, he would be no base renegade, but however great the torments of the void he felt within him he would remain the minister of man's illusions respecting the Divinity. And it was by reason of his conduct in this respect that he had ended by being venerated as a saint—he who denied everything, who had become a mere empty sepulchre." But at last he was inconceivably miserable, despising himself. He was now spending most of his time with his brother on the heights of Montmartre. His brother had three sons, and lived with his mother-in-law. The mother of the boys was dead, and their father was now on the eve of mar-

rying a young girl called Marie, whom he had adopted as an orphan. It was an ideally happy home; and all the members of it were avowed Atheists. To Pierre such blessedness was an offence, and the knowledge of it intensified his own wretchedness. Had it not been for the importunity of his brother, he would have discontinued his visits. While the others toiled and talked and laughed Pierre was idle, depressed, and silent. But he could not stop away. By and by, he began to take a fresh interest in life, and insisted on doing some little work himself. Marie and he became firm friends; and she took a special delight in teaching him the art of living. Indeed, "he felt that he was beginning to live since she had become his friend."

"One evening, at the close of a good day's work, Pierre, who was helping Thomas (one of the boys), suddenly caught his foot in the skirt of his cassock and narrowly escaped falling. At this, Marie, after raising a faint cry of anxiety, exclaimed, 'Why don't you take it off?'"

It was a simple question, asked without malice; but it went straight home. He had been requested to renounce the priesthood and become a man.

"The question was a very clear one. By what right did he remain the minister of a religion in which he no longer believed? Did not elementary honesty require that he should quit a Church in which he denied the presence of the Divinity? He regarded the dogmas of that Church as puerile errors, and yet he persisted in teaching them as if they were eternal truths. Base work it was, that alarmed his conscience."

Pierre's experience, so realistically portrayed by Zola, is by no means unique. Many have passed through the same ordeal; more are passing through it now. Thousands teach what they only partly believe, while hundreds preach doctrines which they themselves cannot accept at all, but faith in which they regard as highly beneficial to the ignorant masses. There are others, and perhaps they are more numerous than many of us imagine, who remain in the Christian ministry simply because they do not know how to get out of it, or because they have not the courage to face the poverty, the ignominy, the ostracism, and the studied persecution which they know would be their lot upon their avowing their unbelief. We must not judge such people too severely, because they are beset by many strong temptations. Still we are bound to lay stress on the fact that it can never be morally right to teach, as if it were truth, what is believed to be error, because it is impossible that error, cherished as truth, should, in the long run, prove ethically helpful even to the most ignorant. In the nature of things, truth must be more valuable in every way than falsehood. If Christianity is not true, to preach it as if it were is a crime against human nature; and when those who do not believe in it themselves so preach it, the guilt attaching to such action is of the deepest dye.

When Marie said to Pierre, "Why not take your cassock off?" he was struck dumb. "His conscience bled as if those words were a stab. What contempt must she not feel for him, she who was so upright, so high minded!" And Marie, "so upright, so high minded," was an Atheist. She had never believed in hell, nor ever stood in any dread of it. She had never cherished the least hope of going to heaven when she died, nor had she ever believed that any such heaven existed. "She lived in all quietude, her one thought being to comply in a reasonable way with the requirements and necessities of earthly life. It was, perhaps, in some measure a matter of temperament with her, but it was also a matter of education." Marie was a natural woman, who was guided in all her life by natural knowledge, and by natural instincts wisely trained; and, consequently, she was happy herself, and contributed to the happiness of those around her.

If a man verily believes in the supernatural, it would be the height of unreason to expect him to avow Secularism. He naturally cannot do it. But we can call his earnest attention to the flimsy character of the foundation on which the scheme of supernaturalism is made to rest, and to the utter

impossibility of verifying or proving the reality of anything above and beyond Nature. We can dwell, with all the enthusiasm at our command, upon the ample sufficiency of natural knowledge for all the requirements of human life, and on the beautiful and highly-useful life which many Secularists have succeeded, and do succeed, in living. This consideration ought to be of weight even with the most ardent believers, while with languid and only partial adherents of faith, and more particularly with those virtual unbelievers who yet hesitate to avow their unbelief, it ought to be absolutely conclusive. Secularism imperils no human interest whatever, but directly tends to safeguard and foster all that makes for human welfare and happiness. Secularism makes full provision for all the needs of mankind. It presents the art of living as an art that can be learned only by constant practice and diligent application. Religion has served to divide humanity into innumerable hostile sects and parties and factions which are always at war with one another, while Secularism continually seeks to emphasise its essential unity, and to cultivate the sense of that unity by exclusively scientific and ethical means.

On what ground, therefore, can Secularism be distrusted and denounced? For what reasons can it be rejected by rational people? The witness of history is entirely in its favor. Take the prisons of Great Britain, and how many Secularists do you find in them? Only 22 in 24,000. We are often asked, in derision, "Where are the hospitals built by Secularists?" and we return the compliment by asking, "Where are the prisons built, and also filled, by Secularists?" No; Secularism does not breed criminals, nor does it for a moment tolerate moral licence. "But," someone may ask, "what about the awful bloodshed of the Reign of Terror in France? Do not the unspeakable atrocities and horrors of that dismal period prove conclusively that Atheism can only lead to shocking immoralities, and grinding, pitiless, cruel, and unreprieved slaughter?" In reply, I unhesitatingly assert that the Reign of Terror was not the harvest of Freethought, but of the Christian Religion; or, rather, of the Catholic Church. At no time did the Government surrender, or seek to suppress Catholicism; and at no time was the number of Atheists in the Constituent Assembly sufficiently large to control its decisions: indeed, even Deists formed but a minority. In their references to this subject, Christian apologists ignore the fact that on its social side the Revolution was an attack on the aristocracy, and that practically all the Atheists of the day were aristocrats; and it was these, chiefly, who passed under the guillotine. Herbert, who led one of the dominant parties, positively denied that he was an Atheist, and constantly exhorted the people to study the Gospels and follow Christ, while Robespierre, who led another, and who was so closely associated with the Reign of Terror, expressly recognised a Supreme Being by setting up his worship, and proclaimed the immortality of the soul. Thus the charge against Atheism, that it was responsible for the Reign of Terror, completely falls to the ground. There is not one tiniest shred of documentary evidence on which it can be made to rest. If anyone doubts this statement, let him consult the valuable work of M. Aulard.

The way is now perfectly clear for the deliberate affirmation that the main subjects on which Secularism succeeds in throwing invaluable light are the Science of Life and the Art of Living in this world. Knowing absolutely nothing of any other world, it concentrates its whole attention on this; and, being utterly ignorant of a personal God, it confines its work to persons that are both knowable and known. Its central aim is to prevent our being led astray by empty beliefs and baseless hopes, and, with scientific intelligence, to direct our individual, as well as social, growth and development. Its mission is thus partly negative and partly positive; only let it be remembered that the object of the negative part is to serve the interests of the positive.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Making of the Gospels.—III.

(Concluded from p. 395.)

As has been shown in the last paper, it is now admitted by advanced Biblical critics that the evangelists Matthew and Luke compiled their Gospels from two written sources—the Gospel of Mark and “another document,” the latter being unknown. It is further admitted that at least a portion of the Gospel of Mark was derived from a written source; whence, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is to be inferred that the whole of the Second Gospel is a compilation made from older writings, and this is rendered more probable from the fact (admitted by all critics) that the compiler was not a witness of the events he records. We thus arrive at the all-important fact—and one which I have more than once referred to as the most weighty argument against the credibility of the so-called Gospel “history”—that the three Synoptical Gospels are merely compilations derived from pre-existing written narratives, whose authors or originators are unknown. And this brings us to the question of the amount and value of the evidence that, under these circumstances, can now be adduced in support of the verity of the Gospel legends.

Upon this point let us first hear what Canon Scott has to say on the Christian side. This eminent Biblical scholar admits that the evidence adducible is very small indeed. He says (pages 31-32):—

“There is one very common error that we must guard against. The Synoptic Gospels, except in one case, only furnish us with the testimony of a single witness. When St. Matthew and St. Luke embody St. Mark in their Gospels, the testimony is of value as the testimony of St. Mark alone: therefore it is the testimony of only one witness. Similarly, when they quote the lost Gospel or fragment of a Gospel, the evidence is only the evidence of the author of that fragment. This is very important for us to remember; especially when we have to deal with opponents. The very worst thing a Christian can do is to overstate his side of the case..... Therefore, speaking in general terms, the joint testimony of all the Synoptists is only the testimony of a single witness. There is one important exception to this, and that is the story of the Resurrection.....The testimony to the Resurrection is the evidence of six separate witnesses.”

There can be no mistaking this statement; but the reverend gentleman, like all Christian advocates, has in the words just quoted overstated his side of the case. In Mark's Gospel, for instance, have we the testimony of one “witness” to the truth of the narratives contained in that Gospel? We have not. The writer himself was certainly not a witness of the events and circumstances he relates, and he does not even tell us who was the originator of the legends he has recorded. Similarly, we have not the testimony of one witness to the truth of the narratives copied by Matthew and Luke from what is called the “other document”? Who was the author of this “other document”? Whence came the writer's information? Did he concoct the stories himself? or did he commit to writing all the legends in circulation in his time? We know absolutely nothing of this anonymous writer or of the source of his narratives.

With regard to the alleged Resurrection we have, it is true, six accounts; but every one of them flatly contradicts one or more of the others. It thus becomes evident that all save one must be false, and yet we are told that we have for this story “the evidence of six separate witnesses.” The oldest of these “testimonies” is that given by Paul, who was not himself a witness, and who appears never to have heard of Mary Magdalene, the foremost figure in all the other accounts. In the case of the Fourth Gospel we have again one “witness”—the writer—who made up a set of new discourses which he placed in the mouth of Jesus. This writer desired it to be thought that his forged Gospel was the work of the apostle John, but he had not the audacity to say so

plainly. His “testimony” reads as follows:—

“This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true” (xxi. 24).

It was this veracious writer who invented the story of an angel coming down from heaven at certain seasons to “trouble” the water of a pool in Jerusalem, and the story of the restoration to life of a Jew named Lazarus, after the latter had been dead four days and decomposition had commenced—stories unknown to the three Synoptists. We have, then, not a single witness to any of the events and circumstances narrated in the first three Gospels, and only a false witness to the fictitious narratives recorded in the Fourth Gospel.

The “common error” which Canon Scott counsels his co-religionists to guard against appears to be very common indeed. I cannot, in fact, call to mind a single Christian apologist, from Paley downwards, who has not fallen into it. Paley's argument of the credibility of the Gospel history is a gem of the first water. It commences, as many readers will remember, as follows:—

“If twelve men, whose probity and good sense I had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, in which it was impossible that they should be deceived,” etc.

It is amusing to notice how thickly, even in this short paragraph, assumptions are piled one upon another. For the historic truth of the Gospel miracles we have the testimony of twelve witnesses; these witnesses were noted for probity and good sense; they saw the miracles worked before their eyes; they could not be deceived by trickery or sleight of hand, and so on, and so on, to the end of the “argument.” It is, of course, needless to say that we do not possess the testimony of a single person who saw one of the Gospel miracles performed.

The late Dean Farrar is a notable instance of modern divines who employ the same delightful method of reasoning. According to this apologist, Christ's claim to have worked miracles “was undisputed by his deadliest enemies. Neither the Pharisees, nor the multitudes, nor Caiaphas, nor Herod..... dreamt of denying that he had wrought deeds apparently supernatural.” Wonderful! Not one of the characters in the Gospel stories did—or could—deny that Jesus was a great miracle-worker; consequently, the only thing lacking is evidence proving the truth of the Gospel stories—which, unfortunately, is not forthcoming. This method of reasoning is the one most generally employed in all Christian Evidence circles, and is simplicity itself. One has but to assume the Gospel stories to be true, then the characters in the stories prove the narratives to be historical.

We are now in a position to form a correct estimate of the value of the “testimony” for the verity of the Gospel legends. How do we know, for instance, that the Holy Ghost descended on Jesus “as a dove,” and that a voice was heard calling out of heaven; that Jesus cast out evil spirits and cured people afflicted with leprosy, palsy, and blindness; that he stilled a tempest at sea by “rebuking” the wind and the waves; that he restored a dead girl to life by simply taking her hand and saying “Damsel, I say unto thee Arise”; that he fed 5,000 men with five loaves and two fishes, and had “twelve basketfuls” of bread and fish remaining; that he caused a fig tree to wither away by cursing it? What evidence do we possess for the actual occurrence of these wonders? According to Canon Scott, we have the testimony of one witness, Mark, whose account has been copied by two later compilers, Matthew and Luke: that is to say, the supernatural occurrences mentioned are found narrated in a book ascribed to an unknown writer named Mark, who was not himself a witness of any of the events recorded. In other words, we have not the smallest particle of evidence that any one of the events recorded in Mark's Gospel was ever witnessed by anybody.

What evidence, again, do we possess for the story of the Virgin Birth, and for the story of Jesus having been carried by the Devil through the air, and placed on the pinnacle of the temple? Well, for these small matters we have the unimpeachable "testimony" of the writer of the "other document" from which Matthew and Luke took their accounts, both the writer and the document being unknown.

And what evidence, to take a final example, do we possess for the stories of turning water into wine, of healing a man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead? In these cases, also, we have the unsworn "testimony" of one "witness"—the unknown second century writer who piously placed discourses of his own composition in the mouth of his beloved Savior for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian religion. It thus becomes clearly apparent that we have not the testimony of a single witness for any of the alleged sayings and doings of Christ recorded in the Gospels. As to the much lauded Sermon on the Mount, given in the First Gospel, Canon Scott says:—

"When we come to investigate the contents of the great sermon in St. Matthew, we find that to the Sermon as apparently originally delivered St. Matthew has added portions of others of our Lord's discourses, which Luke gives as having been uttered on different occasions.Our investigations go to show that this great Sermon is not merely a single discourse, but is a complete summary of all our Lord's preaching to the multitudes. Or, in other words, St. Matthew has been inspired to take the reports of our Lord's discourses and weave them into a systematic exposition of our Lord's teaching."

Here it is plainly admitted that this grand Sermon was not delivered by "our Lord" upon the occasion and in the manner represented in the First Gospel, and that it is, in fact, a literary composition, the work of Matthew himself, who was "inspired" to compose discourses for his Savior from "reports" whose originators are unknown. We have therefore no evidence that Jesus ever uttered one word of this concocted Sermon.

There is one point upon which the Canon of Manchester is necessarily silent. This is the source from which originated all the sayings and doings related of Jesus in the Gospels. From the Canon's point of view the accounts of these matters are historical; from mine the accounts are pure fiction, and must therefore have been deliberately concocted. This source appears to me to be plain and unmistakable. I propose therefore, as soon as I can find time, to devote a short series of papers to this subject.

ABRACADABRA.

We owe to the Greeks every noble discipline in literature; every radical principle of art; and every form of convenient beauty in our household furniture and daily occupations of life. We are unable, however, to make rational use of half that we have received from them: and, of our own, we have nothing but discoveries in science, and fine mechanical adaptations of the discovered physical powers. On the other hand, the vices existing among certain classes, both of the rich and poor, in London, Paris, and Vienna, could have been conceived by a Spartan or Roman of the heroic ages only as possible in a Tartarus, where fiends were employed to teach, but not to punish, crime.—*Ruskin*.

There are persons who never run into any extravagance, because they are so buttressed up with the opinions of others on all sides, that they cannot lean much to one side or the other; they are so little moved with any kind of reasoning, that they remain at an equal distance from every extreme, and are never very far from the truth, because the slowness of their faculties will not suffer them to make much progress in error. These are persons of great judgment. The scales of the mind are pretty sure to remain even, when there is nothing in them.—*Hazlitt*.

The volume of nature is the book of knowledge; and he becomes most wise who makes the most judicious selection.
—*Goldsmith*.

Acid Drops.

What humbugs these Christian Powers are! Let some weak country like Turkey or Servia go wrong, and they lecture it pompously and even take coercive action against it. But if the country that goes wrong is a powerful one they sing small or keep absolutely silent. England broke off diplomatic relations with Servia because of the regicides. She has repeatedly joined the other Christian powers in frightening Turkey. But when the Jews are massacred in Russia, with every refinement of cruelty, neither England nor any other Christian Power can utter the feeblest protest. And the American government (Christian too!) is just as bad as the rest. The Jews in the United States have appealed to President Roosevelt, but that political "bounder" regrets that official action on the part of America regarding the Russian massacres is impracticable. Of course it is. And the American Jews must have been very simple to think otherwise.

One is glad to see that the Russian Duma takes a proper view of the Jewish massacres. The representatives of the Russian people object to bloodshed in the name of religion, and they mean to put a stop to it if they can. It is significant that the massacre at Bielostok began to cease the very moment that the Duma's committee of investigation appeared upon the scene. When the committee returned to St. Petersburg they informed the Duma of the true state of affairs. Thereupon the Government was called upon to respect the principles of civilisation; and some days afterwards when the Minister of the Interior attempted to address the House, with a view to palliating the conduct of the officials, both civil and military, he was hounded out of the place with irrepressible cries of "Murderers!" "Assassins!" and "Massacre Mongers." There is hope for Russia when such defiant words can be flung at the minions of arbitrary power. And we believe that the triumph of the Duma over the forces of reaction is only a question of time.

"Awful particulars are reaching here," says the Berlin correspondent of the *Daily News*, "with regard to the massacre at Bielostok. The number of dead (June 19) is at least 200. Many of the bodies were fearfully mutilated. A typist named Epstein was found with his hands tied. His eyes had been put out with long nails. His whole family of seven were also murdered. His little ten-year-old girl was lying with both legs cut off." And so on, and so on. Thus, after the lapse of nearly two thousand years, the sweet Russian Christians treat the countrymen of Jesus Christ. And this Christianity is (they say) the only religion that ever did any good in the world.

Mr. Herbert Stead, on Sunday evening, declared that the only power that could stop the massacre of Jews in Russia was the Holy Greek Church. He thought that the Archbishop of Canterbury should try to induce the Orthodox Church in Russia to restrain the people, and assure them that Jews did not periodically kidnap Christian children and kill and eat them as a sacrifice. Good! But is not this an admission that the Church has deliberately poisoned the minds of the Christians against the Jews in Russia? And what could be a worse indictment of the Russian branch of the Church of Christ? We should like to hear Mr. Stead's reply.

Frederick Foster Craddock, a Spiritist "mecum" practising at Pinner and the neighborhood, has been fined £15 5s., with the alternative of a month's imprisonment, for craftily imposing on the credulity of his fellow citizens. We have nothing to say in his defence. We only wish to observe that there are lots of other impostors—some of them in high places—who might as justly be put under lock and key.

A Christian minister at Faversham, in the course of a certain Sunday sermon, referred to John Stuart Mill and left the congregation to believe that the great sceptic was at last converted to Christianity. This was greeted with loud and fervent "Amen's." On the following Sunday the reverend gentleman quoted Mill's tribute to Jesus in the posthumous essay on Theism, and followed it up by saying, "Yet he was a sceptic." He forgot what he had said the previous Sunday. His congregation had forgotten it too. They furnished a fresh supply of "Amen's."

One of our readers, who was present on both occasions, sent the reverend gentleman a polite letter on the subject. He stated the facts about that "tribute" to Jesus, and asked the preacher to look into the matter again. Of course he received no reply. That is the way of these little God Almighty's.

At the annual meeting of the Liverpool Branch of the Christian Literature Society for China the Chairman, Mr. R. J. Glasgow, said that "the majority of the Chinese who had been converted to Christianity belonged to the more illiterate classes." We quote from the *Daily Post* report, with a feeling that it is good to hear the voice of truth, even at a missionary meeting.

The *Liverpool Daily Post* refers to the story of the two shipwrecked men who couldn't pray, but proposed to take up a collection, in order to do something religious. Our contemporary speaks of them as "two Jews." What a tender regard for the feelings of its Christian readers!

Jewry used to be ruled by the "Thus saith the Lord" gentlemen who pulled the beards of kings and statesmen. We seem to be coming to the same state of things in England. A squadron of Nonconformist ministers, including the Rev. Dr. Clifford, have been to the House of Commons and harangued Mr. Birrell. They warned him what to expect if he didn't do what they told him. Mr. Birrell should have offered Dr. Clifford his job.

There is no question that our political Nonconformists take themselves very seriously. The result of the General Election was hailed by them as a Nonconformist victory, and soon after ministers like Mr. Birrell and Mr. Lloyd-George received various marching orders from their religious followers. Dr. Clifford also said the new House of Commons was like a glimpse of the New Jerusalem—a statement that hardly raises one's opinion of the latter place. Now the *British Weekly* calmly reminds the Government that to break with the Nonconformists would be to throw the country into the arms of the Conservatives. "The Liberal party," it says, "is simply the Nonconformist to all intents and purposes. Take the Nonconformist party out of it, and there is no Liberal party. The Cabinet Ministers, left destitute of Nonconformist support, may hang their harps on the willows. They have no place any more in the life of the nation." This must be very pleasant reading for Cabinet Ministers like John Morley and John Burns. And even the others must feel how dignified their position is as mere appendages to the dissenting chapel.

Meanwhile, it is worth noting what a complete exposure is the present situation of the humbug written and spoken during the election. Then, religion and the schools was only one of many issues. The dissenters professed to be frantically interested in a 'Trades' Dispute Bill, in the unemployed, in the housing question, and a variety of other social subjects. Now, all these are passed by in quiet indifference. Their only anxiety is to get the better of their religious rivals. The humbug of a pretended interest in social questions has served its purpose, and is now openly cast on one side. Nonconformist press and pulpit are agreed that the religious question is to take precedence of all else. All we can hope is that those Labor leaders who allowed themselves to be made the tools of the Chapel, mere counters in a religious game, will see the error of their ways, and act accordingly. Still more do we hope that their followers will insist upon their leaders holding themselves aloof from religious quarrels, and attending to what is their legitimate business. The present position is a first-rate example of how religious beliefs obstruct reform, and if only people realise this it will have had its uses.

Now that we have no longer a war actually on hand—if we except such affairs as the outbreak in Natal—and there being a reaction in favor of peace, we are beginning to once more hear about Christianity as a "Religion of Peace." The *Christian Commonwealth* unctuously remarks that in Christian countries none of the wars of late years have escaped protest, and leaves its readers to draw the conclusion that this is because of the presence of "the star of the Sermon on the Mount, with its benediction on the peacemakers." We imagine it would puzzle the *Christian Commonwealth*, or any other journal, to point out how, and when, Christianity has actually made for peace. The truth is that there never has been a war in modern times that has not found the Christian clergy of all denominations, with rare exceptions, fanning the war spirit to the utmost of their ability; while right through history no religion has ever done so much to cause wars, and to embitter those it has not actually caused, as has Christianity. The real influences for peace have grown up quite apart from Christianity, and, often enough, against the endeavors of the Christian Churches to crush them out. At home and abroad, whatever else Freethought may or may not do, so far as its influence can be traced in international relations, it makes clearly for a better international understanding, and, so far, for peace and against bloodshed.

M. Clémenceau, replying to M. Jaurès in the French Chamber of Deputies, compared him with Jesus Christ, who wanted to reform mankind and only succeeded in re-establishing violence and force. We do not wish to discuss the political difference between these two French statesmen. We merely wish to express pleasure at the fact that M. Clémenceau's pointed criticism of Jesus Christ will be read all over France. The Chamber voted by 365 against 78 for the printing and posting up of his speech in every French commune.

Mr. Rockefeller, the pious (and unscrupulous) Yankee multi-millionaire, has given £60,000 of his ill-gotten wealth to erect a building for the branch of the Young Men's Christian Association at the naval dockyard at Norfolk, Virginia. The Christian young men don't trouble, any more than he does, about the color of the money.

Why will magistrates play the fool? Colonel H. M. Leathes, a Lowestoft magistrate, has evidently not read the Home Secretary's circular letter on the Vaccination laws, or else he has read it with a plentiful lack of understanding. In reply to a mother who applied for an exemption certificate for her child, he exclaimed: "What about your conscience? What do you know about it? Nothing, simply nothing. Let somebody else sign the certificate." Somebody else did. It was Mr. Lawrence Peto. Colonel Leathes should take Hamlet's advice to Polonius and play the fool nowhere but in his own house.

The one great thing in the world, without which the world is nothing, is love; not heavenly love, but earthly love—not divine love, but human love; the love that is stronger than death, and stronger than disgrace. The other day, at the County of London Sessions, Newington, a man of forty-two and his young son were indicted for obtaining goods on false pretences. The father pleaded guilty, and his son not guilty. Both pleas were accepted. The man got twenty months' imprisonment, and the young fellow was discharged. As he passed his father on leaving the dock he clutched the elder prisoner's left arm, dragged him closer, and kissed him passionately on the cheek. The warders quietly separated them, but the eyes of many persons in court were wet with tears. How such a pathetic incident appeals to us all to deal more wisely and humanely with our criminal population! The worst of men, as we think them, have often a sweetness of affection hidden in their heart of hearts for parent, or wife, or child, or friend; and to work upon that for their redemption would be the best form of penology.

Mr. Lloyd-George, in a letter to a correspondent in Wales, regretting that he could not attend the Education Conference at Bangor, let the cat right out of the bag, and corroborated all that we have said about the Education Bill. While admitting that Clause iv. was "repugnant to the vast majority of Nonconformists" and "an encroachment on the symmetry of the national system which the Bill is designed to set up," he ventured to hope that the Bangor Conference would not condemn the Bill, and with that view asked it to bear in mind the following facts: "(1) That the Bill enables the local authorities of England and Wales to give a moral instruction to the children which will be based on the Bible; (2) that such teaching is in itself an adoption of a Protestant attitude towards the Bible; (3) that it is, consequently, if not an offence to the conscience of Catholics, at least antagonistic to the whole theory of Roman Catholicism." Hence he argues that if religious instruction is given in the schools "it seems an inevitable corollary that you should afford extended facilities to the Roman Catholic parents of the kingdom in the schools to which they send their children." But why stop at Roman Catholics? Mr. Lloyd-George can hardly have the Nonconformist audacity to assert that Roman Catholics have rights in this matter and Church of England parents no rights at all. Even this, however, is not our principal point. We wish to emphasise the fact of Mr. Lloyd-George's admission that the Education Bill is the deliberate establishment and endowment of "a Protestant attitude towards the Bible." And by "Protestant" he obviously means Evangelical—and Evangelicalism is the religion of the Free Churches.

We used to warn the Nonconformists that Passive Resistance was a game that two (or more) could play at. Events are justifying our warning. Lord Hugh Cecil, in a letter to the English Church Union demonstration at the Albert Hall against the Education Bill, declared that it was "a matter of life and death to the Church of England to oppose to the utmost undenominational religion." He pointed out that Clause iv. was the result of a fear of Roman Catholic resistance. "We must not let it be thought," he added, "that Churchmen are less zealous for their rights than Nonconformists or Roman Catholics, or that if illegal action is to

be tolerated in others they will shrink from availing themselves of so powerful a weapon." A resolution was then carried, from which the following is an extract:—

"It (the meeting) claims for the members of the Church of England, as for the members of all other Christian bodies who desire it, definite Christian teaching in accordance with their distinctive formularies to be given in school hours and by their authorised teachers, with regard to whose faith there is definite assurance that they believe what they teach; and, further, the meeting pledges itself if those principles be infringed in any Bill which passes Parliament to resist such measure at all risks by every means in their power.

That a committee be formed to organize, in conjunction, if possible, with other supporters of denominational religious teaching, measures of general resistance should the Bill become law."

Lord Halifax, the most powerful Church of England layman, occupied the chair at that Albert Hall demonstration, and the English Church Union includes nearly half the clergymen of the Church of England. It is evident, therefore, that the Passive Resistance game *will* be played by Churchmen. They are certain, also, to be joined in playing it by the Roman Catholics. And there is no reason why Freethinkers should not join in the game too.

Freethinkers ought to join Churchmen and Catholics in resisting Nonconformist tyranny, just as they should join Nonconformists in resisting Church of England or Roman Catholic tyranny. This is the way to promote Secular Education. The war of the Churches will bring it about at last, and all the sooner if Freethinkers join the attacking force every time the battle starts.

Mr. Birrell has practically consented to sacrifice his Conscience Clause for children. This is what we feared he would do. It was the only good thing in his Bill, and it was the only thing of which he spoke with real feeling in introducing the measure. Yet it is to go. After this we can appreciate the force of Mr. Balfour's question, Which of the right honorable gentleman's speeches the Government means to stand by? "Gentlemen," the American candidate said, "those are my sentiments and if they don't suit—they can be altered." He must have been a relative of Mr. Birrell's.

As we do not wish to misrepresent Mr. Birrell, even unintentionally, we will place on record his actual words on this subject. The following is from the *Tribune* report (June 21):—

"Mr. Pike Pease (U.—Darlington) moved to amend the clause by leaving out the initial word "If," in order to make mandatory the giving of religious education within school hours. He expressed the fear that, in the absence of such an arrangement, a very large percentage of children would not receive any religious education. The hon. member explained that a further verbal alteration in the clause would be necessary if the amendment were accepted.

Mr. Birrell: The Government are perfectly willing, when we come to Clause 6, that the question shall be fairly and fully considered, in such a way as to secure, if possible, that the child shall be required to attend during the time of religious instruction. (General cheers.) That is not a view which meets with special favor in my mind, because I was always of opinion that if you wish to make the Conscience Clause really effective you ought to make it easy for the child, as well as for the parent, to claim exemption. For that reason I favored the clause in the form in which it appears; but there is a great deal of feeling the other way—and I can assure the Committee that when we come to Clause 6 the fullest opportunity will be afforded—it may be upon an amendment of the Government itself, although as to that I have not yet come to any definite conclusion, but I think in all probability the Committee will have an opportunity of considering the question on an amendment of the Government to its own clause. At all events, the whole question will be open to consideration, and there will be no attempt whatsoever to take the clause as it stands as representing the view of the Government upon this important point."

Surely a Bill carried through parliament in this way is a sad instance of political profligacy.

Mr. Ernest Wild, the legal gentleman who is so successful in pulling through prisoners indicted for murder, has been telling the Norwich Primrose Leaguers that a child without religion is better uneducated. Perhaps he meant to say that an uneducated child was pretty sure to have enough religion. Sometimes the truth gets stated upside down.

Commenting on Mr. Wild's speech, the *Eastern Daily Press* had a remarkable paragraph on Secular Education. Here it is:—

"Japan has no religious teaching as Mr. Wild understands religious teaching. Its development has been due to the

splendid growth of its secular efficiency and its secular knowledge. Japan, therefore, by Mr. Wild's reasoning, would have been 'better uneducated.' New Zealand, again, is the British colony which has made the greatest strides during the past generation. The general level of prosperity and comfort amongst its citizens is more even and a higher level than in any other country in the world. And New Zealand has a secular system of education. It had better, according to Mr. Wild, close all its schools and become an uneducated country. Russia, on the contrary, is a country in which religion is the basis of all education; and we all know how happy and glorious the life of the average Russian is."

This paragraph might very well have appeared in the *Freethinker*. What puzzles us is how the journal in which it appears can still be reckoned amongst the supporters of religious teaching in England's schools.

Mr. Lloyd-George, following Mr. Balfour at the City Temple bazaar, said that while he was not exactly a follower of that gentleman he was very glad to see that outside Parliament religion was not a party question. He wished he could say the same regarding the inside of the House of Commons. Why then did he not vote in favor of Secular Education? That is the only way to prevent religion from being a party question in parliament. And Mr. Lloyd-George has surely brains enough to know it.

Mr. George Wyndham is a man of brains. How he must laugh at some of his Tory supporters! He is M.P. for Dover, and the other day he addressed a Town Hall meeting to protest against the Education Bill. One of the mottoes adorning the interior of the Town Hall on that occasion was the following: "What won Trafalgar?—The Church Catechism." We know now.

A Christian minister (we don't hear his name) hailing from Canada, who has been engaged in mission work for years, was staying at Ramsey, in the Isle of Man. Suddenly he was brought up before a hastily-summoned court and charged with an indecent offence. He admitted his guilt, and pleaded for leniency, and the good Christian Bench let him off with a fine of ten shillings. He was announced to preach at services near Ramsey on the following Sunday on the subject of "Sin and its consequences"—but the sermon was not delivered, although it might have had the invaluable note of experience.

Evidently South Wales is trying to establish a record in religious dementia. The latest to hand is the account of a Rev. John Davies, preaching at Aberdare, who treated his hearers to an account of what he had seen in a vision of hell. Naturally he found hell pretty full. Preachers usually do; it spells business. According to a newspaper report, the rev. gentleman "could perceive Chamberlain in hell, suffering for his connection with the South African War. He could see Balfour in hell reaping his reward for his promotion of an iniquitous Education Act against the wishes of the people." Strangest of all, he could see there ministers of religion; from which one may infer that there is something in the shape of pickings even in the infernal regions. It is said that Mr. Davies takes a great interest in elementary education. We do not doubt it, and may take the fact as one more evidence of Wales's claim to a separate educational council. Mr. Lloyd-George must feel quite proud of some of his supporters.

Dr. Henry Jones, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University, complains of the half-hearted way in which Agnostic attacks upon religion are met. He warns the defenders of religion that they will have to fight all along the line if they are to maintain its claims. Agnosticism, he says, is growing inside the Churches themselves; no longer are the pews filled with men of thought, and among laymen the creeds of the Churches have very few defenders. We hope Dr. Jones does not regard this as a discovery; at the same time, we are glad to hear him calling attention to it, for the Churches may listen to him when they would not listen to us.

Not a single leading Christian has come forward to defend Christianity against the attacks of Mr. Robert Blatchford. Of course they may say that there is nothing new in his attacks, but the important fact remains that they are made before a new public, and the leaders of Christianity would recognise this if they only had the courage to act upon it.

Providence continues to keep itself well in front of public notice, probably as a rebuke to those sceptics who question its existence. Segus la Grande, a town of 15,000 inhabitants in Cuba, has just been totally destroyed.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Lectures suspended during the Summer.)

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—July 8, a. and e., Victoria Park; 22, a. and e., Victoria Park; 29, a. and e., Brockwell Park.
- RIDGWAY FUND.—J. Partridge, 183 Vauxhall-road, Birmingham, acknowledges: A Secularist, 8s.
- W. D. ANDERSON (laborer), which is as honest a word as he could put after his name, writes: "I read your 'Brave Days of Old' article after a heavy day's work, and I felt as if I had drunk a pint of wine. It shows that however far down one may be in social rank one may play a part for good in this world. I cannot tell you how much good I have got in reading the *Freethinker*. I give all my old ones away." In reply to this correspondent's question, we have to say that it would be useless to send this journal to the Free Library he mentions without an assurance that it would be received.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your useful cuttings.
- G. C. KNIGHT.—Glad to receive your "thanks for the help you get from the *Freethinker*. See "Acid Drops."
- T. DIXON.—We appreciate your kind sentiments.
- C. R. NIVEN.—Pleased to hear of the result.
- S. ROBINSON.—We only notice such cases when they appear in the newspapers; otherwise we might be awkwardly placed if challenged. Thanks for your good wishes and your efforts to promote our circulation.
- YOUNG FREETHINKER.—We welcome your expressions of goodwill. Thanks.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen is always ready to help us, but we naturally make as few demands upon him as possible. Owing to our personal absence from the vicinity of London we have to acknowledge with thanks some kind assistance from him in connection with the last two numbers of the *Freethinker*. He does not wish the acknowledgment made, but we do, and editors are despots.

During our absence our correspondence has fallen into arrear. We are dealing with it all as fast as we can, but we must ask for a little indulgence.

Mr. Howell-Smith, B.A., lectured in Victoria Park on Sunday for the first time. His audience was very appreciative. Mr. James Neate, the Bethnal Green Branch secretary, informs us that Mr. Howell-Smith, who is a thorough student of the Bible and of Ancient History and Religions, is convincing in his arguments and most courteous in debate; he has also a ready flow of speech; and the Branch is booking him for more dates in Victoria Park. Other N. S. S. Branches should form Mr. Howell-Smith's acquaintance.

We are glad to see that the *Isle of Man Times* speaks out boldly on the case of an offending preacher which is referred to in our "Acid Drops." The preacher is named Windross, and he was guilty of abominable conduct with a number of little children; but he was only proceeded against for the minor offence of indecent exposure, and it appears that one of the two magistrates who were hastily got together to deal

with this holy beast "is connected by the ties of relationship to the defendant in the case." That may have had something to do with his being fined ten shillings instead of getting eighteen months' hard labor. Our Manx contemporary deserves credit for refusing to let "religious interests" interfere with its performance of a public duty.

An excellent letter signed "Communarder" appeared in the Aberdeen *Evening Gazette*, dealing with "The Child and the Bible." The writer advocated Secular Education in all State schools, as giving "freedom and fair-play to Christian and Agnostic alike." Incidentally he remarked that the orthodox faith was declining, so many of the studious artisan population having of late years "familiarised themselves with the writings of Huxley, Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, Foote, and Haeckel." We wish Freethinkers would write letters more frequently to their local newspapers. A great deal of good is done in this way.

Mr. Chamberlain made another speech in the House of Commons on Monday night in favor of separating secular and religious education. The *Daily News*, which six months ago was advocating the "secular solution," sees in Mr. Chamberlain's speech nothing but mischief. We are glad to see that Mr. J. Ramsey Macdonald also pointed out on Monday evening that all the everlasting trouble over the Education Bill was due to the neglect of the true principle of State neutrality in matters of religion.

Lines from Well-Wishers.

Mr. J. W. DE CAUX's appeal has brought a number of donations, and several interesting letters with them, from old and now friends of the Editor of the *Freethinker*. From these letters we venture to give some extracts this week, according to a promise made in our last issue. We believe these extracts will not be uninteresting to most of the readers of this journal. For the *Freethinker* has always been a personally conducted paper, and a more intimate relationship exists between the Editor and his readers than is common in the newspaper world.

The veteran Freethinker, W. H. Morrish, of Bristol, whose memory goes back to the old fighting times of Southwell, Holyoake, and the young "Iconoclast" writes:—

"I still read the *Freethinker* with interest every week, and read it dry (not that I find the contents dry). No matter what the topic you always find a lot of interesting things to say."

The veteran G. L. Alward, of Grimsby, writes:—

"I assure you that although you have not visited Grimsby for some time we have not forgotten you and your great service to the Freethought cause."

Major G. O. Warren writes:—

"Whatever amount is subscribed by the Freethinkers for this purpose, it will be only a small return for your great services to us during the late 25 years. That you may live long to fight for truth and justice is the sincere wish of your friend and admirer."

D. J. D., who gives only initials and no address except a city in Scotland, writes:—

"Everyone who has the slightest tinge of Freethought, as taught and expounded in the *Freethinker*, should ask himself just now, What can I spare? I am sure there are many who, like myself, through lack of ready speech, are bad at placing an argument, but know that the cause is right, and ought, while sheltering in the trenches, hand up the ammunition to the soldiers in the open. Let us all *do it now*. Believe me, though among the Anons., an ardent admirer and almost always an approver of every action that you have had to take up."

A. J. Fincken, a North London stalwart, writes:—

"I hope you will get all you require till the next appeal comes round. Whatever you get it will never be what you deserve."

"F. S.", whose name has generously been in many subscription lists, says:—

"It is of course difficult for one not in intimate touch with the Freethought party to gauge even approximately its resources, but surely the sum of £200 ought at least to result from this effort."

We replied that we feared this was too sanguine an estimate.

John Grange, of Bradford, writes:—

"Receive this as a token of warm esteem and profound appreciation of the high intellectual level you maintain in all your literary work for the spread and glory of Freethought principles."

George Taylor, of North Wales, who is lively in spite of his venerable age, wrote to Mr. de Caux:—

"I thank you very much for the trouble you take over our Chief, as he is not half backed up as he ought to be. Had he been in the Holy Ghost business he would have had no money difficulties. Oh dear no!

E. D. Side, a South London veteran, writes:—

"You continually give me great pleasure; I must help you to some."

H. Jessop writes from Batley:—

"Accept enclosed cheque for your holiday fund, etc. I sincerely hope you will have as much pleasure as you have given to me and a few friends who have read the *Freethinker* of late."

W. P. Adamsom writes:—

"It is now many years since I began reading the *Freethinker*; its consistency, its courage, and its real liveliness are objects of my admiration."

Mrs. S. Burgon writes to Mr. de Caux:—

"I sincerely hope that Mr. Foote may live with good health many, many years to fight for the good cause of Freethought."

John Cross writes:—

"Mr. Foote does not wish to take anything from 'people as poor as himself,' but in spite of that I venture to send my mite—a privilege he should not deny us, being our only way of showing that we sympathise with him and appreciate his great services as highly as our more wealthy confederates do."

The West Stanley Branch has "great pleasure" in helping Mr. Foote to "a well-earned holiday" and hopes the Secular party will respond as it should do to Mr. de Caux's appeal.

T. Hopkins, who frequently subscribes, but never gives his address, jokes us about "the generous souls," as we called them who subscribed out of too slender means. He says:—

"I always gave you credit for having a heart as big as a frying-pan, but about your *soul* I am not quite so certain; it may be as big as the City of London or as large as the County of Devon."

We used the word "souls" in the vernacular sense, as Shakespeare did when he made Marc Antony say:—

"Kind souls, what! weep you when you but behold
Our Cæsar's vesture wounded?"

S. Holmes (Blackpool) writes:—

"I hope you may secure and retain the best of health as long as you wish, and that you may live long to uphold the Freethought flag."

J. W. (Nelson) writes:—

"Though not very pronounced in my views generally (I am in business), I enjoy the *Freethinker* in health and sickness more than any other paper."

"Two Clifton Admirers" write:—

"When we think of you and your daily struggle for the cause we all hold so dear, our hearts go out towards you in sincere sympathy and deep gratitude for the brave fight you are making for us all."

A. Martin writes:—

"I should just like to say with what pleasure I look forward each week to reading your journal. It is so straightforward and true. I never heard of it until Dr. Torrey came to Brixton—so I have something to thank him for."

A London cab-driver and "a common policeman" both express the delight they have in reading this journal every week. The former says he has read it for twenty-five years, and he adds: "I need not tell a man like you what it has been to me." The latter "hopes he is not speaking selfishly" in saying that the cause must not lose the services of the editor of the *Freethinker*.

"A Woman Reader of the *Freethinker*," who gives no name and address, though the envelope bore the Bristol postmark, had "much pleasure" in forwarding her contribution.

G. F. H. McCluskey (Plymouth) writes to Mr. de Caux:—

"I share your hope that the response will be 'both prompt and generous.' I have taken the *Freethinker* from the very first number, and I know from my own observation that the battle of Freethought is easier now than then, and credit is due to Mr. Foote for his large share in the fight."

The above are all the extracts we can give from letters this week. We shall give a second, and final, selection in our next issue.

Obituary.

The Porth Branch expresses sympathy with Mr. and Mrs. Simmons, both members, in the loss they have sustained by the death of their daughter, Rose, aged one year and ten months. The funeral took place at Mid-Rhondda Cemetery on June 19, a Secular burial service being conducted by Mr. S. Holman. It was a new departure in the locality, and produced a favorable impression on all present.

The Church and Marriage.

[A new Chapter in the Fourth Edition (1906) of *A New Catechism*, by M. M. Mangasarian, of Chicago.]

1. Q. What is the teaching of the church on the subject of marriage?
 - A. The church teaches that marriage is a mystery and a sacrament; a mystery because it is symbolical of the union of Christ with his church, and a sacrament because only a duly ordained priest can make it valid. Civil marriages are not recognised by the church.
2. Q. How do you account for the opposition of the church to civil marriages?
 - A. The church is a monopoly, and as such she wishes to have exclusive rights in all the departments of life.
3. Q. How is the church a monopoly?
 - A. Because she will not permit any other agency to represent the deity, nor will she permit the deity to save anyone except through her own instrumentality. She claims that the deity has handed over to her the keys of life and death, which has been interpreted to mean that he has abdicated in her favor.
4. Q. May not other religious bodies labor to save souls?
 - A. No; that would be infringing upon the rights of the "only true church."
5. Q. What is the strongest argument in favor of the claims of the church?
 - A. The credulity of the people.
6. Q. In what countries is the church most prosperous?
 - A. In the least advanced.
7. Q. What motives has the church for condemning civil marriages?
 - A. To prevent the union of a believer with an unbeliever; to secure in advance a promise that the children of the union solemnised by the church, and wherein either the wife or the husband is not a believer, shall be reared in the Christian faith; to secure admission for the priest into the new home for purposes of propaganda; to establish there the confessional, and to tax the newly married couple for the support of the church.
8. Q. What has been the principal effect of the church control of marriage?
 - A. It has helped to make the priest the head of the family.
9. Q. Explain your meaning.
 - A. The priest, being considered necessary to the salvation of the soul, and the salvation of the soul being considered the paramount interest of life, is given an entrance into every home, and allowed to dictate to both the man and the woman how to dispose of their property, how to bring up their children, and in the case of the man, how he should vote, etc.
10. Q. Does the teaching of the church elevate the institution of marriage?
 - A. It degrades it, because it claims that a nun is purer than a mother, and a celibate monk holier than a father.
11. Q. Why is celibacy exalted by the church?
 - A. The Christian fathers attributed the fall of man to the marriage of Adam, and the salvation of man to the celibacy of Jesus.
12. Q. What else?
 - A. Marriage is considered a concession to the flesh, and the flesh is on the same level with the "world" and the "devil." The weight of the influence of the New Testament is on the side of celibacy. Jesus by his example, and Paul both by example and precept, discouraged wedlock. They both believed that the world was coming to a speedy end, and that a wife and children would only be a burden.

13. Q. What other consideration led the early Christian fathers to denounce marriage?
A. Their low estimate of woman.
14. Q. Sum up the position of the church on the question of marriage.
A. (1) Marriage is a sacrament, requiring the services of a priest.
(2) Marriage is a concession to the flesh, and as such not so acceptable to God as the state of virginity or celibacy.
(3) Though marriage is a sacrament for the laity, it is a sin for the clergy.
15. Q. What is a sacrament?
A. A means of grace. The communion, baptism, extreme unction, etc., are sacraments—they are supposed to confer a miraculous benefit upon the person participating in them.
16. Q. Why, then, may not a priest partake of the sacrament of marriage?
A. It is difficult to state the reasons precisely, but it must be for political rather than spiritual purposes that marriage is denied to the priesthood. To increase her power, the church created a priesthood free from every other obligation or attachment and devoted only to the interests of the organisation.
17. Q. Was there a time when the priests married?
A. Before the time of Gregory VII. (Hildebrand), the priests were allowed to marry.
18. Q. Has the celibacy of the priesthood improved its morals?
A. History records many complaints against the morals of the priesthood.
19. Q. What is the moral argument against a celibate priesthood?
A. It exposes them to temptation, and condemns a class of people to perish without issue.
20. Q. Explain your meaning.
A. When the priest is a man of virtue and genius, and he intentionally dies without issue, he contributes to diminish the moral power of humanity. He destroys what he has inherited. This accounts, in part, for the deterioration of the ministry. A celibate priesthood is a suicidal profession. It has been suggested that the decline of Spain was due on the one hand to her disastrous wars which killed her best citizens, and on the other hand, to the priests who abstained from marriage, leaving the lower class alone to propagate themselves.

Ingersoll's Lecture on Superstition.—VI.

(Concluded from p. 397.)

VIII.

OUR God was made by men, sculptured by savages who did the best they could. They made our God somewhat like themselves, and gave to him their passions, their ideas of right and wrong.

As man advanced he slowly changed his God—took a little ferocity from his heart, and put the light of kindness in his eyes. As man progressed he obtained a wider view, extended the intellectual horizon, and again he changed his God, making him as nearly perfect as he could, and yet this God was patterned after those who made him. As man became civilised, as he became merciful, he began to love justice, and as his mind expanded his ideal became purer, nobler, and so his God became more merciful, more loving.

In our day Jehovah has been outgrown. He is no longer the perfect. Now theologians talk, not about Jehovah, but about a God of love, call him the Eternal Father and the perpetual friend and providence of man. But, while they talk about this God of love, cyclones wreck and roud, the earthquake devours, the flood destroys, the red bolt leaping from the cloud still crashes the life out of men, and plague and fever still are tireless reapers in the harvest fields of death.

They tell us now that all is good; that evil is but blessing in disguise, that pain makes strong and virtuous men—makes character—while pleasure enfeebles and degrades. If this be so, the souls in hell should grow to greatness, while those in heaven should shrink and shrivel.

But we know that good is good. We know that good is not evil, and that evil is not good. We know that light is not darkness, and that darkness is not light. But we do not feel that good and evil were planned and caused by a supernatural God. We regard them both as necessities. We neither thank nor curse. We know that some evil can be avoided and that the good can be increased. We know that this can be done by increasing knowledge, by developing the brain.

As Christians have changed their God, so they have accordingly changed their Bible. The impossible and absurd, the cruel and the infamous, have been mostly thrown aside, and thousands are now engaged in trying to save the inspired word. Of course, the orthodox still cling to every word, and still insist that every line is true. They are literalists. To them the Bible means exactly what it says. They want no explanation. They care nothing for commentators. Contradictions cannot disturb their faith. They deny that any contradictions exist. They loyally stand by the sacred text, and they give it the narrowest possible interpretation. They are like the janitor of an apartment house who refused to rent a flat to a gentleman because he said he had children. "But," said the gentleman, "my children are both married and live in Iowa." "That makes no difference," said the janitor, "I am not allowed to rent a flat to any man who has children."

All the orthodox churches are obstructions on the highway of progress. Every orthodox creed is a chain, a dungeon. Every believer in the "inspired book" is a slave who drives reason from her throne, and in her stead crowns fear.

Reason is the light, the sun, of the brain. It is the compass of the mind, the ever-constant Northern Star, the mountain peak that lifts itself above all clouds.

IX.

There were centuries of darkness when religion had control of Christendom. Superstition was almost universal. Not one in twenty thousand could read or write. During these centuries the people lived with their back to the sunrise, and pursued their way toward the dens of ignorance and faith. There was no progress, no invention, no discovery. On every hand cruelty and worship, persecution and prayer. The priests were the enemies of thought, of investigation. They were the shepherds, and the people were their sheep; and it was their business to guard the flock from the wolves of thought and doubt. This world was of no importance compared with the next. This life was to be spent in preparing for the life to come. The gold and labor of men were wasted in building cathedrals and in supporting the pious and the useless. During these Dark Ages of Christianity, as I said before, nothing was invented, nothing was discovered, calculated to increase the well-being of men. The energies of Christendom were wasted in the vain effort to obtain assistance from the supernatural.

For centuries the business of Christians was to wrest from the followers of Mohammed the empty sepulchre of Christ. Upon the altar of this folly millions of lives were sacrificed, and yet the soldiers of the impostor were victorious, and the wretches who carried the banner of Christ were scattered like leaves before the storm.

There was, I believe, one invention during these ages. It is said that, in the thirteenth century, Roger Bacon, a Franciscan monk, invented gunpowder, but this invention was without a fellow. Yet we cannot give Christianity the credit, because Bacon was an infidel, and was great enough to say that in all things reason must be the standard. He was persecuted and imprisoned, as most sensible men were in those blessed days. The Church was triumphant. The sceptre and mitre were in her hands, and yet her success was the result of force and fraud, and it carried within itself the seeds of its defeat. The Church attempted the impossible. It endeavored to make the world of one belief; to force all minds to a common form, and utterly destroy the individuality of man. To accomplish this it employed every art and artifice that cunning could suggest. It inflicted every cruelty by every means that malice could invent.

But, in spite of all, a few men began to think. They became interested in the affairs of this world—in the great panorama of nature. They began to seek for causes, for the explanations of phenomena. They were not satisfied with the assertions of the Church. These thinkers withdrew their gaze from the skies and looked at their own surroundings. They were unspiritual enough to desire comfort here. They became sensible and secular, worldly and wise.

What was the result? They began to invent, to discover, to find the relation between facts, the conditions of happiness and the means that would increase the well-being of their fellow-men.

Movable types were invented, paper was borrowed from the Moors, books appeared, and it became possible to save the intellectual wealth so that each generation could hand it to the next. History began to take the place of legend

and rumor. The telescope was invented. The orbits of the stars were traced, and men became citizens of the universe. The steam-engine was constructed, and now steam, the great slave, does the work of hundreds of millions of men. The Black Art, the impossible, was abandoned, and chemistry, the useful, took its place. Astrology became astronomy. Kepler discovered the three great laws, one of the greatest triumphs of human genius, and our constellation became a poem, a symphony. Newton gave us the mathematical expression of the attraction of gravitation. Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood. He gave us the fact, and Draper gave us the reason. Steamships conquered the seas and railways covered the land. Houses and streets were lighted with gas. Through the invention of matches fire became the companion of man. The art of photography became known; the sun became an artist. Telegraphs and cables were invented. The lightning became a carrier of thought, and the nations became neighbors. Anæsthetics were discovered, and pain was lost in sleep. Surgery became a science. The telephone was invented—the telephone that carries and deposits in listening ears the waves of words. The phonograph, that catches and retains in marks and dots and gives again the echoes of our speech.

Then came electric light that fills the night with day, and all the wonderful machines that use the subtle force—the same force that leaps from the summer cloud to ravage and destroy.

The Spectrum Analysis that tells us of the substance of the sun; the Röntgen rays that change the opaque to the transparent. The great thinkers demonstrated the indestructibility of force and matter—demonstrated that the indestructible could not have been created. The geologist, in rocks and deposits and mountains and continents, read a little of the story of the world—of its changes, of the glacial epoch—the story of vegetable and animal life.

The biologists, through the fossil forms of life, established the antiquity of man and demonstrated the worthlessness of Holy Writ. Then came evolution, the survival of the fittest, and natural selection. Thousands of mysteries were explained, and science wrested the sceptre from superstition. The cell theory was advanced, and embryology was studied; the microscope discovered germs of disease, and taught us how to stay the plague. These great theories and discoveries, together with countless inventions, are the children of intellectual liberty.

X.

(After all we know but little. In the darkness of life there are a few gleams of light. Possibly the dropping of a dish-cloth prophesies the coming of company, but we have no evidence. Possibly it is dangerous for thirteen to dine together, but we have no evidence. Possibly a maiden's matrimonial chances are determined by the number of seeds in an apple, or by the number of leaves on a flower, but we have no evidence. Possibly certain stones give good luck to the wearer, while the wearing of others brings loss and death. Possibly a glimpse of the new moon over the left shoulder brings misfortune. Possibly there are curative virtues in old bones, in sacred rags and holy hairs, in images and bits of wood, in rusty nails and dried blood, but the trouble is we have no evidence. Possibly comets, eclipses, and shooting stars foretell the death of kings, the destruction of nations, or the coming of plague. Possibly devils take possession of the bodies and minds of men. Possibly witches, with the Devil's help, control the winds, breed storms on sea and land, fill summer's lap with frosts and snow, and work with charm and spell against the public weal, but of this we have no evidence. It may be that all the miracles described in the Old and New Testament were performed; that the pallid flesh of the dead felt once more the thrill of life; that the corpse arose and felt upon his smiling lips the kiss of wife and child. Possibly water was turned into wine, loaves and fishes increased, and possibly devils were expelled from men and women; possibly fishes were found with money in their mouths; possibly clay and spittle brought back the light to sightless eyes, and possibly words cured disease and made the leper clean, but of this we have no evidence.

Possibly iron floated, rivers divided, waters burst from dry bones, birds carried food to prophets and angels flourished drawn swords, but of this we have no evidence.

Possibly Jehovah employed lying spirits to deceive a king, and all the wonders of the savage world may have happened, but the trouble is there is no proof.

So there may be a Devil, almost infinite in cunning and power, and he may have a countless number of imps whose only business is to sow the seeds of evil and to vex, mislead, capture, and imprison in eternal flames the souls of men. All this, so far as we know, is possible. All we know is that we have no evidence except the assertions of ignorant priests.

Possibly there is a place called "hell," where all the devils live—a hell whose flames are waiting for all the men who think and have the courage to express their thoughts, for all

who fail to credit priests and sacred books, for all who walk the path that reason lights, for all the good and brave who lack credulity and faith—but of this, I am happy to say, there is no proof.

And so there may be a place called "heaven," the home of God, where angels float and fly and play on harps and hear with joy the groans and shrieks of the lost in hell, but of this there is no evidence.

It all rests on dreams and visions of the insane.

There may be a power superior to nature, a power that governs and directs all things, but the existence of this power has not been established.

In the presence of the mysteries of life and thought, of force and substance, of growth and decay, of birth and death, of joy and pain, of the sufferings of the good, the triumphs of wrong, the intelligent honest man is compelled to say: "I do not know."

But we do know how gods and devils, heavens and hells, have been made. We know the history of inspired books—the origin of religions. We know how the seeds of superstition were planted, and what made them grow. We know that all superstitions, all creeds, all follies and mistakes, all crimes and cruelties, all virtues, vices, hopes and fears, all discoveries and inventions, have been naturally produced. By the light of reason we divide the useful from the hurtful, the false from the true.

We know the past—the paths that man has travelled—his mistakes, his triumphs. We know a few facts, a few fragments, and the imagination, the artist of the mind, with these facts, these fragments, rebuilds the past, and on the canvas of the future deftly paints the things to be.

We believe in the natural, in the unbroken and unbreakable succession of causes and effects. We deny the existence of the supernatural. We do not believe in any God who can be pleased with incense, with kneeling, with bell-ringing, psalm-singing, bead-counting, fasting, or prayer—in any God who can be flattered by words of faith or fear.

We believe in the natural. We have no fear of devils, ghosts, or hells. We believe that Mahatmas, astral bodies, materialisations of spirits, crystal gazing, seeing the future, telepathy, mind reading, and Christian Science are only cunning frauds, the genuineness of which is established by the testimony of incompetent, honest witnesses. We believe that Cunning plates fraud with the gold of honesty, and veneers vice with virtue.

We know that millions are seeking the impossible—trying to secure the aid of the supernatural—to solve the problem of life—to guess the riddle of destiny, and to pluck from the future its secret. We know that all their efforts are in vain.

We believe in the natural. We believe in home and fire-side—in wife and child and friend—in the realities of this world. We have faith in facts—in knowledge—in the development of the brain. We throw away superstition and welcome science. We banish the phantoms, the mistakes and lies, and cling to the truth. We do not enthrone the unknown and crown our ignorance. We do not stand with our backs to the sun and mistake our shadow for God.

We do not create a master and thankfully wear his chains. We do not enslave ourselves. We want no leaders, no followers. Our desire is that every human being shall be true to himself, to his ideal, unbribed by promises, careless of threats. We want no tyrant on the earth or in the air.

We know that superstition has given us delusions and illusions, dreams and visions, ceremonies and cruelties, faith and fanaticism, beggars and bigots, persecutions and prayers, theology and torture, piety and poverty, saints and slaves, miracles and mummeries, disease and death.

We know that science has given us all we have of value. Science is the only civiliser. It has freed the slave, clothed the naked, fed the hungry, lengthened life, given us homes and hearths, pictures and books, ships and railways, telegraphs and cables, engines that tirelessly turn the countless wheels, and it has destroyed the monsters, the phantoms, the winged horrors that filled the savage brain.

Science is the real redeemer. It will put honesty above hypocrisy, mental veracity above all belief. It will teach the religion of usefulness. It will destroy bigotry in all its forms. It will put thoughtful doubt above thoughtless faith. It will give us philosophers, thinkers, and savants, instead of priests, theologians, and saints. It will abolish poverty and crime, and greater, grander, nobler than all else, it will make the whole world free.

For we are made for co-operation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another then is contrary to nature; and it is acting against one another to be vexed and to turn away.—*Marcus Aurelius.*

Correspondence.

A WORD FOR JOHN MORLEY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am sorry to observe your able contributor, Mr. Cohen, join in the now fashionable chorus of depreciation of the services rendered by the Rt. Hon. John Morley to Free-thought; inclining to the belief that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find, during the period of his militant Freethought propaganda, a more effective fighter than the gentleman in question, I think this lack of due recognition savors of ungraciousness. For perfectly honorable reasons, which were exposed to the public view, he minimised or abandoned his Freethinking efforts, yet he did not and could not undo what he had done, and he did good service. At a critical period in the country's history a choice was offered him between an active political life, in the capacity of a member of the Government, or his hitherto literary, journalistic, and Freethought career. Exercising a choice, certainly within his honorable rights, he chose politics, influenced by the fact that his official position would enable him to greatly advance a policy in which he firmly believed and which he strenuously advocated. His choice is to be regretted, inasmuch as the most inefficient Freethought advocate is of vastly greater value, as conditions now exist, than a thousand brilliant politicians. Unfortunately capable men are repelled from the advocacy of Freethought and impelled to that of politics. Yet were the converse to obtain, and if men of mark found not what they sought in the arena of politics, conditions would be sadly worse than now. The Freethinker is wanted, and has his own sphere in which he may make the world brighter, cleaner, and better; the politician (not the partisan) is absolutely essential. Men who essay the rôle of publicists must decide for themselves which best suits their capacities and taste. To force a Freethought crusade upon a person whose principal mental energies are exercised in matters political or conversely, is a wanton waste of good material and tends rather to retard than to advance either movement. A volunteer is worth three pressed men in any venture, and if men tire in the Freethought ranks it is well to let them "fall out" with whatever honors they may have won, or should they find another army better suited to their inclinations, grateful acknowledgment should be made of their past services, and no obstacle of our creation should bar the progress of their new campaign. Mr. Morley apparently anticipated to-day's sneers, and in his "valedictory" to the monthly of which he was then editor explained he had rendered Freethought all that was due from him, and assured his readers that the fact that he "at least had made Agnosticism fashionable" was an adequate life's service. I regret I have not the article by me, and cannot give more than the words in inverted commas as written.

Perhaps there was a deal of real good in this severance of a leading political Freethinker from active participation in Freethought propaganda. Unfortunately the movement had been popularly associated with a particular party in politics, and with even a narrow sect within that party. Mr. Morley's action began to effect a rightful appropriation of labor to each. Freethinkers were to be found in every party, and sat on both sides of the Speaker in Parliament. Yet the active movement seemed inseparably associated with a section of a political party. On the publication of John Stuart Mill's posthumous work, the *Edinburgh Review* triumphantly claimed that the book amply justified their view that anti-Christianism and Benthamism were synonymous terms. This did not tend to real advancement nor union within our cause. Mr. Morley's action somewhat cleared the field for the truer Freethought which now obtains.

SOUTH DEVON.

FREE SPEECH IN HYDE PARK.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The right of free speech is seriously threatened in Hyde Park by a clerical "Christian Evidence" advocate named Waldron. This clergyman, who plumes himself upon his platform prowess, is so puffed up with vanity that he invariably exhibits a lamentable display of ill-temper upon finding himself less of an attraction to the public than those on other platforms. Discovering this to be the case last Thursday evening, he, to hide his discomfiture, accused Mr. Boulter, who was addressing a huge gathering, of having made personal remarks "calculated to cause a breach of the peace." The complaint was made to a police officer, who, as I am informed, was told that if he failed to take the address of the "offender," a letter would be forwarded to Scotland Yard! This looks uncommonly like a threatening not only of free speech, but also of the police; for it is well

known that the word of a mere policeman is of little value in certain quarters when pitted against that of a highly respectable parson; the officer having to think first of his family and then of the less important public.

But the "offence" is a fiction. Such personal remarks were not made by the speaker complained of, as I am able to testify. Nobody—including the officer—was aware of this "calculated to cause" humbug save the reverend gentleman himself, who, in his zeal for Christianity, finds it necessary to attempt the sealing of Secularist lips by intimidating the Force.

But tactics such as these, adopted by an unscrupulous cleric, constitute a real danger to free speech in our public parks. A parson has only to indulge in a little calculating, and a little intimidating, when lo! a perfectly innocent man finds himself at Marlborough-street to answer the phantom charge. There is a Court prejudice against the Freethinker as a Freethinker, and a Court prejudice in favor of the parson as a parson; the result being that the unoffending Freethinker is "bound over to keep the peace" (which he has not broken) for six months, which is next door to ordering him to keep SILENCE—for at any moment after this judgment is passed, and until the six months have expired, his knavish antagonists, gloating over their first easy victory, will again pounce upon their victim, as they well know that a second charge may result in a ruinous fine, or even imprisonment.

This being the position, I trust that every real Freethinker will support the Secularist platform in Hyde Park on Thursday evenings, and that he will keep ears and eyes open, so that when the parson next tries this infamous manoeuvre he will find himself checkmated.

Is not this the same person who so recently attained notoriety in Chatham by the charges he levelled against its inhabitants, and for which he was called over the coals by the Parish Council?

ERNEST PACK.

REFORMING A PARROT.

A Pittsburgher who spent a part of last summer in England tells an incident which sadly disturbed the religious peace of a parish in Penzance.

A maiden lady of that town owned a parrot, which somehow acquired the disagreeable habit of observing, at frequent intervals:

"I wish the old lady would die."

This annoyed the bird's owner, who spoke to her curate about it.

"I think we can rectify the matter," replied the good man. "I also have a parrot, and he is a righteous bird, having been brought up in the way he should go. I will lend you my parrot, and I trust his influence will reform that depraved bird of yours."

The curate's parrot was placed in the same room with the wicked one, and as soon as they had become accustomed to each other the bad bird remarked:

"I wish the old lady would die."

Whereupon the clergyman's bird rolled up his eyes and in a solemn accent added:

"We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord!"

The story got out in the parish, and for several Sundays it was necessary to omit the litany at the church services.—*Pittsburg Chronicle*.

PROFITABLE INDECISION.

A good story of a recent conversation between Mr. Howells and Mark Twain is going the rounds. Mark Twain was relating some of his experiences before he became famous. "My difficulties taught me some thrift," he observed. "But I never knew whether it was wiser to spend my last nickel for a cigar to smoke or for an apple to devour."

"I am astounded," returned Mr. Howells, "that a person of so little decision should meet with so much worldly success."

Mark Twain nodded very gravely. "Indecision about spending money," he remarked, "is worthy of cultivation. When I couldn't decide what to buy with my last nickel I kept it, and so became rich."

PERSONAL OBJECTIONS.

"Yes, Bruddah Johnsing," said the exhorter, bending over the man at the mourner's bench; "Aldough yo' hab gone t'roo great trials an' tribbylations, aldough yo' hab bin pusecuted by man an' sent ter de jail time an' time ergain fo' chicken-stealin', it is still possible fo' yo' ter go ter heaben an' join in de glad songs ob de seraphs, an'—"

"Hol' on!" interrupted Mistah Johnsing, jumping to his feet; "hol' on, Bruddah Snowball! I declaihs mahse'f right now an' hyuh. I isn't gwine ter no heaben whar I has ter join in de songs wid de sheriffs. I's done had too much truck wid dem kind ob people on dis earth,"—*Judge*.

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.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, James Rowney.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Rushcroft-road, Brixton, 11.30, Ernest Edwin; Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6, C. Cohen.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A., "False Prophets."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, Mr. Rowney.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): W. J. Ramsey, 3.15, "The Freethinker's Position"; 6.30, "Where Angels Dwell."

COUNTRY.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): 7, H. Buxton, "God, Mill, and Aked."

PORTR BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Room, Town Hall): 6.30, T. Bennet, "Secularism: its Aims and Objects."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (4 Co-operative-street): 3, Special Meeting to receive Delegates' Report from Conference, etc.

OUTDOOR.

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Square): Tuesday, July 3, at 7.45, H. Percy Ward, "Saintly Sinners."

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