

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Ah! ye knights of the pen! May honor be your shield
and truth tip your lances! Be gentle to all gentle people.
Be modest to women. Be tender to children. And as
for the Ogre Humbug, out sword, and have at him.*

—THACKERAY.

Secularisation.

PROGRESS means, or involves, the secularisation of public life. In former times, if we go back far enough, every part of the collective existence of the community was under religious sanction and regulation. When it was perceived, for instance, in old Babylonia, that a periodical day of rest was necessary to the very existence of the slave population, the day selected was that of the great god Sabaoth, and the institution was placed under his patronage. Afterwards the fiction was devised of his having instituted it; and thus, through the Jews having borrowed the Sabbath from their Babylonian masters, the weekly day of rest has come down to modern society in connection with the name of Jehovah, who took the place and function of the god Sabaoth in the Hebrew scriptures. This is one illustration, and we could give a hundred. Let us take a few more.

When a child was born he had to be christened. There was no other way of introducing him to the human family and giving him a name. Now he can be registered and named at a public office, without any religious ceremony. When he was married he had to go to church with his bride and be joined with her by a priest in the holy bands of matrimony. Now he can go with his bride to a registrar's office and be married in a purely secular fashion. When he died his body had to be laid with religious rites in a consecrated churchyard. There was no other way of disposing of it. Now it can be cremated, or interred in the unconsecrated portion of a cemetery, without a religious word or a religious act from beginning to end. As far as the law is concerned, birth, marriage, and death have been secularised.

There was a time when the Bible was quoted as a standard authority in parliament. A text of Scripture was enough to terminate a discussion. But all that belongs now to the dim and distant past. A legislator who raised a passage in Holy Writ as an objection to a Bill would be looked upon as a curiosity. Parliament itself has been secularised. Once it was only open to Protestants, then Catholics were admitted, then Jews, and lastly Freethinkers. The Christian oath was altered to a Theistic oath, and finally it was made optional by the alternative of affirmation.

To a large extent other public bodies have been secularised. Tests have even been abolished at the universities. And although the social dice are loaded against avowed Freethinkers, there is no longer any open religious inquisition in any branch of the public service. Citizens of all religions, and of no religion, are supposed to be on a level of equality.

Now the secularisation of public life is the positive side of the negative principle that the State should not in any way concern itself with religion, which is a purely private and personal matter between a man and the God he worships. The State should concern itself with the affairs of this world, without regard to

the alleged affairs of another world. The actions it seeks to regulate have their origin, their conditions, and their results on earth; and the State does not deal with them in relation to their issues in another sphere of existence.

When the Nonconformists demand the disestablishment of the Church of England they invoke the principle of secularisation. Why then do they oppose the principle of secularisation in the educational system of England? Because they are animated by selfish motives. Secularisation would help the Free Churches in disestablishing the Church of England. Secularisation would injure the Free Churches in disestablishing religion in the national schools. There is no principle in the Nonconformist policy. Principle receives mouth homage when it serves the turn, and is trampled under foot when it stands in the way of self-interest.

Mr. Birrell is ostensibly a Liberal minister; he is really in the service of political Nonconformity. He spoke in the House of Commons as a Nonconformist and the son of a Nonconformist. His object was to help the Free Churches without provoking a too dangerous revolt on the part of Anglicans and Catholics. We are happy to see that this unstatesmanlike and sinister policy is meeting its nemesis.

The great gatherings recently held in the Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester, are striking signs of the Anglican and Catholic revolt. Fifty thousand Anglicans supported the Protestant Bishop of Manchester, and sixty thousand Papists supported the Catholic Bishop of Salford, in denouncing the Education Bill as a thing to be resisted and broken at any cost. Instead of smoothly settling a great question, Mr. Birrell has provoked something very much like civil war. If his Bill becomes law, in anything like its present condition as it passed the House of Commons, the policy of "Passive Resistance" will be pursued by the Anglicans and Catholics, and in a fashion, we believe, that will throw all the achievements of the Cromwell-Clifford party into insignificance. It will be something more than a teapot and silver-spoon struggle this time.

This quarrel of the Churches is rather pleasant to Freethinkers; not in itself, but because of its probable consequences. The rival Churches are striving for what neither of them can gain without exasperating the rest. No peace is possible, therefore, except on the lines of Secular Education. To this complexion they must come at last.

Meanwhile the one clause in Mr. Birrell's Bill which slightly favored the principle of secularisation, and was probably intended as a sop to the Secular Educationists, is the one providing that parents need not send their children to school during the hour devoted to religious education. This was the one liberal thing in the whole Bill, and the Lords have spotted it. It is marked out for destruction in the Gilded Chamber. And its destruction may induce Freethinkers to join Anglicans and Catholics in practical resistance to Nonconformist tyranny.

What we keep our eye steadily upon, and what we ask all Freethinkers to keep their eyes steadily upon, is the great principle of secularisation. It is our polestar. Neither religion nor irreligion should be hindered or promoted by the State. For this reason we have hoped that the French Republic will disestablish the Catholic Church without a shadow of

injustice, and above all without setting up future relationships between religion and the State, such as are involved in the Associations Cultuelles.

Our late article on "France and the Pope" has attracted the attention of the *Catholic Times*. "Whilst we deplore the writer's general attitude towards religion, and the language in which he refers to it," that journal says, "we cannot but recognise in this article a love of fair play." "Mr. Foote," it says later on, "holds with the late Charles Bradlaugh that it is with the Catholic Church Free-thought will have to fight its great battle, and he warns the French Republic not to underrate its power. The English Freethinker takes a calmer view than the French enemy of Christianity."

We are pleased to read this acknowledgment, but we take it at its true value. We do not expect that Catholics will show us any consideration in return. They will oppress us when they have the opportunity. That is in accordance with their principles. But it is not in accordance with our principles. We must offer our enemies justice, even if they would show us none; for we are serving, not the transient hour, but the whole future of Humanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

On Ridicule.

A WRITER in one of the religious weeklies recently observed that while there could be no defensible objection to a criticism of religious beliefs, there was a well-founded feeling against criticism that was merely intended to exhibit in a ridiculous light highly-cherished beliefs. It would have been interesting had the writer supplied his readers with samples of anti-religious criticism that had no other purpose than to raise a laugh, if only for the reason that such criticism is extremely scarce, and therefore worth preserving. Those who do place religious beliefs before the public in such a manner as to raise a laugh have usually a very serious purpose, and the method is of value to them only in proportion as it tends to realise this end. It is true that the religionist is not always able to see what this purpose is, but this may be due either to a poor sense of the function of ridicule or to an inability to credit anyone with a serious purpose whose opinions do not coincide with his own.

It is significant, however, that the believer dreads this form of attack more than any other. He not only asks that his beliefs shall be treated with the utmost solemnity, but is deeply aggrieved if his request is not complied with. And thanks to this repeated demand, thanks also to the power and influence of religion, it has come to pass that a considerable number of non-believers tacitly agree to the condition that the one subject in the world to be discussed with the utmost solemnity is that which they believe to be the outcome of primitive ignorance joined to perpetuated credulity and imposture. Psychologically these form an interesting study. They form part of a tolerably large class whose intelligence has outstripped their instincts. Intellectually they have outgrown religion, instinctively they are afraid of it. Like the people who do not believe in ghosts, and yet hold back from entering a house that has the reputation of being haunted, they have a lurking fear of religion, although they know it to be intellectually worthless. Their expressed respect for religion is, therefore, not due to any perception of either its moral or intellectual value, but simply to organic fear implanted in them by their earlier history, and which they have not yet outgrown. While people continue in this state, religion must present an appearance of strength and vitality which it does not, as a matter of fact, possess.

There is, then, good reason for the religionist asking that his beliefs shall be treated with the utmost solemnity, and every reason for the Freethinkers ignoring the request. No one questions the right of man to cherish a ridiculous belief as of the

greatest value; all that the Freethinker reserves is the right to laugh at this belief should he choose to do so. For to admit that any particular belief, as a belief, deserves only serious treatment is to concede half the case, by admitting its inherent importance or value. One admits in such a case that the belief is of value to the world, and that its disappearance is a matter of importance. But Freethinkers do not believe this, and there is no reason why they should act as though they do. And if, as I have suggested, the desire to approach religion with the utmost solemnity is partly due to unacknowledged fear, then there is ample reason why these people should be taught to laugh at what they have hitherto feared. For superstition is never really dead in any person until he (or she) has learned to laugh at it. Happiness is the psychological equivalent of physiological health, and laughter is in this connection a guarantee of perfect sanity of mind. The man who has faulty digestive organs, a badly working liver, or who is weighted with cares and fears, does not readily laugh; he smiles, he sniggers, but the good, round, hearty laugh is not his. So let all learn to laugh at religion, if only as a proof to their fellows that in them it is dead beyond the possibility of resurrection. Had people in the sixteenth century learned to laugh at the Church there would have been no Protestant Reformation. As it was, they only laughed at the abuse of some of its forms, and so paved the way for another Church equally objectionable. Had the people in the seventeenth century learned to laugh at kingship, England would have remained a Republic after 1649. An institution that has no better foundation than an act of faith cannot survive ridicule, which is at once the reason why its upholders dread the weapon and why its opponents should use it.

Laughter is not only an indication of health, it is in its way a test of truth and utility. A truthful thing or a useful thing does not dread ridicule; it persists in spite of all the laughter that may be directed against it. Consider how much laughter has been raised in connection with the family, with mother-in-laws, or with husbands and wives. Yet none of these institutions have complained, and none have been injured thereby. If anyone informed the President of the Royal Society that some one had been ridiculing the law of gravitation, the reply would be, "let him." But if some one informs the Bishop of London, or the Archbishop of Canterbury that people have been ridiculing the Virgin Birth, or the belief in the deity, the reply would be that it is really very shocking, and that all possible steps must be taken to suppress such conduct. Whence this difference? Plainly, because in the one case there is the conviction that the fact will outlast the laughter, and in the other the feeling that gods exist only so long as they are believed in, and that people believe only so long as they refrain from examination and criticism.

Another thing worth noting is that ridicule is only effective and only commands notice when it is directed against shams. The man who went about ridiculing honesty or truthfulness would find more people laugh at him than *with* him. But, as a matter of fact, men do not readily laugh at such things. Their value is too obvious and too insistent to offer material for ridicule. People do laugh at religious beliefs, and some few always have; and as these have not been among the least illustrious of the sons of men, one may safely assume that there is something in the spectacle of a civilised people clinging to religious beliefs that invites ridicule.

The world's greatest reformers have often enough been mighty laughers. Consider the work of Rabelais, who, with his titanic humor, did more to purify men's minds of superstition than could have been accomplished by any number of solemn books written by equally solemn-minded men. So, too, stands the work of Lucian at an earlier date, and that of Swift and Voltaire at a later one. These men had grasped the secret that to attack a ridiculous thing with profound solemnity is but to convince those who uphold it of its impor-

tance and sacred character. It is to take the foolish at the valuation of the fool, instead of at the value set upon it by wiser men. One may silence by superior dialectic one who holds an absurd belief, but it is the ridiculous aspect that finally makes the believer ashamed of it. Freethinkers know this to be true in relation to Christianity, and Christians know it to be true in relation to other religions. The priests of one creed are ready enough to pour ridicule on the believers in an alien religion. Then they recognise its legitimacy and its force. It is when the weapon is turned against themselves that they cry out for quarter and declaim against its use. It is then they protest against the exercise of that sense which—if there be a God—God gave his creatures at the same time that he furnished them with a religion. And to this one need only retort that if God did not wish man to laugh at religion he ought to have made him destitute of a sense of humor, or given him religious beliefs of an entirely different character. If Christians only asked themselves why it is that their religion so easily lends itself to ridicule, they would better appreciate the weakness of their own attitude and the real purpose of their opponents.

Christianity itself, it may be cheerfully admitted, is not a religion that has ever aimed at increasing happiness or encouraging laughter. Its principle figure is a man of sorrows, its great leaders have invariably been men to whom laughter was more or less alien. No man or no body of men who were in the habit of laughing heartily could ever have elaborated nine-tenths of the doctrines that go to make up orthodox Christianity. Still less could they have pursued bloodthirsty quarrels year after year, and drenched nations in blood. Could men, with a sense of the ridiculous, have solemnly elaborated such doctrines as the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, or the infallibility of the Bible? The proper cultivation of a sense of humor or the opportunity for the free play of ridicule would have prevented these doctrines gaining the importance they did, and the world would have been sweeter and healthier for their absence.

It may be admitted that there is a place for serious discussion, even in the case of religious beliefs. If one is studying the origin and development of religious belief there is no need, and little room, for ridicule. Or if one is dealing with religion under primitive conditions, where it is really alive and honestly held, one feels no very strong desire to use the weapon of ridicule. But when we find these beliefs, belonging properly to savages, perpetuated among a civilised people, then the most effective instrument one can use is the weapon of ridicule. Said Voltaire: "Men will not cease to be persecutors until they have ceased to be absurd"; and one may also say that a common type of mind will never cease to hold an absurd opinion until they realise its absurdity, and have grown strong enough to laugh at the superstition that has hitherto enslaved them. That religion is an object of ridicule to-day is the price it pays for living beyond the period for which it was intellectually fitted. And that it now asks for social, as it once asked for legal, protection against ridicule, is an admission that it feels its own unfitness to the age.

C. COHEN.

The Holy Ghost and Life.

LATELY some of us have heard and read much concerning the person and power of the Holy Ghost. In Evangelical Churches this is a theme of vital importance; and even in Churches not distinguished for their orthodoxy frequent references are made to this subject. On resuming his ministry at Westminster Chapel, after the summer holiday, the Rev. Dr. Campbell-Morgan devoted a whole service to an impassioned consideration of the power that results from the Spirit's presence in the human heart. Of

course, the Spirit was invariably spoken of in terms of personality. He could come and go at will; he could be received or rejected; he could be quenched, grieved, and resisted; he was to be distinguished from the Father and the Son, so that those people who had the Father and the Son lacked an essential attribute of life unless they also had the Spirit. At Ephesus, Apollos made a few converts, about twelve in all; but Apollos, though eloquent and of a fervent spirit, knew nothing about the Holy Ghost. He was a disciple of John the Baptist merely, and it was into John's baptism that he immersed his converts. Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos in hand, and "expounded unto him the way of God more carefully." By-and-bye, Paul came back to Ephesus and found the twelve partial converts, to whom he said, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed? And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given." Then Paul supplemented the teaching of Apollos, and "baptised them into the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts xviii. 24—xix. 7). Now, in this story of the double conversion and double baptism of these twelve men, the most notable and significant statement is that "when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied."

Dr. Morgan's central proposition was that without a distinct outpouring of the Holy Ghost no man can fully realise himself, or, in other words, that no one can live a complete life without being baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus, which is tantamount to being baptised with the Holy Ghost. Indeed, this was Dr. Morgan's great message. He was very much afraid that the majority of present-day disciples did not receive the Holy Ghost when they believed, which accounts for the barrenness and impotence of their lives. They are disciples of Jesus up to a certain point, but lack the elements which make life worth living. "You have repented and believed," he said, "but neither your repentance nor your belief, nor both combined, can infuse into your hearts the glorious wealth and power of life until you receive the Holy Ghost, until you are born from above." In the course of the sermon that contention was repeated, in varying forms, at least twenty times. "You are Christians," he cried, "but not complete Christians, and the cause of the incompleteness is that you did not receive the Holy Ghost when you believed. Your repentance has not been rewarded with remission, your belief has not ripened into faith, and your faith has not blossomed into rapture. You have received only a part, the introductory part, of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. That is why your life is so poor and dull and heavy and earth-bound. To realise a complete life, the life that bursts into poetry and music and beauty, you must be filled with the power of the Holy Ghost."

It is not my intention to criticise Dr. Morgan's theology. His orthodoxy is beyond question. His doctrine of the Holy Ghost is thoroughly Biblical. It may also be added that he is an ideal Christian preacher. He exhibits all the essential marks of the genuine pulpit orator. He will never lack crowded congregations. He has sincerity touched by passion. But is his teaching psychologically sound? Is his gospel practically true? Do the facts of history say Amen to his doctrine? These questions we are bound to answer in the negative. Translated into untheological language, Dr. Morgan's teaching is that morality without religion lacks its dynamic, its glow, its joyousness. To every one who has accepted only the ethic of Jesus he would say, "One thing thou lackest," that one thing being fervor, fire, illumination. One would like to ask the great preacher, in this connection, whether or not he knows of anyone who has accepted the ethic of Jesus, as contained in the Gospels, and who endeavors to shape his life according to it. Dr. Morgan must know that there are scholars, quite as competent to judge as himself, who are convinced that the ethic of Jesus is fundamentally faulty and cannot be converted into practice, and that there are many commandments of Jesus

which even the most devout disciples never dream of obeying. But waiving that point, is it a fact that the moral life, apart from the Holy Ghost, is cold, repellent, and dead? Is it a fact that its true motive-power comes alone from the supernatural world? Or, in other words, is it a fact that the life of non-Christian people generally is wanting in ardor, intensity, passion, pulse, and power? Here again a little knowledge of the world would show that these questions also must be answered in the negative. The joy of life is immeasurably older than Christianity and is experienced to-day by myriads of people who have no religion. Ecstasy is not confined to Christendom. Rapture is known outside all Churches. Atheists are often carried away from themselves by agreeable excitement in the faithful discharge of the common duties of the common day. No visions of God and his glory, of Christ and his love, of the Spirit and his power, of eternity and its blisses, are ever vouchsafed to them; but they are frequently transported by visions of the Good, the Beautiful, and the True, and their joy is unspeakable and full of glory.

As a rule, Christians are less jubilant and exulting than non-Christians. Have you never noticed what a vast proportion of Christian hymns and tunes are in the minor key? Are not the majority of prayers also characterised by a whining, complaining, lamenting, deploring note? It is with fear and trembling, not with ebullient rapture, that Christians appear before their God. Surely, to stand in perpetual awe of a person is not conducive to merriment. To be in constant fear of offending our Sovereign Lord is fatal to lightheartedness and wholesome laughter. Fear and joy cannot coexist. Even the Apostle John tells us that perfect love casteth out fear, and the same may be said of perfect joy. Dr. Morgan observed that faith signifies whole-hearted surrender to the will of God; but what is the will of God? As interpreted by the Church, the will of God is that we should believe on the name of the Lord Jesus in order to be safe from the wrath to come. The will of God is that all men should be saved from their lost condition through the atonement of Christ, and be inspired for the noblest life by the hope of heaven. Now, the Church is a Divine institution, in which the word of salvation has been deposited, and by which it is to accomplish its beneficent mission. Therefore it is the will of God that we should attend to the various ministrations of the sanctuary, listen to God's message to us as delivered by God's men, sing hymns, join in the prayers, and offer monetary gifts on the altar, which the Lord always condescends to accept. And is it not in the Church that the Holy Ghost is poured out in great abundance on the Lord's people, and through them on all flesh? But the fact to be noted is that the will of God, as thus expounded, is calculated to engender fear rather than love in those who contemplate it; and this fact accounts for the dejection and lugubriousness which characterises most Christian people.

Now, our contention is that, in all the teaching of the Church concerning human life, there is a depressing note of insincerity. The will of God, the atonement of Christ, the Holy Ghost, and the spiritual world do not touch human life except artificially or farcically, and, of necessity, injuriously. In order to know about these so-called realities you sit at the feet of a man to whom they are as incomprehensible as to yourself, with the inevitable result that you neglect to cultivate self-reliance and self-control, and get to depend upon Another, unknown and unknowable, for the salvation which you ought to be working out for yourself and your neighbors. And, after all, what does the Holy Ghost do for a man's redemption? Nothing directly. Even preachers admit that he works alone through appointed means. For example, if a drunkard, a thief, or a swindler wishes to have his bonds shattered, he must attend a church or a mission-hall, get into a specific atmosphere, and be played upon by human voices that tremble with sympathy and encouragement; and eventually, perhaps, when his nervous system is duly excited, such a wave of

intoxicating emotion sweeps over him as causes to arise within him a strong aversion for, and a burning desire to conquer, his terrible weakness. When this consummation occurs, the Holy Spirit gets the credit of having emancipated the poor sinner from his spiritual bondage. We gladly admit the reality of many such conversions, but firmly hold that they are really due, not to supernatural intervention of any kind, but to the atmosphere of human sympathy, helpfulness, and encouragement thrown around the weak and fallen; and we maintain, further, that the transforming and ennobling power of such an atmosphere would be immensely heightened by the elimination from it of all the alleged supernatural presences and activities.

For the Holy Ghost, then, let us substitute the slowly emerging spirit of humanity, those beneficent forces inherent in human nature itself which make for the uplifting and ennoblement of the whole race, but which, because of religion, have for thousands of years been kept in abeyance. Let this philanthropic spirit of humanity have free course; let these constructive and rectifying forces, latent in ourselves, be duly trained from earliest childhood; let us form societies, the object of which will be to educate the ignorant, to strengthen the weak, to reform the erring, to comfort the sorrowful, and gradually all our present disharmonies and painful limitations and degrading immoralities shall vanish, and life "shall become first a peace out of pain, then a light," then a sustained and ever-growing harmony. The Holy Ghost has been a signal failure; let us give philanthropy, in its broadest meaning, a fair chance.

J. T. LLOYD.

My Twenty Years' Fight in Australia.—V.

(Continued from p. 645.)

WE left the Hall of Science, Bourke-street, Melbourne, in 1888, and for some months we had no settled place to meet in. We negotiated for a building, and were prepared to expend £200 or £300 on repairs and alterations; but the two or three men who conducted the negotiations, we soon found, were in league with the Anarchists, and they played us false. We then went successively to two other places, and so contrived to carry on our work under vast difficulties during five or six months.

Before the Anarchistic troubles we had bought a plot of ground on which to erect a hall. And here I must relate the history of that building in some little detail, as there are in the story one or two points of importance. The Association, be it remembered, had been formed about a year and a half before my arrival in Australia, and I took over the responsibilities of my predecessor. The property of the Association was all vested in three trustees—two of them very decent fellows, the third a born and well-developed mischief-maker. Most unfortunately, the two good men resigned when my fights with the government commenced, but the bad one, for ends of his own, held fast to his office. He had been brought to Australia by his elder brother to save him from death by consumption. When I say that his good brother stuck loyally and heartily to me all through the troubles, and thoroughly detested the one whose life he had saved, the reader will understand that the trustee who stuck to his office was one of the worst eggs possible. Two other men were elected in the room of the two who resigned, and when the crisis came they were mere tools in the hands of the bad one.

When I discovered that we had trustees, and that the Association was not a registered one, I at once said: "Then your trustees can play you false whenever they please; they can lift whatever money you have in the bank and claim it as their own, and you have no remedy." At my suggestion steps were at once taken to give the Association a legal status, and

we spent £30 to £40, and much time also, in drawing up the necessary rules, etc., for registration. When these were ready, and nothing further was required except a vote of the Executive Council to authorise the registration, the very parties who years later did all the mischief, spoke against it. They had previously gained over a large majority of the Council to vote against the registration, and when it was put to the vote the motion was lost.

One thing only kept me from openly denouncing them. I had not been long there; I knew these men but very partially, though I suspected them; I had no fault to find with them except in connection with this vote. I did not feel justified in denouncing men, however perverse, on such insignificant grounds. I might be injuring them and their families in character and purse both. And so I let the opportunity slip. I am bound to confess that my weakness then, and consideration for men who later showed themselves unworthy of regard, furnished the opportunity for most of the evils that followed.

Early in 1888, being unwell and about worn out, run down, and exhausted by incessant work, worry, and a severe attack of bronchitis, I went to Brisbane, the capital of Queensland, for a month. I performed the overland journey of 1,300 miles, spending the nights in a sleeping-car, and, to my surprise, arrived in Brisbane on the Sunday morning feeling much better, and quite ready for work. I was a month in that city, and lectured there some six or seven times, and then returned to Melbourne.

During my absence the Anarchistic elements of the Association had gained considerable strength, and had turned our Society into a bear-garden. To remedy this state of things a meeting was called, and the secretary and several others were expelled. The three trustees went with them; in fact, they were the real movers in the mischief, though not openly so. The one openly proclaimed object of the plotters was to expel me from the Association, and drive me out of Melbourne! Their sole reason for this was the fact that I had both opposed and ridiculed Anarchy. As I have said, if the trustees had done their duty, and remained true to their trust, the Anarchistic incident would have proved nothing worse than a flea-bite; but their flight was a serious matter, as will be seen.

We had the site for the building, but owing to a change in the Victorian law relating to the transfer of land it took a year or two before the deeds were ready and the transfer made. This proved fatal to us. We found that the land was certainly ours, and should certainly become so formally and technically as soon as the new law in its workings permitted. Besides, we were advised by several of the most reputable lawyers that our runaway trustees could do nothing, as they had not secured any title to the land. So we resolved to build the hall.

In December, 1888, we erected on the land a splendid marquee, which would seat about five hundred persons, and for three months we used that tent with the most gratifying results. Until we were actually ready to build, the tent remained on the site the hall was to occupy; then we removed it to another place, and I laid the foundation-stone of the hall on March 29, 1889.

Just at that time I was engaged in a Parliamentary fight of a fierce and exciting character; and, all things considered, what with lectures for the same audience every Sunday, my paper to fill up weekly, the hall building, and electioneering, I had irons enough in the fire. But, in addition to all that, I was then fighting a tough battle for the working men (mostly), in order to secure their right to hold meetings, etc., on Sundays on a particular wharf. But of that I say no more now.

The hall was rapidly built, and opened on May 15, 1889. And for nearly two years we used it with good effect. We were still flourishing, but a thunderbolt was forging for us. The papers, the lawyers, the government were all our deadly foes, and in that fact the trustees found their opportunity. Our own lawyers sold us. The government officials made the

transfer of the property to the trustees; and, looking back over it, I hardly see now how we could have prevented that, with the solid combination against us. The law is 'one thing, its exposition, execution, and application quite another affair. And never were law and justice more shamelessly manipulated than in my experience in Melbourne.

Suffice it to say that the trustees took us to court; our case seemed a good one; the Judge showed a bitter animus against us from the beginning; our barrister was either cowed by the Judge or in the swim with the enemy; I could not induce him to put me in the witness box; the Judge would hear nothing patiently that our side had to say. He decided against us and gave the trustees possession of the Hall. The next day, without a moment's notice, we were expelled and all we had in the Hall was turned out into the street by a sheriff's officer. Still we stuck for days to the building and never gave the thieves the chance to use it for many months. At length they had to barricade the place, and found they had acquired a white elephant.

I am loth to parade my own feelings, but I think the months, January to March or April, 1891, were the most trying and depressing of my existence. Mr. Bradlaugh died in January, and that stunned me; in March we were expelled from our own hall, mostly by official rascality. An insolent parson came and pretended to sympathise with me, and quickly departed with a flea in his ear. Several pious and well-meaning Christian fanatics came to entreat me now, in this crisis, to come over to them, and they would make it worth my while! They retired much more sad than I was.

We were scarcely out of our own Hall when our Association found itself domiciled in the Young Men's Christian Association rooms! This body had built a very costly structure on the very site of our old Hall of Science, which we left in 1888, and they were childish enough to glory in the fact that they now worshiped God on the site once occupied by the Atheistic Temple. Not so fast, said I. On that site where I so long preached Atheism you can never succeed. And they never did. In a short time the body was bankrupt and their new building was sold.

In the meantime we made capital use of the building the Christian young men had formerly occupied and would fain have returned to; and this was one of the very bitterest pills I administered to my Christian foes in Melbourne. Beaten? No, we were not yet knocked down, not to mention defeat. And we never should have experienced even a seeming failure if an all-mighty foe had not invaded Australia.

Let me explain. When I first went to Australia money was extremely plentiful. I was astonished, and a bit alarmed. Investigation showed that my alarm was well-grounded. They were boasting of prosperity and cracking up their manufactures. Said I, "The article you are manufacturing here the most rapidly and extensively is POVERTY. You are living over a volcano, and there's going to be a smash!" Of course, I was written down a crank or a fanatic; but the crash came for all that. After the land-boom the collapse came like an earthquake, and the state of thing in Australia became positively indescribable. Most of our people, belonging as they did to the industrial classes, had to fly; they simply vanished. How we kept our heads above water at all is the marvel. But we never said Die. We hung on somehow, and kept the *Liberator* going, vigorously too, during ten or twelve years of unmitigated poverty. This brought out both the wickedness and the goodness of our seeming and our real friends. Never have I seen more unprincipled villains than I found in Melbourne; and, I am proud to add that I found there and in Australasia generally men and women of the most perfect goodness I have ever known. No! if I live to be a hundred, I can never meet with better friends than I have left in Australasia.

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

Some of our readers will remember our recent remarks on the Rev. Dr. Fitchett's new novel, entitled *Ithuriel's Spear*, in which Christianity is proved to be true by the cheap and foolish device of painting an imaginary wicked infidel. We are glad to see Dr. Fitchett taken to task for this in last week's *British Weekly*. The editor of that Nonconformist organ speaks out very plainly. "A very careful reading," he says, "has forced upon us the reluctant conviction that Dr. Fitchett's novel is a bad and pernicious book." And reasons are given for this judgment.

Dr. Fitchett depicts a regular Chamber of Horrors lot of Freethinkers, all belonging to the same Freethought Association. One owns brothels, and another owns public-houses; one is an extortionate money-lender, and another is a forger; and so on to the end of the dirty chapter. Now the editor of the *British Weekly* asks whether all this has "any real likeness to the facts of life." "Is it so certain," the editor asks, "that the moral superiority of a certain number of Christians to an equal number of Freethinkers would be admitted by outsiders? We would that it were so. It ought to be so. It ought to be clear that in the Church a higher life of purity, of pity, of fidelity obtains than any to be found in the world. But the lecturer on Christian evidences, who would state this as an admitted fact, would at least have the quality of courage." Dr. Fitchett simply does not understand the intellectual difficulties of people who have come to doubt the Christian faith. "He takes it for granted," the editor says, "that anyone who rejects Christianity is ready to tolerate and even to ally himself with the most notorious scoundrels in order that the faith may be destroyed. Therein we believe he is utterly mistaken. Therein we believe he gravely libels multitudes who are striving for the light as earnestly as he has ever striven."

The common-garden Christian notion has been that Freethinkers adopt the motto: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," and that they do no more good in this world than they expect to do in the next. Intelligent and observant Christians (say like the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam) smile at this notion. They know how far it is from the truth. But of course it is adopted by the Rev. Dr. Fitchett. Here again he is taken to task by the editor of the *British Weekly*. After referring to the material evils of modern society, he writes: "It is a vile slander on Freethinkers to say that they have been supine and careless in the face of all this. It would be far truer to say that it is they chiefly who have roused the Churches to their duty. There is an awakening, but it is yet the early morn. Nor can any just and candid student of history deny that the fancied liberation which many Freethinkers imagine they have gained, has been used by them as the instrument of a painful, a toilworn, and an arduous life of duty."

Finally, the editor says it is "necessary that the strongest protest should be raised from the Christian camp against Dr. Fitchett's methods." This is an honorable declaration. We raise our hat—for this once, anyhow—to Dr. Robertson Nicoll. But we don't believe that the "Christian camp" will make that "strongest protest." Look at the unbroken conspiracy of silence maintained by the Christian press against Mr. W. T. Stead's effort to bring the Rev. Dr. Torrey to book for libelling Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. If there was hesitation to speak when we had that job on hand, there ought to have been none when Mr. Stead threw himself into the arena. The *British Weekly* itself said not a word. It allowed Dr. Torrey to pass unrebuked. Yet the methods of Dr. Torrey were the methods of Dr. Fitchett, with just this difference—that the latter presents his fiction as fiction, while the former presented his fiction as history. Still, we would rather not end with an ungenerous note, so we congratulate Dr. Robertson Nicoll on his highly creditable article.

There is great significance in the fact that the Rev. Dr. Fitchett's novel, *Ithuriel's Spear*, has been severely handled by the critics in some of the religious journals of England. The *Christian Commonwealth*, though it has its usual dig at the *Freethinker*, pronounces the book a failure. The *Christian World* admits that it is open to the charge of "unfair exaggeration."

That fatuous sentimentalist, the Bishop of London, who pretends to have an extraordinary acquaintance with the "laboring classes," has just been telling a metropolitan audience that "he knew the democracy better than most men, having lived for years amongst them, and he knew that the great mass of the people were not irreligious.

They might not openly join any definite religious body, but deep down in the heart of all the working people that he knew there was an instinctive fear of God." Very likely. They have the same instinctive fear of ghosts. Superstition survives in the nerves after it is dead in the intellect.

The Rev. Dr. James, the new Congregational minister at Enfield, is going to perform miracles. He has no intention of being dogmatic, or to set up "an articulated creed," the one desire of his heart being to preach Christ as a divine and human person, "the same yesterday, to-day, yea, and for ever." But to preach Christ in that fashion is to be in the highest degree dogmatic. The divinity of Christ is a positive dogma. Indeed, Christianity itself is a cluster of unverified and unverifiable dogmas. Religion is all creed. There must be something radically wrong with a man's intellect when he imagines that he can be a Christian minister without being dogmatic. The thing is a natural impossibility.

Expounding Free Church principles at Huddersfield, Dr. Clifford exclaimed that "God knew nothing of the secular." But is not God's neglect of the secular the strongest argument against him? He has devoted himself so exclusively to the other world that he has left this world sadly to itself. If God does exist, it is high time that he awoke, and looked after these mundane affairs, instead of allowing them to manage themselves, as he has invariably done hitherto. But Dr. Clifford seems to glory in the melancholy fact.

And yet our modern Cromwell spoke of God as "the world's schoolmaster." How can the Deity be the world's schoolmaster if he knows nothing of the secular? But it appears that God's one duty as the schoolmaster of the world is to teach it Free Church principles. In that case, we are driven to the mournful conclusion that God's schoolmastering has not been eminently successful. God knows nothing of Catholicism, and he is equally ignorant of Episcopacy, the sole subject on which he is an authority being Free Church principles. Boundless is the egotism of some men: they make even God their own exclusive property.

Dr. Clifford made another claim just as foolish. "He contended that it was only the Free Churches who were in touch with the common people. To the extent of at least three-fourths the Free Churches were made up of the working classes, and it was the Free Churches that had educated the majority of the Labor men in the House of Commons." This is a monstrously false statement. Nothing is more notorious than that Nonconformity flourishes almost entirely among the middle classes. Again and again have Free Church leaders deplored the fact that they have lost touch with the working classes. It is humiliating to find a man in Dr. Clifford's position adopting such ignoble tactics. Here is partisanship with a vengeance! Here is the political parson at his lowest depth.

At the Baptist Union Missionary Meeting, the Rev. Bruce Henderson, of Ceylon, "made a lively speech which startled the audience by its revelation of the active revival of Buddhism that is going on in Ceylon. A new Buddhism was taking the weapons out of the hands of the missionary and turning them against Christianity. Educated Buddhists were establishing schools, and there was much aggressive Buddhist missionary work." According to the editor of the *Hibbert Journal*, Buddhism and Christianity ought to join forces in the attempt to uplift humanity; but Mr. Henderson wants Ceylon to become wholly Christian, and urges his side to carry on the war with much greater zeal and energy, in order to counteract this renewed activity of Buddhism. O the pity and the tragedy of it all!

You can't always take what the *Daily Mail* says as gospel—though some people would say it is too much like gospel. But we suppose there is some truth in its New York correspondent's report that Bishop Charles D. Williams, of Michigan, has been telling the Young Men's Christian Association that the Bible is not the word of God. Even bishops, of course, talk sense sometimes; and the most thoroughly-paced deceivers have their moments of expansive veracity.

Bishop Williams described this theory that the Bible is the word of God as one of the most prolific sources of unbelief. Of course it is. One of the first doctrines of Christianity is naturally one of the first sources of unbelief. For the rest, the Bishop spoke as follows:—

"He said that the Bible nowhere declares itself to be the word of God, yet we were told that we must accept it in its entirety. But the young man reading Genesis found it impossible in geology, astronomy, and ethnology, and the only

assistance the Church was able to give was the advice, 'manipulate it until it fits the sciences.'

The result was, that the young man, if honest, must either abandon his belief or stultify his reason.

'The Bible,' said the bishop, 'needs a "square deal." When we represent it to be the word of God we use it like a heathen fetish.'

We learn that Bishop Williams's remarks have caused a sensation in the States.

The Lords had better sit down and be quiet. They will never succeed in their opposition to the Education Bill. The Rev. J. Scott Lidgett, President of the National Free Church Council, has spiked their guns before they could fire a shot. He has called on all Nonconformists to pray hard, in public and private, on Sunday (October 21), for inspiration from Christ himself." It will be a case of "See the conquering hero comes," and the Lords may consider themselves done for.

What we fear is that the "inspiration from Christ" may not save Clause VI. of the Education Bill, which is the only sensible and liberal thing it contains. Our reading of history, and our experience, show us that inspiration is generally the death of common sense.

If God exists, how amused he must be to learn what different people think and say about him. The Rev. A. J. Kesting, B.D., of Kirkcaldy, has a strange notion as to what is acceptable to the Divine Being. He says: "Though many worshipers be insincere, yea, though all be hypocrites, the ordinance of Divine worship is still acceptable to God." That is to say, God prefers the worship of hypocrites to none at all. He *must* be praised, though it be lying praise that is lavished upon him. If God *is* in the heavens, how he must laugh—or weep, when he listens to such twaddle.

Mr. Kesting makes another silly remark: "Cause public worship to cease in the land; drive out the spirit which prompts to prayer and praise, if that be possible, and you will find that the Atheist and Agnostic, the libertine and the scoffer, will tremble for the fate of mankind." Ignoring the stupid classing together of Athcists and libertines, we ask Mr. Kesting whether he really believes that Christians generally have so little moral backbone that, if they ceased to worship, they would speedily become the biggest scoundrels on earth, in the presence of whom even the libertines would tremble with fear?

But the habit of worship does not necessarily keep people morally straight. Mr. F. K. Hipple, LL.D., of the Real Estate Co., Philadelphia, was always spoken of as a "prominent, notable, trusted man of business, lawyer, and financier." He was so pre-eminently Christian in spirit, and "his integrity was so apparently beyond question, that bank examiners did not think it important to examine his accounts very strictly or often, directors took his word for everything, and the trustees of the Presbyterian General Assembly made him their treasurer." But this pious worshiper "robbed depositors, deceived his directors, stole and borrowed on securities deposited with the company, wrecked it to the tune of seven million dollars, and, when exposure was certain, ended by committing suicide." And this is by no means a solitary case. There are scores and hundreds of similar ones every year. These are the cases which Mr. Kesting and his brethren *ought* to lay to heart and carefully study.

The plain fact is, as often pointed out in the *Freethinker*, that religion, even of the devoutest form, does not prevent a man from following his constitutional bent, does not hinder a criminally disposed person from revelling in secret wrongdoing, to the serious loss of multitudes, does not, that is, morally recreate, or heal, people handicapped by a thoroughly bad heredity. Of course, the usual religious explanation of such a man as Dr. Hipple is that "religion never had any real place in his life, that it was from the first but a suit of clothes to be worn as occasion required"; but we are glad to notice that the *Church Times* is sensible enough to disown such a cowardly explanation. It is the moral impotence of religion which such cases prove.

Canon Scott-Holland is delightfully frank—sometimes. In a recent sermon he admits that the history of the Church is by no means creditable. Thinking of it, he exclaims: "What venom! what horror! what madness!" Then comes this remarkable passage:—

"This story is the most eventful story in all human experience. It must therefore be told abroad. It must be recorded for all time. Down all the long ages men must read it. And what they read will be a story of division, of violence, of cruelty, of blood. And it is the history of

Christ's Church. It is all the rehearsal of what was done in his name. It cannot be hidden. It cannot go unnoted. It cannot be forgotten."

And yet, with this frightful story staring them in the face, Christian teachers have the effrontery to assert that from the very beginning the Church has been the body of the Holy Christ, the dwelling-place of the God of love, the vehicle of the Spirit of Purity and Truth!

Converts to Christianity are often very "queer uns." The other day a young Russian was bound over at the Guildhall, London, on a charge of assaulting a Church of England missionary. It was given in evidence that he had undergone many changes of religion. He was a Jew when he came over from Russia, but, finding it difficult to obtain employment, he became a Christian. Then he was assisted by a Roman Catholic mission, and was sent to Paris, where he nearly managed to marry an English lady. Failing to do this, he became a Jew again. But he went back to Christianity once more, for a consideration, and joined the Church Army, from which he was dismissed for laziness. We suppose he will box the compass before he finishes.

Someone exclaims, "There is no grave in heaven." That sounds smart; but the smartness does not hide the stupidity that underlies it. Death is a law of Nature, and no life known to us escapes it. The Christian heaven lies outside Nature; but the scientists assure us that Nature is both eternal and infinite, so that to speak of a realm outside or beyond Nature is to utter pure nonsense. If a man said "There is no heaven in the grave," he would show himself sensible; but when he says, "There is no grave in heaven," he merely darkens "counsel by words without knowledge."

The Rev. John Thomas, M.A., of Liverpool, in his Baptist Union Sermon, delivered at Huddersfield, said that "Jesus Christ is the only Dictator to the world and the Church." If that is true, there never was a Dictator who proved a more gigantic failure. Neither the world nor the Church pays the least attention to what Jesus Christ says. In devotional utterance he is on the throne; but in practice he is ignored. Why do preachers persist in shutting their eyes against this glaring fact?

Mr. Thomas also said that "the love of Christ cannot co-exist with the love of the world." But the *profession* of love to Christ *does* co-exist with the *practice* of love for the world. Jesus Christ himself said that if people loved him they would do whatever he commanded; but nothing is more notorious than the open disregard of his commandments on the part of Christians. Indeed, many ingenious volumes have been written to explain them away. "Submission to the sovereign demands of Jesus Christ" is not to be found on our globe—except on the lips of preachers.

In spite of this incontrovertible fact, Mr. Thomas had the temerity to assert that "there is in humanity a deep heart of response to the Christ of God, which can never fail or be destroyed." How passing strange it is then, that humanity has never bowed the knee to this Christ of God! Equally absurd was this piece of rhetoric: "There is some holy link between humanity and Christ as inviolable as the mutual love of the Father and the Son." There is no such link. For two thousand years preachers have been trying hard to manufacture it, but up to the present signal failure has been their reward. And yet we are told that such empty rhetoric carried the Baptist Union off its feet.

Rev. F. B. Meyer explains in the *Christian World* that he doesn't wish to "introduce the Apostles' Creed into our common schools as an undenominational formula." What he and the others who signed a recent Nonconformist manifesto want is something very different—to those who can see the difference. "We could not," he says, "think of asking that the Apostles' Creed should be used in the elementary schools, in any form. Still less do we wish that it should be made a test in the selection of teachers. All that we asked was that the simple Bible teaching, which might be given, *should not be inconsistent with that well-known epitome of the fundamental facts of Christianity.*" Could sly, prevaricating hypocrisy go further than this? The Apostles' Creed must not be taught. Oh dear no! Perish the very thought! But nothing must be taught that is inconsistent with the Apostles' Creed. In other words, the Apostles' Creed must not be used as a positive test, but should be used as a negative test, in order to keep out teachers who don't believe what it teaches.

That this is Mr. Meyer's object is proved by his own words. "We desired," he says, "to guard against the

anomaly of an agnostic or a disciple of the more destructive schools of Higher Criticism saying at the close of the Bible lesson: 'Now, boys, there is as much truth in that as a fairy-tale; you may believe it if you like. I don't.' There are to be no tests on teachers. Certainly not. But they must be kicked out if they don't believe as much as Mr. Meyer and his colleagues consider orthodoxy. Down with tests! But up with Meyerism! And how on earth is that any improvement? It is tyranny—and it is dishonest tyranny.

Christianity calls itself the religion of love. But self-flattery is a universal weakness. It was Thomas Hood who exclaimed:—

"Alas for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!"

But as Christian charity has generally displayed itself the rarer it is the better. Swift knew what he was saying when he declared that men had usually religion enough to make them hate each other. Even in the most pious evangelical circles there is any amount of envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness. Those who have read "Mark Rutherford's" novels will know what we mean. That fine writer understands Chapeldom down to the ground.

What a tragedy of religious malice is disclosed by an inscription lately deciphered on a tombstone at Milford, in New Hampshire, where the Puritans used to hold sway!

"CAROLINE H.,
wife of

Calvin Cutter, M.D.
Murdered by the Baptist Ministry & Baptist Churches as follows: Sept. 28, 1838, AEt. 33
She was accused of Lying in church Meeting by the Rev. D. D. Pratt & Deac. Albert Adams and condemned by the church unheard. She was reduced to poverty by Deac. William Wallace. When an exparte council was asked of the Milford Baptist Church by the advice of their committee George Raymond, Calvin Averill & Andrew Hutchinson they voted not to receive any communication upon the subject. The Rev. Mark Carpenter said he thought as the good old Deac. Pearson said we have got Cutter down and it is best to keep him down. The intentional and malicious destruction of her character and happiness as above described destroyed her life. Her last words upon the subject were that the truth of the iniquity will come out."

Calvin Cutter was a doctor, and doctors have always been suspected by Christian zealots. This may help to explain the tragedy.

Lord Elgin says there must be equality for all religions at Malta, which is a British possession. The Catholic clergy scream against this as "an act of despotism" and declare that they are being deprived of their "rights and religion." How funny!

"If the clergy would only practise what they preach it would be better for the Church at large." So said the Rev. J. G. Jones, of Pontypridd, at a recent diocesan conference at Newport, with reference to the "sin of intemperance." The Bishop of Llandaff, in the chair, soon shut Mr. Jones up. Naturally.

Bishop Fisher, addressing a temperance meeting at Norwich, denied that alcohol was a poison. Men who swallowed it lived to a good old age and were never a bit the worse for it. He might have added that Jesus Christ used it habitually—manufactured it when the supply ran short—and is still living.

Rev. Conrad Noel defines an Agnostic as one who knows that he knows nothing. Mr. Noel ought to be an Agnostic.

The *Preacher's Magazine* contends that the Rationalist, in denying the evidential value of Christian experience, "excludes from his consideration the more important part of the evidence" for religion. But the contention is a misrepresentation of the case. The Rationalist does not "exclude the more important part of the evidence from his consideration." On the contrary, he devotes to what is *claimed* to be "the more important part of the evidence" for religion the

most serious consideration, and is forced to the conclusion that the claim is without foundation. Having carefully examined what is called Christian experience, the Secularist is profoundly convinced that as an evidence of the truth of religion it is absolutely without value.

A writer contemptuously asks, "Can reason demand the denial of my own experiences of God and the similar witness of Christians in all ages, because I cannot give a perfectly philosophical explanation of them?" That question is rooted in entire ignorance of the nature of evidence. What Secularists maintain is, not that such experiences are unreal, but that they in no way prove the existence of God. The only thing they prove is that those who have them *believe* in God, and not by any means that God *exists*. Secularists do not deny the *experiences*, nor the *beliefs* from which they spring; but they do deny that either the experiences or the beliefs are an evidence of the existence of God. The experiences prove the existence of the beliefs, and the beliefs account for the experiences; but the objective existence of God is another matter altogether. The *Preacher's Magazine* should re-study the subject of Christian Evidences.

Mr. Joseph McCabe, the translator of Haeckel, Rationalist, and Ethicist, was to have lectured on Evolution in the Wigan Co-operative Hall recently, but the rumor got abroad that he was going to attack the Catholic Church, from which he "verted" several years ago, and the Co-operative people refused to let their hall be used for the meeting. As a last resource the Miner's Hall, a small building, was available by favor of the Spiritualists, and there Mr. McCabe delivered his harmless necessary lecture on Evolution, which we understand might be heard without an earthquake in a Sunday-school. Evidently the Wigan Christians are very easily frightened. We hope they have recovered their senses and will bear themselves more bravely in future.

Rev. Dr. Sanday, of Cambridge, complains of the hard treatment that the Creation Story has received at the hands of scientific critics. He says that the first three chapters of Genesis were never intended to be literal. Will he explain how this was not discovered until science had disproved them?

According to the *Methodist Times* the Rev. Stanley Parker, of Plumstead, has replied to the challenge of "an infidel publication" and given the full name and address of his "recently converted sceptic." Unfortunately our pious contemporary does not print it. But the convert's surname leaks out. It is Amy. He is reported as having displayed "activity in the sceptical camp." Well, we don't recollect ever hearing of him, and we should like to know if anybody else does. Dear Amy appears to have been a frightful drunkard, and we are not quite sure that he is yet sober.

Another good man gone wrong. The Right Rev. John Gott, D.D., third Bishop of Truro, who died on July 21, aged 75, left estate valued at £82,611. After looking at the Sermon on the Mount again, we shudder to think of his present residence. A still more shuddery case is that of the late Rev. Sir Borrodaile Savory, of Brook-street, Grosvenor-square, rector of St. Bartholomew the Great, E.C., who left £95,642. Thermometers are no use where he is.

Another poor apostle of Jesus in trouble. You may guess what has become of the late Rev. Thomas William Whale, of Mount Nessing, Weston Park, Bath, when we state that he has left £19,172. The weight of it is enough to sink him far down in the place that is "unmentionable in polite society."

Rev. Percy Anning Gardner, curate-in-charge of St. Mark's Church, Bourne End, Bucks, has been committed for trial on one of those charges which his profession is only too liable to. Bail was granted—himself in £200 and a surety in £200; which shows the gravity of the case in the eyes of the magistrates.

Rev. Dr. Clifford is just seventy and still unrepentant. He was at Plymouth on Monday—the eve of his three score years and ten—talking about Education, with the mayor in the chair. All his old falsehoods and evasions were repeated. The Nonconformist policy was a clvic policy, not a Free Church policy; it provided for the complete extinction of theological and ecclesiastical tests; it abolished both clerical control and sectarian teaching. And so on. Every statement a lie. Dr. Clifford talks like a penny-in-the-slot machine. And the Nonconformists actually call this old joker their Cromwell.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

October 28, Leicester.

November 4, Woolwich Town Hall; 18, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 21, Tyneside Lecture Society, Newcastle; 22, Hetton-le-Hole. November 4, Birmingham. December 2, Forest Gate; 9, Glasgow; 16, Belfast.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 21, Glasgow. November 25, Manchester. December 2, Liverpool.

MR. SYMES'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 21, Camberwell; 28, Manchester. November 4, Nelson; 11, Liverpool. December 2, Birmingham; 9, Leicester; 16, Newcastle.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Dr. Sanday is one of the so-called Higher Critics. All the reverend gentlemen of that school disbelieve Genesis, and a great deal else of the Bible, as much as we do. The whole matter is reviewed in our *Book of God*. Have you seen it? Thanks for cuttings.

H. BUCKLEY.—Clearly the person you should write to is the one who was traduced.

J. BROUGH.—You are quite right. The man ought not to be admitted at the Manchester meetings, and we have expressed our view of the matter very strongly.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

E. MOORCROFT.—Glad you always find the *Freethinker* "refreshing and instructive."

J. A. R.—Hope to find room for it in our next. Glad to have your good opinion of the *Freethinker*. There is certainly more brain-work put into it than in most papers, and perfectly honest speech throughout. Thanks for the Huxley enclosure.

E. PACK.—Pleased to hear that you and Mr. Boulter have, between you, sold 5,873 copies of *Freethought* journals at your open-air lectures in Finsbury Park, Hyde Park, etc., this summer, of which 3,800 were *Freethinkers*.

A. MARTIN.—There is not a word of truth in your Christian friends' statement about Charles Bradlaugh. We shall not pollute our pages by printing it.

R. BURKE, 35 Ford-street, Bow, E., takes orders for and delivers all *Freethought* publications.

W. W. GUNN.—Not without merit, but the composition is somewhat defective.

HAROLD ELLIOT.—The paper is beneath contempt. Thanks all the same.

W. S. DEAN.—Sorry cannot oblige in this instance.

MAJOR G. O. WARREN writes: "I am glad that the *Freethinker* maintains such a high standard of excellence: it seems to improve with every issue, if that be possible."

W. LEACH.—A Secular funeral can be conducted in the unconsecrated part of any cemetery. There are two or three burial services, all unofficial, but obtainable by writing to the N. S. S. secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

W. T. W.—(1) Mr. Cohen has revised and enlarged his article on the Salvation Army; we have just put it in the printers' hands for production as an eight-page tract for free distribution, and shall be glad to hear from friends who will subscribe towards the cost of it. (2) Birmingham is the nearest Branch you could apply to with any advantage. Nothing is being done at Nottingham yet. (3) We should be glad to give more time to writing on great poets and prose writers.

G. JACOB.—We fear you are right.

H. COWELL.—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*.

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had splendid audiences at Manchester on Sunday; the evening meeting, in particular, so crowded and so enthusiastic, being a sight worth seeing. Of course the local press gave Mr. Foote no announcement beforehand and no report afterwards. He owes nothing to the press. The newspapers do not make his meetings; on the other hand, the newspapers cannot unmake them. There is some consolation in that.

Sunday meetings gave Mr. Foote an opportunity of bringing Mr. Symes's visits to the attention of the South Lancashire "saints," and especially of the younger generation to whom he is at present only a name. Mr. Symes is lecturing at Manchester next Sunday (Oct. 28), and Mr. Foote, as President of the N. S. S., begged all the "saints" to rally round the veteran and give him an enthusiastic welcome to Manchester.

Mr. Lloyd lectures twice for the Glasgow Branch to-day (Oct. 21), and we hope to hear of first-rate meetings. The local "saints" should try to bring their orthodox friends to hear Mr. Lloyd.

A Catholic reader, who sends us some cuttings, writes:—

"Among others I was agreeably surprised at the very just and impartial remarks in the *Freethinker* on the position of the French Church—or rather the Papal Church in France. I should imagine a greater number of people, and of more diverse opinions, read the *Freethinker* than you would perhaps suspect. Certainly there are some extremely interesting articles in it, and they provide immense relief after the concentrated piffle of the daily press.

We hope we shall always be just to others, in spite of all differences of opinion. Catholics have the same rights as *Freethinkers*—no more, and no less; and *Freethinkers* have nothing to gain by violating their own principles.

Here is a sample of the congratulatory letters we receive from time to time. The writer's name and address are withheld because publication may do him an injury:—

"DEAR SIR,—Some while past I arrived at the conclusion that I had got utterly sick of the great and nebulous amount of literature now published, that had neither point, real truth, or even common sense to recommend it.

It was my object, however, being a searcher after light, to find a paper, and something with no palaver, that I could learn something from and was in *real earnest*.

I have discovered the *Freethinker*, which will satisfy me for ever; and my object in writing is simply to convey my best thanks and heartiest wishes, with the assurance that this earth will never contain a greater admirer of Mr. Foote than myself."

We have pleasure in giving our readers the benefit of the following extract from last week's *John Bull*:—

"Everybody sympathises with the Cadbury family, so justly honored in Birmingham, in regard to the unfounded rumors set afloat to the effect that Mr. Alexander, of the Torrey-Alexander mission, had been previously married in America and had thus contracted a bigamous alliance with Miss Cadbury. But when Mr. Alexander, in repudiating the slanderous statement, declares that it is "men who serve the Lord" that "cannot get clear of people's tongues," it is impossible to forget how foully and shamelessly his colleague, Torrey, a man who professed to "serve the Lord" calumniated the memories of Paine and Ingersoll, thereby bringing upon himself a terrible and well-merited castigation at the hands of Mr. Foote and Mr. Stead. And, after all, if "serving the Lord" really means serving humanity, loving it, living and dying for it—what better servants has the Lord ever had than honest Tom Paine and Col. Ingersoll? Would there were more like them, in the Church, to-day!"

Most of our readers will be glad to hear that Mr. Foote has (by invitation) written a special article for *John Bull*, entitled "Church, Chapel, and Child: the Secular View," which Mr. Bottomley will publish on the eve of the reassembling of parliament.

A fair beginning was made at the old Camberwell Secular Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Cohen lectured to an appreciative audience. Mr. Symes occupies the platform this evening (Oct. 21). We hope the audience will increase week by week.

The Glasgow Branch's annual report and balance-sheet is a very healthy document. It is an inspiring record of successful work and of plans for future effort. Secretaries of other Branches who would like a copy should apply to Mr. T. Robertson, 1 Battlefield-crescent, Langside, Glasgow. One peculiarity is the large balance of £470 odd which the Glasgow Branch has to its credit. This is very largely due to the generosity of an anonymous local friend.

"Social" Christianity.

THERE has just been issued by the Wesleyan Methodist Union for Social Service, a hand-book on social questions, entitled: *The Citizen of To-morrow*. It is written by fifteen of the ablest persons of that body, including the Revs. Frank Ballard, J. Ernest Rattenbury, and C. Ensor Walters; each of the fifteen chapters of which it is composed, dealing with some aspect of modern social problems. The point of view, we are told in the preface, is that of Evangelical Christianity—not the old-fashioned, purblind, Individualistic Evangelicalism, but the New Evangelicalism of Evangelical Christians. (How they do sling the words about, these people!) It is said to be written in the interests of public and professional work—an object somewhat vague, considering the number and variety of "professions" in modern civilised life.

The second chapter, which is contributed by the Rev. Harry Bisseker, M.A., of the Leysian Mission, London, treats of "The Call and Credentials of Social Christianity." The purpose of the article is to show that "the world's hopes for real social advancement lie in the principles and practice of religion." The writer, however, is obliged to confess that "after centuries of Christian influence, thousands of our fellows are living in 'homes' in which we should be ashamed to keep our dogs; that thousands more are, by their hours and conditions of labor, subjected to an existence but little preferable to one of slavery; that even hundreds of thousands are compelled by poverty so to live that through starvation and insanitation physical health is already shattered in childhoods days, while a life of moral purity is for many rendered well-nigh an impossibility." Such, according to this champion of the faith, are the "credentials" of Christianity for the office of Social Regenerator! But if all these social evils have grown up under the shadow of Christianity, and she was unable to check the disease while watching the development of the symptoms, how is it likely, in the present acute stage of the trouble, that she will be able to remedy it? In the face of such an admission, it is difficult to understand how any sane person can assert, as does Mr. Bisseker, that "the religion of Jesus Christ has proved itself the most potent factor, first in the formation, and then in the realisation of the world's highest social ideals." Every student of intellectual and social movements knows that the religion of Jesus Christ has always been one of the greatest obstacles to the realisation of high ideals. We need only refer to Whyte's *Warfare of Science and Theology*—a valuable record of the continuous struggle of knowledge and truth against the dogmas of religion—in proof of this.

It is obvious throughout the whole of the article, that the writer has, at least, two Christianities in view; and his failure to distinguish these leads to a lamentable confusion of thought. One of these is the Christianity of the Church, which, of course, is the Christianity he is laboring to defend. For instance, he says, "the attitude of 'the Christian Church' to these grave social problems will determine the place she is to hold in future among the masses of the people," and speaks of the danger of her falling behind discredited and disowned. To claim that this Christianity had been the pioneer of any movement for the uplifting of the masses would be a falsehood too apparent, and so a "spiritual" Christianity is introduced and credited with quite a number of valuable social reforms. The "power" of Christianity is distinguished from its "dogmas"—which seem to be discredited—and this "power" is declared to "stand alone" among the influences which have contributed to social progress. And to this power or spirit, he alleges, we owe such reforms as "the abolition of slavery, the exaltation of womanhood, the improvement in conditions of labor, and, in general, the birth of our modern concern for the down-trodden masses dwelling in our great cities." As we said, there are here two Christianities used

insinuatingly as if they were one and the same; and we suggest to Mr. Bisseker and his fellow writers, that a similar manipulation of material objects would be termed "juggling." Further, the humanitarian spirit to which we really owe these reforms is something grander, and nobler, and wider than any spirit actually generated by religion. The writer himself confesses that "many centuries before the birth of Christ a true and tender philanthropy was practised by many peoples and in many lands," and what was true of the ages before Christ is also true of the ages since, among peoples where his name is not revered. The magnanimous treatment of a foe by Japan in the hour of her victory, which caused even Christian bishops to open their eyes in wonder, was an example of the true and tender heathen philanthropy, uninfluenced and uninspired by this much-vaunted "Christian spirit." The "power" of Christianity, which he claims to form the chief source of inspiration for social service, is not by any means co-extensive with even modern humanitarianism. The very publication of *The Citizen of To-morrow* is evidence that the Socialist movement, which its writers wish to pat on the back, did not owe its inspiration to Christian zeal for the welfare of the masses. While, according to a German economist, Continental Socialism is an out-and-out irreligious movement, and hostile to the Church. This attempt to rob humanity of the fruit of its moral efforts, for the purpose of magnifying the importance of religion is morally reprehensible, though it does not appear to disturb the religious conscience. Indeed, we might remind Mr. Bisseker that a similar appropriation of what rightly belonged to another, in material things, would be termed "thieving." Another unwarrantable claim which the writer makes on behalf of Christianity, is its monopoly of unselfishness. The sacrifice of the special interests of the capitalist and land-owning classes which the establishment of a just social state would involve, would, he urges, call for a spirit of no ordinary unselfishness. And further, that "to expect the unselfishness essential to such a sacrifice, apart from the spirit of Christ, would be quixotic and ridiculous." A ready proof of this, he maintains, lies in the fact that "to many the mere suggestion of such a sacrifice will appear wild and even revolutionary." Such proof as this may be "ready," but it is very far from being logical or conclusive. The fact that a given suggestion may, to some persons, appear "wild," is no proof that the suggestion is impracticable, apart from religious sentiment. If it were, every wild suggestion would be a proof, in itself, of the practicability of whatever solution might be propounded as to its realisation—which, of course, would be "quixotic and ridiculous." Such a suggestion may appear wild to those who have been nurtured in Individualistic Evangelicalism, but the sacrifice of individual interests to the common weal is certainly no new doctrine in philosophy. The fact too, that the nobility of Japan, at the suggestion of the Mikado some thirty years ago, did forego many ancient privileges in their country's interest, shows that "the unselfishness essential to such a sacrifice" has no necessary connection with the spirit of Christianity. Besides, if the privileges of the capitalist and land-owning classes be prejudicial to the interests of the people as a whole, as Mr. Bisseker assumes, the sacrifice of these privileges ought rather to be considered as a matter of public duty, than regarded as a special virtue.

Considering the marvellous claims which the writer makes on behalf of Christianity as the inspirer of social effort, his confession of the apathy of the Christian public toward these questions is somewhat inexplicable. He laments "the unconcern of Christ's followers to the existing state of things"; and so conspicuous is this unconcern that "it is beginning to impress the masses of the people." The result of this is "the existence of a grave danger lest Christianity should lose the confidence of our large and increasing army of social workers." He is evidently not concerned about the Socialist movement, as a movement, however just its aims and ideals, but only

with the future of religion and the Church. The reason he gives why "the Christian of the twentieth century is bound to give instant attention" to social questions is—not because social justice demands an alteration in the present system—but because "they have begun to assume a prominent place among the life-interests of the nation." Truly a noble reason! But if it be true that "there is no incentive for the social worker comparable with that which is derived from Christianity," how does it happen that these social questions have first to assume a prominent place in public consideration before it becomes a Christian duty to give them attention? What supplied the incentive to the long, hard, self-sacrificing labors of the noble men of past generations, who worked with a single eye to truth and justice while the Christians were waiting until the social truths they advocated assumed a prominent place in public regard? That "the social worker needs the inspiration of Christianity" is a statement which is contradicted by the past and present history of the social movement. Indeed, it is a sufficient refutation to quote Mr. Bisseker's own words that "it is no sense suggested that the truest social service may not be, and is not being, rendered by those who call themselves 'agnostics.'" Mr. Bisseker does not appear to know when two propositions contradict each other; for many of his principal statements are nullified by the admissions he makes in the course of his meanderings. When the writer asserts that "the cause of Social Reform cannot afford to do without Christianity" he is merely expressing a professional wish; and his anxiety for the future of Christianity too much resembles the concern of those old Ephesian craftsmen for the Greatness of Diana. It is the contrary statement that is true; for Social Reform cannot afford to have anything to do with Christianity—its connections with it in the past being a severe and painful lesson. The contention of Upton Sinclair in *The Jungle*, that religion is the arch-fiends deadliest weapon in the onslaught against reform, is all too true—for oppressing the human mind, it "poisons the stream of progress at its source."

The place the Christian Church is to hold in future years among the masses of the people is *already* determined. She may exist for long as an institution, but her influence in the world of thought is gone. "Ichabod" is written above the door of her sanctuary; and the masses are busy working out their own social salvation—not in fear and trembling, but in the spirit of human confidence and brotherhood.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

An Astronomer on Religion.

By PROFESSOR EDGAR L. LARKIN,
Lowe Observatory, Echo Mountain, California.

The words "god," "gods," "great king," and deities were devised by men in infantile states of mind abjectly ignorant of nature, and without a trace of conception that the universe is run by changeless ironclad laws. They could not think of God; and it has been found out by modern mentalists that the ablest mathematicians and logicians now living cannot so much as even commence to think of God. The strongest human intellect that ever appeared on this planet is absolutely impotent and unable to grasp even one idea about any kind, type, or form of God, or gods. Take a man with a mind so powerful that he knows more than one million others; explore his mind, and it will be found a blank concerning any kind of God. The most powerful mind now on earth, trying as intently as it may, cannot start to think of God, Infinity, Eternity, beginning, end, immortality, duration or time. Go live with a great mathematician, a man with a trained mind and powerful. He will not even let his mind approach these words; he stops short and makes this sign, ∞, to show the barrier. It is the sign of the unknowable.

I have been to prayer meetings, where the densely ignorant were frantic in prayer to a man-shaped god, about as high above their heads as the ceiling, and their prayers did not reach that altitude. For absolutely nothing is known, and in the present state of the human mind nothing can be known, of the cause of the universe. Should it reveal itself,

our little brains could not comprehend. We are utterly ignorant of whether it had a cause or a beginning. These words are mere toys used by logicians, and mean nothing. We do not know whether the cause, if any, is, or was, mental or material. And if mental, whether the mind was, or is anything like the human mind.

Anthropomorphic gods are pure fictions, and the idea is due to man's enormous egotism. The word "he" is always applied to the primordial cause; it is the height of absurd egotism. It is hopelessly useless to make any effort to think about the origin of the structure of nature. Read works on the new mentalism, that majestic science, and you will agree with me. In forty years research I have not encountered anything so supremely marvellous as the human mind, especially the mathematical mind. Any words spoken about the first cause—god or gods—are useless and impotent.

THE GREATER PART OF LITERATURE OBSOLETE.

It is true, my oft-repeated assertion, that three-fourths of the literature of the world is obsolete. Tons of books on religion and millions of sermons are obsolete. I now wish to make my assertion a bit stronger by saying nine-tenths.

I am exceedingly mild until I hear that hideous word of all ages the "Confessional." That atrocity is still on earth, and I will rage against it so long as I can hold a pen. How could the brain of man have invented such a horrible engine of blood and death? It is the deadliest enemy of woman to-day.

I would like to have my religious brother come and climb the glorious mountains with me and see the pure white Galaxy in the telescope. When he had found a rich place where 40,000 suns are piled up in one field of view only, I would fire this question: "How is it possible for a man to look at this supernal splendor, and at the same time have his mind filled with any trace or kind of religion?" And then the good brother would be shocked. Religion is rooted and grounded in prayer. What earthly use to pray to any Being, having power to "create" billions of giant suns and trillions of worlds? Let one cubic inch of air be taken from any building in London contain one million particles of dust, then each particle is larger in proportion to the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral than the earth is to the quantity of matter now known to be in existence. And my religious brother knows this. How is it possible for him to hold to any kind of religion? No one knows better than he that prayer is absurd, for let 1,600,000,000 human beings pray without ceasing for seventy-two hours, and no effect whatever on Nature in any part would be had.

I repeat, every religion was invented before men had detected a solitary law of nature. Religion is totally useless in a universe based on law, and "every creed and belief will be swept from the earth," when men get out of infantile stages of growth. For science is scarcely 300 years of age, and religion at least a hundred centuries. Then the brother sojourner in this world of mysteries objects to my doctrine of "letting everyone believe as he pleases," on the ground that it would result in "doing what he pleases." Let all human beings do exactly what is pleasing to them, unless the action brings injury to themselves in mind or body, or to any other human being in any way whatever, or useless suffering to animals.

Now Nature does not have the slightest care what you think, say, or even do. You may toss living babies from bayonet to bayonet, as did the Russians and Turks. Nor among the Jewish savages, for they "took all his cities at that time and destroyed the men and the women, and the little ones of every city, we left none to remain" (Deut. ii. 34). The entire human race may engage in one colossal war, and annihilate all save one man. He may die a natural death, or kill himself, and Nature would not care the weight of a spider's thread. This is a most terrific picture, but it is true. But it has been discovered that it makes a vast difference to ourselves, to others, to animals, what we do, but nothing for what we think or say. For centuries laws were made to force men to think on forced lines, and have an extreme care for what they say. But here in the United States you can say what you please, and believe anything without hindrance; but you must look out when you begin to act—to do. So beliefs, words, and also actions affect us only locally, while Nature does not even notice man. Therefore, all religion is useless, and is rapidly becoming obsolete.

And thus the good brother pities me because I need "something more than Nature." But there is no more than Nature, and I am a part of it—an infinitesimal, smaller even than one of the first order.

My brother speaks next of a Creator; but mentalists have discovered that we cannot commence to think about creating, so that word makes no impress on our weak minds. And he, in reply to my assertion that "No knowledge has even been received on this planet from without," asks, "Who says so? Such a statement is contrary to human experience all down

the ages. How do you know that no knowledge has ever been received on this planet from without?"

I know exactly as well as those who say there was. I have during my lifetime watched the origin and growth of four vast systems of religion that, to all appearance, will sweep the others from existence; at least, those of the white races. These are Mormonism, Spiritualism, Christian Hypnotism, and Dowieism. A fire on a dry prairie cannot spread faster. They number many millions of adherents; Spiritualists claim sixty millions. They are all colossal swindles. All exist without foundation, yet are devouring the people of this great nation, to the alarm of statesmen. The horrors of Mormonism and hypnotism are dreadful. To one versed in religious and linguistic archæology the antics of the people in an orthodox church make a fruitful field for the study of anthropology. They worship a cross, but are totally ignorant of what it means. They do not know that it is a phallus pure and simple. So well settled is this fact that trained scholars no longer combat the idea. The cross is prehistoric. When fitful gleams of historic light are seen flickering in the depth of ancient night and barbarism, they shine on two pieces of wood in the shape of a cross. They represent the male generative organs, which were worshiped for many thousands of years, and are yet, in some parts of the world. Every anthropologist knows this to be a fact.

THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION.

Not science *and* religion. All religions are now arranged and labelled scientifically, as in the case of a botanical or geological museum. They are mere mental phenomena, and are all understood by modern mentalists. They have no place in this the twentieth century, and instead of doing good are doing harm by preventing men studying the laws of Nature. For where a man's mind is in the clutch of a set belief, his case is hopeless. A law of Nature has no effect on him, if he thinks it conflicts with his silly imagining. There is but one difference between a civilised and savage man. At present, one knows a half-hundred laws of Nature, and the other none. Revelation, the doctrines of sin and of forgiveness of sin, the Fall of Man, the Atonement, of Heaven, Hell, and an angry God are, one and all, pure inventions of designing men in very remote prehistoric times to gain dominion and power over their fellows, and make them the hewers and diggers, the delvers and toilers. And the ancient myths have absolute sway in Russia, one of the most degraded nations on earth, where every peasant is robbed to the verge of endurance by besotted priests.

Let religionists drop their brain-crushing beliefs and dig after the laws of Nature. Let them transform the earth, deserts and all, into a garden of peace. Let humanity stop praying, and work to polish our good world the earth. Let man wipe out religion, war, and alcohol, and substitute known natural law. The moment the people find out what the cross actually represents, they will drop it in shame and horror. They need not; for sexology is one of the higher sciences. But they will reject the cross merely out of false modesty. For Chaldeans, Phœnicians, Aryans, later Hindus, Persians, Bactrians, Egyptians, Hebrews, Huns, Baal-worshippers, Tartars, all Asiatics, Nubians, Mercians, Greeks, Romans, Carthaginians, Gauls, Touts, Britons, and Druids, together with Mexicans, Aztecs, and Toltecs, worshiped the "Crux," the symbol of transmission of "life," for centuries. And the cult was in activity centuries before men came to Greece and Rome. In fact, it is the oldest religion on earth except the worship of sticks, stones, snakes, crocodiles, birds, apes, plants, lizards, hearts, livers, and fire.

No trace of anything in religion is modern. Everything, without one exception, has descended from times before the invention of writing. Every minute detail of all religions was invented by "Pagans." Preachers are known to shut their eyes because their brethren many thousands of years had to face the sun when praying. All modern churches, when placed as they should be, must face the rising sun, or the rising point of some prominent star like Sirius. All round towers and every church spire on earth are of unbroken descent from phallic worship. They are emblems of Priapus; for how do you like to tax yourselves to build senseless Priapic steeples, at the cost of millions, to perpetuate the chief tenet of all paganism, enduring for centuries? Better buy books and magic-lanterns, microscopes, telescopes, and other modern wondrous scientific instruments for your children. Instead of teaching them how the Jews killed the inhabitants of cities whose civilisation was higher than theirs, teach them of the radiant glories of the laws of Nature. How long—oh! how long—will ancient exploded myths be taught to young children? When the Spaniards landed in Yucatan they found all the great temples burdened with elaborate crosses, the symbolism, as elsewhere in the world, being "Life to Come." There is no hope of trying to upset the phallism of the cross. You cannot argue with modern scholarship and oriental research. During twenty-five years I have simply revelled in the unutterable glories of

the stars. I do love the windrows, heaps and twisted rolls of suns in the Galaxy. The word millions is worn out in telling about the number of these suns; billions is the better word. Now, if a being created them, "He," if "He" has any mental attribute similar to human beings' minds, He must simply despise cringeing, grovelling worship. For a human being that made laws would the more admire one who stood up like a being endowed with reason and made careful study of the laws. To me it appears that research into the splendid mysteries of Nature, with telescope, microscopes, retorts, and electrical apparatus and with that majestic engine, greater than them all—mathematics—is so infinitely superior to abject humiliating religion, prayer, and bloody sacrifices, that comparison is simply ridiculous. For many millions of animals, and many humans also, have had their throats cut to appease the imaginary wrath of entirely imaginary gods.

Worship of any kind, type, or phase, is highly absurd, and a sheer waste of time. Irrigating a desert and planting orange-trees is a better occupation, and roses and heliotropes. Good times are coming; religion is dying with rapidity; great churches are mere fashionable clubs. Many preachers do not either know or care what their parishioners believe. Neither do they know their own beliefs. Magnificent mental chaos is coming on in beauty and splendor. The intelligent see that it does not matter a straw's worth what they believe.

I would take cringeing, kneeling, praying human beings from their knees, lift them erect and to their feet, and bid them never to kneel again, but look round about on every hand on this lovely world; climb the peaks, descend into the canyons, explore the awful solitudes of a desert at midnight, and love all that may appear. Worship has retarded the advance of man from the beginning of his career. To grovelling millions, I would say, "Arise, study nature, love each other, and speak kindly to the sorrowing. Make the earth an abode of peace, not war."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Presbyterianism and Plunder.

THE principal lesson to be learned from the suicide of Frank K. Hipple, of Philadelphia, the man who had benevolently assimilated seven millions of dollars of other people's money, is that the public must at all times be aware of the man who is so extremely pious that the moral welfare of others appears his chief concern. The money he stole, while unctuously crying "Amen" on Sundays, represented the deposits of thousands of clients of the Trust company of which he was president.

The incident, for in these days of colossal welshing and gigantic thefts, it can be regarded as an incident only, emphasises a business rule that is rapidly becoming popular, one that is caused by the hollowness and hypocrisy of religious advocates. Always keep a Pharisee under the gun. Learn to distrust the man who vaunts his virtue and looks to the vices of others. The professional religious reformer who makes his duty to regulate the morals of society, at large, needs watching. When he was not occupied with the practice of embezzlement, Mr. Hipple was seriously attending to the moral regulation of others. One of his daily business observations was, that he would never trust a man who smoked a cigar, but if he declined to smoke in this world then the good Lord, Satan, or somebody in authority, ought to see to it that he smokes good and plenty in the next world.

In religion, Mr. Hipple was a Presbyterian, and he worked at the trade seven days in each week, the meanwhile, he was stealing the money of other people. There are, of course, many honest Presbyterians, but Mr. Hipple was not one of them. Yet he was true to his church. The length of his face on Sunday and the sonorosity of his prayers, won for him the confidence and esteem of the Philadelphia Synod. They made his bank their bank. In it they poured the wealth they had wrung from their worshippers. It came easy to them, and Hipple thought he might as well have a pick at it as they. He picked, but he picked it all and left nothing for them but anathema. So great was the confidence reposed in President Hipple, that Sunday-school organisations, which thrive off the pennies of little children, entrusted their funds in his hands with an abiding faith in his integrity. Even these were cleaned out, for he had verily "licked the platter clean, both outside and inside."

Because of his religious proclivities and for the sake of his church family, the coroner held back the report of his suicide for several days, and gave it out that the sacred defaulter had died of a hæmorrhage. True, indeed, but the hæmorrhage was caused by a bullet fired into his brain by his own hand. The crash was upon him, and from his coward lips the color did fly, and he was afraid of the consequences of his crimes. Thousands of wage earners are impoverished by reason of his peculations. Little children may cry themselves in

hunger to sleep, and yet the very creed to which he subscribed gave a license to his thefts, for he had learned that crime will be forgiven if repentance cometh at the eleventh hour and the blood of Christ can atone for it all.

If *The Blade* had the means, it would open an institute for the inculcation of morals among the clergy and church workers, and take such brazen hypocrites under the shelter of its wing. Seven millions! Think of it! What could he have done with the money? Think of the number of widows and orphans he has robbed, and then, we are told, the funds of his church, which he had care of, are safe. With but a small loss the church will get its deposits intact. This information is given out with a view to softening public criticism. Such is the estimate of one who made Presbyterianism a synonym for plunder.—*Blue Grass Blade*.

Correspondence.

WHAT THE COLONIES WANT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Englishmen have hitherto thought that good health, sound character, and well-tryed enthusiasm for noble ideals were valuable assets for any land, and nowhere more than in the rising British Colonies. It seems that we were all mistaken. What the Colonies want, according to the British Women's Emigration Association, is believers in "revealed religion."

This Association renders help to ladies desiring to go to the Colonies by arranging for reduced fares, and, for a small charge, housing them until suitable work has been found. Within the last few weeks a lady well known to me, whose character and fitness for teaching work is beyond all question, applied for the good offices of this Association in order to get to Vancouver. Everything went well until it was discovered that not only was she a Unitarian, but, alas! also a member of an Ethical Society. This horrible discovery immediately put a stop to the proceedings. She received a letter saying that it was impossible to recommend her so long as she was (temporarily it was hoped) "turning away from the truth and revealed religion."

The British Women's Emigration Association has the right to withhold help from whom it will; but if access to the British Colonies is denied to the poor, unless they are credulous, and people of sterling character "are not sufficient for the benefit of the Colonies," the British people ought to know it.

H. SNELL, *General Secretary Union of Ethical Societies.*

SONNET.

WRITTEN IN DISGUST OF VULGAR SUPERSTITION.

The church bells toll a melancholy round,
 Calling the people to some other prayers,
 Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,
 More harkening to the sermon's horrid sound.
 Surely the mind of man is closely bound
 In some black spell; seeing that each one tears
 Himself from fireside joys, and Lydian airs,
 And converse high of those with glory crowned.
 Still, still they toll, and I should feel a damp,—
 A chill as from a tomb, did I not know
 That they are dying like an outburst lamp;
 That 'tis their sighing, wailing ere they go
 Into oblivion;—that fresh flowers will grow,
 And many glories of immortal stamp.

—*John Keats.*

People are never ridiculous except when they try to appear or to be that which they are not. The poor, the ignorant, the rustic, the sick, the old, are never ridiculous while they are content to appear such as they are, without endeavoring to masquerade as something else; but when the old try to appear young, the sick healthy, the poor rich, the ignorant learned, the rustic courtly, they are truly ridiculous. Even bodily deformities, however grave, would only excite a passing smile if the person subject to them did not attempt to conceal them—that is, to appear as if he had them not, or, in other words, try to produce a false impression. In short, a little consideration will show that our defects and our disadvantages are never ridiculous in themselves; it is only when we make vain and futile efforts to conceal them, or to appear as if we had them not, that they become subjects of laughter.—*Leopardi.*

Euthanasia.

Where everything is dying,
 It is no pain to die;
 Sad mortal! Cease thy sighing,
 Release and rest are nigh.

The rose thy breast adorning
 Shall wither, maiden fair!
 Before the breath of morning
 Gives perfume to the air.

And he whose kiss the flower
 Still carries in its breath,
 Beneath the hostile tower
 Shall find a warrior's death.

The speechless joy that, living,
 Youth counts all joys above,
 Who knows not that its giving
 Benumbs the life of love?

He neither mourns nor pities,
 He of the Silent Land:
 Lord of a hundred cities!
 Thou canst not stay his hand.

His steadfast foot doth ever
 Keep pace with thine; he stays
 An instant but to sever
 The links that hold thy days.

Thou goest, and hereafter
 Life troubles thee no more;
 Nor moans, nor tears, nor laughter
 Attend thee to the shore.

Happy thy lot if drinking
 Oblivion's draught shall stay
 The fever-flush of thinking,
 And leave thee senseless clay.

Gone as his trail who roweth
 O'er a dark-gliding stream;
 Gone as the bubble goeth,
 Gone like a morning's dream.

Sad mortal! cease thy sighing,
 Rest and release are nigh;
 Where everything is dying
 It is no pain to die.

M. C. O'BYRNE, *Nyssia.*

Dogmatism, said Douglas Jerrold, is only puppyism grown to maturity. This sarcastic wit never said a truer thing. We call a young fellow a puppy when he is conceited and impudent, and we call a man dogmatic when he betrays the same qualities in controversy. Yet every Church prides itself on being dogmatic. Rome is dogmatic and Canterbury is dogmatic. Without dogma there is no theology. And what is dogma? An opinion, or a set of opinions, promulgated by somebody for the blind acceptance of somebody else. Arrogance, therefore, is of its very essence. What right has one man to say to another, "This is the truth; I have taken the trouble to decide that point, and all you have to do is to accept what I present you"? And if one man has no such right to impose his belief on another, how can twenty thousand men have such a right to impose their belief on twenty millions? This, however, is precisely what they do, without the least shame or compunction. Before we are able to judge for ourselves, the priests thrust certain dogmas upon us, and compel us to embrace them. Authority takes the place of judgment, dogmatism supplants thought. The young mind is rendered slavish, and, as it grows up, it goes through life cringing to the instruments of its own abasement.—*G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."*

It was a fine saying of Nangfu, the emperor, who, being told that his enemies had raised an insurrection in one of the distant provinces, "Come then, my friends," said he, "follow me, and I promise you we shall quickly destroy them": he marched forward, and the rebels submitted upon his approach. All now thought that he would take the most signal revenge, but were surprised to see the captives treated with mildness and humanity. "How!" cries his first minister, "is this the manner in which you fulfil your promises? Your royal word was given that your enemies should be destroyed, and behold you have pardoned all, and even caressed some!" "I promised," replied the emperor, with a generous air, "to destroy my enemies: I have fulfilled my word, for see they are enemies no longer; I have made friends of them."—*Goldsmith.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road) : 7.30, Joseph Symes, "Of What Use is Christ?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate) : 7.30, H. Spence, "Evolution v. Creation."

OUTDOOR.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. : Brockwell Park, 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, "Christianity and Women."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, Marble Arch) : 11.30, H. B. Samuels, "Bible Beauties."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street) : 7, S. L. Aston, "Affinity."

FALLSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane) : 6.30, J. Harvey Simpson, "Cremation in Manchester and Elsewhere." Illustrated by lantern.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street) : John Lloyd, 12 noon, "Is Secularism Reasonable?" 6.30, "Does Secularism Safeguard Morality?"

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street) : Wednesday, Oct. 24, at 8, George Hardie, "Is Competition Necessary?"

HETTON-LE-HOLE BRANCH N. S. S. (Miners' Hall) : Monday, Oct. 22, at 7.30, C. Cohen, "Christianity and the Labor Question."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street) : 7, Jos. Orrell, "Men Who Prey Without Ceasing."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road) : 6.30, Mr. Edgar C. White (late Lecturer for Hamilton's Excursions), Miscellaneous Dramatic Recital, with Musical Intervals.

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Room, Town Hall) : 6.30, S. Halman, "Reply to Father Lambert."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (2 William-street, South Moor) : 3.30, Hall Nicholson, "Secular versus Christian Education."

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