

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXVI.—No 48

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1906

PRICE TWOPENCE

*Those worshipers who discard the light of reason are ever gloomy; their fears increase in proportion to their ignorance, as men are continually under apprehensions who walk in darkness.—GOLDSMITH.*

## Talks With the Dead.

*Talks With the Dead.* Edited by John Lobb, F.R.G.S.  
London: John Lobb, 4 Ludgate-circus. Price 2s. 6d. net.

MR. JOHN LOBB is doubtless a very worthy man, and we have no desire to question his veracity; but it does not follow that all he says is "gospel," or that the laws of evidence are to be set aside when he communicates anything to the world.

Many years ago Mrs. Besant went down to the Hall of Science one Sunday evening, and told her old Secularist friends a number of astonishing things which she had witnessed as a Theosophist. She referred, for instance, to the Mahatma letters which Madame Blavatsky used to receive from nobody knew where; and she told the audience that there was no doubt as to their genuineness, for since Madame Blavatsky's death she had received them herself. She did not produce one, neither did she adduce any testimony with respect to them. She simply appealed to her old friends' trust in her truthfulness. Had they ever known her to tell them a lie? On that ground she asked them to believe her extraordinary statements. We called it at the time the intellectual confidence trick. And we were perfectly right. Not long afterwards it was proved that the Mahatma letters which Mrs. Besant referred to were forged by Mr. Edge. But the lady did not call her old friends together again, and tell them that she had been deceived, and apologise for having unwittingly deceived them. She let the matter slide. She was essentially an honorable woman, but the intellectual confidence trick works mischief all round.

We must be pardoned, therefore, if we decline to let Mr. Lobb play this trick upon us, even if he attempts it in perfect good faith. We have to look after our own mental integrity, and if we go wrong it will be of no use to plead that Mr. Lobb misled us. Moreover, we have a very decided objection to *being* misled.

Mr. Lobb takes an extremely free and easy estimate of his performance in this book. Just listen to this from his Preface:—

"The great beyond has engulfed many of our dear ones, and we ourselves are moving fast forward to it, and may at any time break through the thin veil that divides us.

What is it that awaits us there?

The following pages supply an answer."

They do nothing of the kind. Mr. Lobb is lamentably mistaken. And if we cannot prove this to him (as is quite possible) we believe we can prove it to our readers.

There are several "spirit photographs" in this book. There is even one, no doubt designed as a popular attraction, on the cover. Mr. Lobb is duly posed on a chair, probably by the photographer, and is gazing intently in a certain direction, where "the spirit of Charles Haddon Spurgeon" appears—the face being faint but fairly clear, and the rest of the figure shrouded in a luminous mist. This photograph was taken in June of the present year. And the

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ingenuous Mr. Lobb seems to say, "There you are now. You can't get over that." Let us see.

It is not our duty to prove a negative. Mr. Lobb offers this as a "spirit photograph" and he should substantiate it. What evidence does he offer? None.

Mr. Lobb does not even say that he saw the spirit of the late Mr. Spurgeon. You might think so from the way in which he is looking in its direction—but that proves nothing. Was the spirit of the famous Baptist preacher visible to Mr. Lobb? If he answers "Yes," we ask him why he did not say so. If he answers "No," we ask him how he explains the appearance of the invisible upon that "sensitive plate."

We are not told the name and address of the photographer. We are not told under what conditions the photograph was taken. We are not told what human being was present, if any, besides Mr. Lobb and the photographic operator. We are not told anything of the least importance about it.

We do not know whether Mr. Lobb has ever heard of "fake" photographs. If he has not, he should make immediate inquiries. If he has, he should state what precautions, if any, he took against "faking" in this particular instance.

Even on the most favorable supposition, it is perfectly obvious that, as the case stands, we have absolutely no evidence but Mr. Lobb's personal assurance; and we beg to assure him that this is not sufficient to establish the authenticity of his ghostly narratives. He may consider his own word good enough for anything, but it would not be so received in a court of law, and it cannot be so received in the court of reason.

There is always the possibility that Mr. Lobb is a victim of deception. Wiser men have been deceived before him. And it is a melancholy truth that Spiritualism is honeycombed with fraud. Mr. Lobb appears to admit it. He states that he has had "some share in exposing materialising frauds." We presume that honest people were deluded by them. It is not impossible, then, for Mr. Lobb to be deluded too.

It is all very well to say that "not a million deceptions, impositions, and frauds can upset the fact if only one clear case of spirit return be proven." Admitted. But is the one clear case established? And do not the many deceptions, impositions, and frauds call for a more rigid scrutiny of every case that has even an air of genuineness?

Take another feature of Mr. Lobb's revelation with respect to the "great beyond." He informs us that the "spirits"—really the "ghosts" of deceased persons—have a peculiar "controlling power over matter." They are able to—

"condense the atoms—solid, fluid, and gaseous matter—which form the physical organisation. They can either compose or decompose material substances with incredible rapidity, convey one solid body through another, or cause them to become visible or invisible at pleasure."

Now all these words are intelligible in themselves, but are the sentences in which they are concatenated intelligible? Of course a person who knows *nothing* can imagine *anything*. Tell an ignorant man that water was turned into wine, and he may believe it; tell a man who knows something of chemistry, and he will wonder how it was done. In the same way, the composition and decomposition of material substances by spiritual agency may be credible to one

who does not understand the full meaning of the words, but to one who does understand their full meaning the conception is simply nonsensical. It is neither true nor false, but merely absurd.

One of Mr. Lobb's statements, however, is susceptible of testing. He says that the "spirits" materialise by drawing atoms away from the bodies of the medium and the sitters at *séances*. The poor medium, indeed, is treated very severely; he is "drained to the fullest extent, often sixty pounds or more being taken from his body." Now a definite statement like this can be proved or disproved. We therefore invite Mr. Lobb to find a medium who will be weighed naked before a *séance*, and weighed again in the middle of it when he has been seriously depleted. If this invitation of ours is accepted, we shall come to business; if it is not accepted, sensible men and women will regard Mr. Lobb's assertions as mere verbiage. Of course *he* may believe them, but that is nobody's concern but his own. What a man believes may be important enough to himself; it is only what he can prove that is important to other people.

One of the "spirits" who have "materialised" is that of "Mr. John King." We fancy we have heard of that ghost before. When he made Mr. Lobb's acquaintance he came with a lot of other "spirits" who talked "freely among themselves, and occasionally to the sitters." Very likely. But what means had Mr. Lobb of knowing what they really were? He says they were "spirits," but where is the evidence? "Our hands were inter-linked," he says, so he could not feel round; and "the room was in semi-darkness," so he could not use his eyes to any advantage. There was not the slightest pretence of investigation; the conditions were beautifully favorable to deception; yet we are asked to believe that "Mr. John King" talked, that star-like lights flitted about the room, that a stringed instrument was played by spirit hands, and was passed through the ceiling and played in an upper room, and then brought back again through the flooring. What the worthy Mr. Lobb heard, he heard; what he felt, he felt; what he saw, he saw. We are not disputing his sensations. We are only examining his explanation. And we are bound to say that, in the circumstances, he can only be telling us what he was told himself. Simply this, and nothing more.

Worthy persons like Mr. Lobb have been the biggest dupes in all ages. It is their simplicity that has been the fortune of all impostors. And that is the reason why the impostors have always gone to work with preternatural gravity. Mr. Lobb sits in semi-darkness, with his eyes practically useless, and both ears open. Semi-darkness, of course, is a very vague phrase; no doubt it means a darkness that baffles the keenest eyesight. And in that obscurity Mr. Lobb is evidently an acceptable inquirer. He has no need to pray, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." He has no unbelief to help. He has actually been induced to believe that sitting in the dark (with your hands out of mischief) is the ideal method of scientific investigation. He solemnly informs us, on the authority of a spirit, that darkness is absolutely necessary to the most striking "spirit" manifestations, because "light" is "a dis-integrator." Of course it is! And a joke of this kind only deepens Mr. Lobb's gravity.

Mr. Lobb tries to corner his Christian friends by reminding them that communication between the living and the dead is common enough in the Bible. He refers to the "spirits" that visited various Bible worthies, and of the "angels" that frequently appeared on divine embassies. "Let both the Old and New Testaments," he says, "be read in conjunction with modern Spiritualism, and it will be seen that the same credence should be given to the facts and spiritual phenomena of later days." We agree with him. Modern spirits are just as credible as ancient spirits. "Yea, they have all one breath."

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

## Defending the Faith.

DR. R. F. HORTON has discovered fourteen reasons why people are losing faith in Christianity; and, with the courage of a knight of old going forth to wage war against the "Paynin," he has set himself to demolish the difficulties in the path of faith, or lose his own belief in the attempt. And, like the ancient knights, he sets out with a profession of high faith and noble endeavor; but, also like them, these noble resolves turn out to be not worth much in practice. As they vowed to protect the fame of "fair ladies," and usually spent their time in making love to other people's wives, so Dr. Horton professes a passionate devotion to truth while handling it in a most remarkable manner; and, as they swore to protect the weak, and straightway perpetrated all sorts of ruffianism on those who were unable to protect themselves, so does he profess the most chivalrous feelings towards unbelievers while treating them in anything but a gentlemanly manner. Dr. Horton's chivalry also leads him to promise that at the end of each lecture he will hold a conference, at which people can frankly discuss whatever has been said. I have heard of such "conferences" before, and they have usually resulted in a second sermon and the application of an extinguisher to any convinced Freethinker who wished to state his view of the question. If Dr. Horton really wished the difficulties in the way of religious belief to be discussed before his congregation, I fancy it would be tolerably easy to see that *that* portion of the program was well looked after.

Dr. Horton is most profuse in his expressions of this desire to get at the truth. He wishes to have in his creed "no article that can be disproved"—which is certainly not the most logical position to take up. Not to be able to disprove a thing may be very good grounds for not declaring it to be false, but it is anything but solid grounds on which to say it is true. He also wishes to get rid of all that is false; but, in the light of what has been said, he obviously means he will hold on to everything which cannot be demonstrated to be untrue. There is also a touching desire to enter into close intercourse with unbelievers—into "close contact and perfectly free intercourse" with them. But as Dr. Horton, not very long ago, gave it as his firm conviction that those who did not believe in a future life ought to be ostracised from human society, one may be pardoned questioning the sincerity of this sudden desire for communion with Freethinkers. Even as it is, this Nonconformist Bayard cannot refrain from showing his real feelings on the subject, as will be seen from the following.

The difficulties he wishes to remove, he says in reference to unbelief, are those which "chill the emotions and arrest enthusiasm.....and even endanger the wheels of human life." So the man cannot be decently civil even while in the act of desiring a close and friendly intercourse with Freethinkers. If he only knew anything of either Freethought or Freethinkers he would know that their emotions are not chilled, their enthusiasm is not checked, nor do they endanger the wheels of human life. On the contrary, it is because their emotions are keenly alive to injustice that they repudiate the moral aspect of Christian teaching, and it is because they are deeply interested in the welfare of humanity that they impeach Christianity as one of the greatest obstacles to its orderly development. And one may fairly pit the enthusiasm of the men and women who risk social ostracism and face financial loss in the interests of Freethought with that of Christians, who have, and need, every possible artificial stimulant to keep them up to the mark.

In the same vein he says: "Come, now; let us reason together. If you can show to us that there is no good, we also will be Atheists; if you can prove to us that there is no soul, we also will live as beasts." Here, then, is a cheerful Christian invitation to brotherly intercourse. Come, my dear brother, he

says with the customary pious snivel, I desire to be on terms of intellectual intimacy with you, so that we may discover which of us is in the right. And, if I find that you are in the right, then I will forsake my lofty morality, abandon my devotion to high ideals, and be as miserable and as beast-like as you are yourself. It is an affecting picture, and characteristic of both the man and his creed. But it has this trifling drawback: the Freethinker does not believe that the repudiation of Christian beliefs involves people living "as beasts," by which Dr. Horton means, not living like animals, but like certain human beings (mostly with religious beliefs), who live in anything but animal-like simplicity and innocence. Nor does the Atheist believe that the better aspect of human life is at all dependent upon religious belief. He sees that good men are here divisible in precisely the same manner; he fails to find truth and justice co-extensive with the boundaries of sectarian beliefs; and, not having been brought up in the logic of Dr. Horton's school, he concludes that what is not peculiar to any sect cannot be the exclusive property of any, and that which is common to all men must be the result of influences or causes operating upon all alike. And if Dr. Horton cares to seek what this is he will find it to be, not specific religious beliefs, but that human nature which religion has been always conquering but has never quite subdued.

Or if the Freethinker cared to avail himself of the retort obvious, he might point out—dropping the simile of animals, for most unbelievers have a kindly feeling towards these—that very frequently indeed it is when people have been stirred by devotion to religious beliefs that they have acted in the worst possible manner. It has led people to sexual extravagances as is evidenced by the history of the early Christians, by the Anabaptists, by the Pre-Adamites, and numerous other sects, down to their latest representative, "Messiah" Piggot. In another direction there is the Roman Catholic Church, which Dr. Horton believes to be one of the worst influences that can dominate a nation's destiny. But as it is impossible to believe that Roman Catholics are as human beings worse than other people, the only conclusion here is that the evil produced by them is one of the consequences of their religious belief. Or one may take the other side of the case and show how corresponding evils have been wrought by Protestants. Consider only the thousands of people who were burned, drowned, or otherwise murdered by Protestants in the seventeenth century for the religious offence of witchcraft, and we have here an offence that owes its origin entirely to religious beliefs. Then if one takes the Jew baiting and the heresy hunts, the interference with family and social life, and the wars brought about by religious differences, the ferocious legislation and the hereditary hatreds springing from religious beliefs, when all this is taken into consideration one may reasonably ask which is the more calculated to make people live "as beasts," the beliefs of the unbeliever or the faith of the Christian? If Dr. Horton only allows plain speaking at his proposed conferences, the congregation of Lydhurst-road might be treated to a few wholesome truths, rather different to the pious misrepresentations and scurrilities of its favorite preacher. But while Dr. Horton is ready to fight, it must be with an adversary of his own choosing and on conditions fixed by himself, and these, we may depend, will effectually exclude avowed Freethinkers.

Dr. Horton gives fourteen reasons why people do not believe, and all of them might be grouped under the first, that "Religion is unnecessary and unreliable." But even in commencing he cannot avoid one of his customary misstatements. He tells us that Guyau in his *Non-Religion of the Future*, says that "a few years hence" religion will have disappeared, thus giving his readers the impression that Guyau believed in the sudden, and practically immediate, disappearance of religion. But Guyau neither said nor meant anything of the kind. What he forecast

was the *ultimate* disappearance of belief in the Supernatural, and of the truth of that prophecy Dr. Horton is himself evidence. His lectures are themselves an admission of the rapid manner in which religion is losing ground, since frantic efforts would not be made to keep people in the faith unless there were some danger of them giving it up. Neither Guyau nor any other Freethinker ever imagined that the disappearance of Christianity would be a matter of a few years, or even of a few generations. But they do believe that no amount of special pleading or bribery can avert its ultimate dissolution, and in this belief all history and all experience is with them.

Dr. Horton notes that a "multitude of intelligent people" are reading Haeckel's works and similar productions, a phenomenon he regards with anything but approval. It is these "intelligent" unbelievers Dr. Horton is aiming at in the lectures that are to follow this introductory one, and provided he allows them to express *their* views I sincerely hope he may reach them. It would be a sight for the gods to see Dr. Horton in the grip of three or four Freethinkers who understood their case. There would, of course, be little fear of Dr. Horton giving up his belief, but there might be some rather surprising results among his congregation. For thanks to the efforts of Dr. Horton his audience can have only the most grotesque idea of what the Freethought position is, since his teaching has hitherto been ill-calculated to bring about full and friendly intercourse between Freethinkers and Christians. When a man says, as Dr. Horton has said, that he who does not believe in God and a future life, lowers the tone of life and bestialises man, and should, therefore, be ostracised from human society, and when he adds that the alternative is between the belief in a soul and living as a beast, he is exhibiting the Freethinker as a perfect cesspool of contamination, and from whom his congregation naturally shrinks. Of course, this is a religious caricature of both the Freethinker and of life, but it is about the only presentation audiences get from the pulpit. And therefore, I would suggest to Dr. Horton, that if he wishes to impress the "multitude of intelligent people" who are reading heretical works he cannot make a more propitious start than by imparting a little common honesty and ordinary courtesy into his sermons. Freethinkers *may* be wrong in their conclusions; but, then, so may Christians; and no one would welcome an honest interchange of views more than would unbelievers. What the Freethinker does resent is that type of mind which mistakes narrowness of view for strength of conviction, intolerance of difference for uprightness of character, and extravagance of speech for a demonstration of truth. And of this type Dr. Horton is a most eminent example.

C. COHEN.

### "Doers of the Word."

SUCH is the title of a recent sermon by Canon Scott-Holland, preached in St. Paul's Cathedral; and the text on which it was based is Matt. vii. 24-27. The text is clear and simple enough, but the sermon founded on it is hopelessly ambiguous and discursive. There is no possibility of mistaking the import of these words attributed to Jesus; but it requires an exceptionally clever man to understand and expound this discourse suggested by them. The Canon deals chiefly with the cataclysmic end of the world, which he describes in pompous, turgid language. The tumultuousness of the rhetoric is most alarming. To listen to it is like standing by turbulent Niagara. Take the following lurid description of the dissolution of the universe:—

"All that security of permanence in which the endless succession of the days had compelled us to trust will fail us. Habits, associations, memories, and traditions—all these will fall away and vanish. All that we count upon because it has always been what it is will give way under our feet. There will be convulsion, there will be upheaval, there will be violent dismissal, there will be

swift invasion, there will be total transformation, there will be a break-up of the solid framework of things. The heavens will roll together as a scroll, they will melt with fervent heat; earth will flee away, stars will fall, sun and moon will be blotted out."

Why, Miss Marie Corelli might have written that passage. It is nothing but a string of words, and when you sum it up there is nothing in it. But supposing such a terrible cataclysm were to take place, what would it signify? This:—

"The long patience of God will close in an act of judgment; the silence of God will be shattered by a great cry; the hidden glory will burst through, the withheld movement will announce itself. As the lightning that shines from one part of heaven to the other, so will be that coming."

Now, what connection has all that with the text? There is no distinct reference to the end of the world in the Sermon on the Mount. "That day," spoken of by Jesus, means the advent of the kingdom of heaven which he believed to have been close at hand. It was in that belief that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. In what manner the kingdom would come he in no way indicated. All we know is that, according to the Gospels, he lived in constant expectation of its arrival. But his expectation was doomed to bitter disappointment. Of course, Canon Scott-Holland does not mention this disappointment; nor does he take note of the fact that the emphasis of his text is not upon the end or destruction of the Universe, but upon the essential duty of *doing* "these words of mine." Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, the one test of discipleship is, not faith or trust in Jesus, but obedience to his commands. This test Canon Scott-Holland, throughout his sermon, either ignores or misrepresents. Take the following appeal as an example:—

"Can you show proof of right action—right action, not good works, not your own virtuous deeds, but real action of the will which shows itself in abandoning your own claims to good deeds, and in confessing your own impotence, and in penitential tears, and in chastened humility, and in devoted reparation? That is right action; that is what it is to be a doer of the word. You are a doer of the word if you give yourself wholly away to the Christ, who alone can enable you to do good works. That is the word that Christ preaches, the word that convinces us of our sin and drives us to the cross."

That extract is wholly false and pernicious. That it is disloyal to the text is beyond dispute, and common sense tells us that it is as untrue to life. To treat human nature in this preacher's fashion is positively iniquitous. Christ addressed his hearers as if they were fully capable of doing all that he commanded them. In the Sermon on the Mount there is not one reference to the "impotence" emphasised by the Canon. It is simply absurd to assert that Christ crucified alone can enable people to do good works. Millions of people perform the most admirable deeds to whom the name of Jesus is unknown. Why, it is man's chief glory that it is within his own power both to be and to do good to his fellow-beings. To describe human nature as inherently evil and incapable of good is to be guilty of blasphemy. There are impotent people in the world, and many of them are so impotent that they cannot be made strong. Because of bad heredity and corrupt environment Nature has doomed them to destruction. Our hearts may bleed with pity for them; but that is practically all we can do on their behalf. *And it is in vain that the Christian Gospel is preached unto them.* But the majority of mankind are not the victims of either inherited or acquired impotence. They are strong both to will and to do the right. It would be sheer folly on their part to "abandon their own claims to good deeds," or to confess an impotence that is not theirs, or to waste their emotions in "penitential tears." It is their nature to be what they are, and they could not be otherwise.

Here is another silly utterance, steeped in evangelical fervor:—

"Those are doers of the word who lay hold in very truth of that cross, and put no trust in themselves, and

are re-born by the power of his passion. Such doers build their house on the rock.....Doers! We are doers of the word if we are converted. We are doers by surrendering ourselves, by emptying ourselves. Do that, and you have done all."

One can scarcely believe that an intelligent man could talk such rubbish. If the Canon only went "behind the glamor of his phrases" he would perceive the vitiating errors of his teaching. It is all very well to speak of *conversion, faith, regeneration,* and such-like; but can Dr. Scott-Holland give us the name and address of one converted person who is a veritable doer of "these sayings of mine"? There are thousands of professing Christians who fervently sing—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling";

but among them all is there even one who conscientiously *obeys* Jesus? Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth"; and yet dignitaries of the Church, Divinely-appointed Shepherds of the Christian sheep, die worth £40,000, £50,000, or £100,000. Would Canon Scott-Holland call *them* doers of "these sayings of mine"? Jesus said, "Give to him that asketh thee"; and yet in Christian England, if a man is bold enough to ask, he is treated as a felon and clapped into prison. Would Canon Scott-Holland include Christian England, in that particular, among the doers of "these words of mine"? Jesus said, "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also"; and yet if anyone *did* smite the reverend gentleman on his right cheek, instead of turning to him the other also, his reverence would prosecute the rascal and get him punished for a criminal assault. The prosecution might be perfectly justifiable in itself; but could the prosecutor be accurately characterised as a doer of "these words of mine"? "These words of mine" clearly mean every commandment contained in the so-called Sermon on the Mount. They are the moral precepts ascribed to Jesus Christ. They are the words of one who "spake as never man spake," and who insisted upon strict obedience to all his injunctions. Non-Christians may indulge in severe criticism of the commandments just quoted; but to disciples they are the precepts, the rules, of an Infallible Teacher, and ought to be strictly carried out. And yet Christians pay no more heed to them than other people do.

Canon Scott-Holland evidently does not take his Divine Master seriously. To him the rock on which the house should be built is, not obedience to the commandments, but sentimental trust in the person, of Jesus Christ. This is the fundamental and fatal fallacy of Evangelicalism. By the rock Christ meant obedience; by the rock the Church means Christ himself crucified. Hence the hymn Christians love so much:—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee;  
Let the Water and the Blood,  
From thy riven side which flow'd,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

Against that totally false and demoralising sentimentalism we wish to utter the most solemn warning. It is an intolerable insult to the native dignity and majesty of human nature. It offers a flat contradiction to all our healthiest instincts and impulses. "Right action" is action dictated by an enlightened head and a chastened heart, action rooted in reason and love, and issuing in benefit to all concerned. At the back of all wrong action lie ignorance and stupidity. What the world still lacks is, not Gospel, Christian or Pagan, but education, knowledge; not supernatural grace, but adequate instruction of head and heart in the science of living in society.

J. T. LLOYD.

## My Twenty Years' Fight in Australia.—VI.

(Continued from p. 661.)

WE were expelled from our hall, as I have related, and were excluded from it for nearly seven years.

During much of that time the thieves who stole it tried to use it, as they would say, for Freethought purposes. There were one or two disreputable fellows, a disgrace to our platform, anxious to hold forth in the stolen hall; but I spoilt their game for them, exposed them in every issue of the *Liberator*, and so made it quite impossible for them to use the building. At length they let it to the most unprincipled of the Melbourne Spiritualists, and it looked as if we had lost it for ever.

But we did not give up without a further fight. We called a meeting of the members who had not been driven away by want of work, and we decided, in the name of all the members, except the trustees, to sue the trustees for restitution of the hall. The case was the first one heard by the present Chief Justice of Victoria; and, if he had been an honest man, we must have won. For a long time the judge seemed puzzled, and very undecided which way to leap; but when he grasped the situation, and understood that the trustees could never use the place, and that the Symes party would employ it for Freethought purposes, he soon made up his mind. He manipulated the evidence that he had heard and inverted some of it, and then decided against us.

And here I may as well relate two or three other lawsuits I had in Melbourne. In 1887 two working men were had up, and let off with a caution, for lecturing on the Queen's Wharf, where lectures had been delivered and meetings held on Sundays for a great many years. I was asked to take up this case, being assured that I should have the support of the Trades Unionists, and also of a powerful temperance body. For three months I went down every Sunday afternoon, although very unwell and often tottering on my feet as I tramped through the sunlight of that summer, the temperature very often up to 104° or 105° Fah. in the shade, and 40° to 50° higher in the sun. The fight was a bitter one, and I was left alone; even the two men whose place I had taken left me in the lurch. I beat the enemy in my first trial, but a second was started and in that I came to grief.

To help me through, I employed Mr. David Gaunson, a solicitor, thought to be honest and straightforward, but really a rogue of the purest water. When I went to Brisbane, as before recorded, this fellow undertook to see to my case, so that everything should be ready for an Appeal to the Full Court against the decision of the police-magistrate on my return. When I returned from Brisbane I found he had done nothing, and the time was expired. This necessitated a costly process to bring the case before the court, but after much trouble I succeeded in doing so, only to find the Court dead against me. As I was not backed up outside, the judges gratified popular prejudice by deciding against me, contrary to all precedent too.

I next sued the rogue-lawyer, Gaunson, for breach of contract, and the fellow perjured himself and made his clerk do ditto to escape punishment. Though he need not have done so, for the judges protected him all through. The judge of first instance decided against me, but there was one item in Gaunson's own evidence quite sufficient to floor him on appeal, and appeal I did. When, however, I interviewed the judge for items from his notes of the trial, he refused the said item. I had seen him note it, but I could not induce him to read it at my interview with him. Of course, he knew it would prove fatal to the lawyer; and condemn a lawyer and a member of parliament too! No, certainly not! The three judges, on appeal, took the same view of the matter, and sheltered the lawyer at my expense.

This, and the loss of the wharf case, landed me seriously in debt, and on three occasions I had the bailiffs in over these two claims. My furniture was sold, but my library and microscope were saved for this time—they travelled to a place of safety.

Another lawsuit arose out of the erection of the marquee that I have spoken of. It was scarcely up before the police were on me. I was sued for erecting a tent without obtaining permission from the

Board of Health. The trial was a curiosity. The Bench was packed in every sense. All the pious saints of Melbourne, who were on the Commission of Peace, turned up—and spent a most exciting hour or two. A lawyer opposed me, and I defended myself. Knowing the Bench to be both ignorant and bitterly prejudiced against me, I took most especial pains to instruct them, and explained the Act the prosecution invoked, as I might have done to a class of school-boys. But all in vain. They now had the arch-enemy of God in their toils, and would see to it that he should not escape. The saints retired for a few minutes, and then returned into Court in a state of the greatest excitement. They had, of course, found the case proved, and inflicted upon me a fine of £50 or three months' imprisonment.

I gave notice of appeal; and, when the morning of appeal arrived, I went up to the Supreme Court fully persuaded that the Judge of General Sessions would prove as prejudiced as the J.P.'s had been, and that I should go to prison; for I was fully resolved not to pay the villainous fine. The judge in this case—Casey was his name—took a most rational view of my action, and repeated almost verbatim what I had pleaded in the Court below. He reversed the decision of the magistrates, and gave me £7 7s. costs against them. One of them ran a local paper, and it was weeks before he sobered down over the defeat he and his friends had sustained. Indeed, his style of writing upon the subject would lead an uninformed person to suppose that I had perpetrated a terrible crime in seeking to reverse their saintly decision, and that Judge Casey was as bad as myself.

Out of the wharf case and the Gaunson case sprang the most serious lawsuit I have ever had. As I have said, these two cases left me in debt; and, as times were very bad, I was unable to pay. I therefore raised the money by giving a Bill of Sale over my new furniture, my costly microscope, and a library of from 1,500 to 2,000 volumes—a splendid library it was. This Bill of Sale was later on transferred, with my consent, to a man I mistook for a genuine friend, and his brother took half the risk with him. Times became worse and worse, and I found it impossible to pay the interest. In average times I should have had no difficulty, but now it took us all our time to make both ends meet.

In 1893 the owner of the Bill of Sale put in the bailiffs and seized all I had. He then, under the guise of friendship, made an arrangement with me to this effect: that we should take a house, place all the property therein, pay the rent, of course, and pay him so much a week for the use of the furniture, books, etc. We did this, and my wife, who was in business on her own account, was called upon to back a promissory note covering all claims they had upon me. If this were not done, he would seize everything I had.

Let the reader realise my situation. My wife was now within four or five months of her confinement, and I was anxious, no matter what it might cost, to have a roof over our heads when that crisis should arrive. So we did our best to gratify the man who had us in his grasp. We acceded to his wishes, and hoped all might be well. But just a week before the baby was born, lo and behold, he demanded full payment of all I owed him, on pain of seizing all we had and turning us out in the cold! I saw it was no use to reason with him. I dreaded a storm just then, for my wife's sake. But for that I would have fought him tooth and nail, but I had to yield.

I went to a good friend, told him my trouble, and asked if he could lend me £5 for a few weeks. He could. With that money I went and ordered some furniture—a few absolutely necessary things—secured a cottage, got the few things put in by 11 p.m. on Saturday. There were three of us in the house—my wife, a young girl friend, who proved a heroine on this occasion, and myself. We went to bed late. At four next morning I walked five miles for the doctor, and the baby was born about 7 a.m.

There is not one word of romance about this, my reader. Every word of it is sober truth. As for me,

I had to spend several nights lying on the floor, there being no other bed for me. But that was nothing. I said to my wife, "They are anxious to kill *you*; that is their object. See that they don't do it. Make up your mind not to gratify them."

I have many times tried to fathom the depth of this plot, but without success. What motives swayed the man I could never discover, though I have always been satisfied that some other people were at the bottom of it all; that persons of a diabolic nature must have prompted and urged him to do as he did.

But I have not finished. The reader may remember the promissory note I mentioned, which was backed by my wife. The fellow sued her for payment of this, and now he was joined by the Anarchistic set, or he had joined them. The *Liberator* plant was owned by my wife, and the fellows promised themselves that at length they foresaw the end of that hated journal which had so terribly spoilt their game. They even foretold the exact date when it must cease, and cease for ever; but it ran for nine or ten years longer, for all their predictions. They did their best, but a good friend, William Harris, a Russian Jew, bought the plant before they could grasp it, and their game was up—no, not yet. My worst lawsuit has yet to arrive. William Harris, let me add, was a staunch and true friend to our movement; and I was extremely sorry to learn, when I enquired for him in Sydney last June, that he was dead.

Ripper, the man who seized my library, etc., in so diabolical a manner, was offered all the money I owed him two days after the seizure, but he declined. A good friend—my very best friend, indeed—went to him, unknown to me, and tried to bring him to reason, but quite in vain. He kept the books for a year or two, and then sold them to a bookseller. I saw them laid out on tables and shelves, and bought back a few. I had acquired a few others in the interval; for, no matter how poor I may be, I must have books. I was told that Ripper and others had hoped the *Liberator* would stop if they left me without books! They did not know that I had read them, or that I could have carried on the paper for years without consulting books—if driven to it.

The big trial record must wait till next week.

(To be continued.) JOS. SYMES.

### Acid Drops.

Dr. Clifford amuses his old age by soaring on the wings of prophecy. In a recent address at Market Harborough he declared that "the Free Churches were preparing the way for a genuine democracy, for a people governing themselves, by themselves, for themselves." The reverend gentleman forgets that the inventor of the phrase "the government of the people, by the people, and for the people" was Abraham Lincoln—a Freethinker. He also forgets George Eliot's saying that prophecy is the most gratuitous form of error when he declares that "the Free Churches and the Labor Party will work hand in hand for the accomplishment of their great democratic ideals." This is simply a case of the wish being father to the thought. We fancy the Labor Party will go its own way, without troubling whether Dr. Clifford and his like agree with it or not.

The *Daily News* waxed indignant over the case of Mr. Frederick Nettleton, a Southend Passive Resister, who was taken off to Chelmsford Gaol for a week for "refusing to pay the sum of one shilling demanded for the purposes of sectarian education." Of course, if a Freethinker refused to pay his rates in the same way, the *Daily News* would see him carried off to gaol with the greatest equanimity. It only gets into a passion when the victim is a Nonconformist.

Our pious contemporary knows perfectly well that no shilling was demanded of Mr. Nettleton for the purposes of sectarian education. The rate, whatever it be, is demanded in its entirety. The "shilling" is Mr. Nettleton's own little calculation. And it is a very absurd calculation too. No man can possibly say what is the cost of the "sectarian" part of the total education in an elementary school.

There is something else to be said. Mr. Nettleton is probably a Nonconformist and goes in for "Simple Bible Teaching" in the public schools. Well now, he ought to be aware that *this* teaching is "sectarian" to all Catholics, High Churchmen, and Freethinkers. The truth is that all religious teaching is necessarily sectarian.

The Congregational Union adopted a resolution proposed by Sir Albert Spicer, M.P., dealing with what is called "temperance reform." This resolution earnestly hoped that the Government would "enact Sunday closing for England, and complete Sunday closing in Ireland." For our part, we hope the Government will do nothing of the kind. Sunday closing is sheer Sabbatarianism. If a public-house should be open on any day it should be open on Sunday. Only religious bigotry could make an act, which is legitimate on one day, illegitimate on another day. If drinking a glass of beer is right on Saturday and Monday, it cannot possibly be wrong on the day that comes between them. And if the Government adopts the policy of Sunday closing it will simply show that it is the tool of the Churches in general, and of the puritanic Free Churches in particular.

We wonder if Sir Albert Spicer is a tectotaller. If he is not, if he drinks liquor from his own cellar on Sundays, he is an impudent busybody in attempting to prevent the masses of the people from getting a drink at a public-house. There has been too much humbug on this question. Every man who supports Sunday closing should be publicly asked whether he is a total abstainer—and pressed for a straightforward reply.

The Rev. Dr. Barrett, of Norwich, read a paper on the Virgin Birth before the Congregational Union at Wolverhampton, in which he rightly held that those who rejected the Virgin Birth could not "long retain the Incarnation, and that with the Incarnation went the Deity of Christ." Dr. Barrett was heroically consistent. "The Virgin Birth," he said, "was far more than the negation of the human fatherhood. It was the introduction of a new factor—the Divine factor." Everybody can see the reasonableness of such a statement.

Consistency, however, is not everything. Does not Dr. Barrett see that a being already in existence cannot be born? The babe is invariably a *new* being, an *addition*. If the Virgin Birth actually occurred, what it signified was, not the incarnation of the Second Person in the Trinity, but the production of an additional Divine Being, and the consequent conversion of the *Trinity* into a *Quaternity*. Jesus, if a Divine Being, was not the second, but the fourth, in the group of Divine Persons. The story is that Mary, though betrothed to Joseph, "was found with child of the Holy Ghost"; and common sense tells us that the child she bore was the son, not of the first, but of the third Person in the Godhead. In any case, Jesus was a new being, not an old one transformed. There is no need to dwell on the unutterable absurdity and puerility of the whole thing.

Dr. Barrett's paper was followed by a discussion, which was highly amusing. Two well-known Principals and a Professor opposed the teaching of the essay, declaring that, while believing in the Incarnation, they were obliged to reject the Virgin Birth. Then a layman, Mr. W. B. Wilson, of West Bromwich, vehemently denounced Principals Ritchie and Forsyth and Professor Duff, because they wantonly "destroyed the faith taught him at his mother's knee." The iconoclastic Doctors of Divinity must have been totally demolished when this terrific bomb fell amongst them: "Luke was a medical man, and he accepted the Virgin Birth!"

Rev. R. J. Campbell has been interviewed on this Virgin Birth discussion. He was "loth to speak," but "being pressed" he made the following declaration:—

"The doctrine that Jesus was born without a human father is, of course, a crude and misleading presentation of a great truth—the truth, namely, that out of chaos and darkness the Spirit of God is ever calling order and beauty, life and light. The idea is this: That matter is the matrix out of which the Divine Spirit produces a Divine humanity; it is this truth that is behind the dogma of the Virgin birth. But the Incarnation remains the central truth of Christianity, quite independent of the popular presentation of the Virgin birth."

The idea of the Virgin birth is older than Christianity by eons of years. It is the symbolical statement of that great truth of which I have spoken, a truth common to several ancient faiths. The physiological aspect of that doctrine is a crude presentation of an essential truth. It is a much larger question than perhaps the general public have any idea of."

It is not certain, from all this vorbiage, whether Mr. Campbell believes in the Virgin Birth or not. Probably he

doesn't. Possibly he does. Nobody quite knows what the reverend gentleman *does* believe. We don't think he knows himself.

According to Mr. Campbell the Incarnation is the central truth of Christianity. Not so, says the Rev. Agar Beet, who was also interviewed on the same discussion. Personally, he believes in the Virgin Birth, but he is not disposed to "put it in the front of the Gospel of Christ." "Christianity," he says, "does not rest in the slightest degree on the doctrine of the Virgin Birth; it rests securely on his Resurrection from the dead. That is my position." Yes, but what is the position of Christianity? Will its teachers kindly agree as to what it really rests on? One says it rests on something that happened before Jesus was born; another says it rests on something that happened after his death. Such is Christian harmony!

The Rev. Mr. Carlisle, of Lincoln, read a paper on "The Ideal Fellowship of the Church," which he concluded thus: "Though we fail indeed, you, I, a score of such weak workers, he [Christ] fails never. If he cannot work by us, he will work over us." What sheer hypocrisy! Ministers are in the habit of talking thus because it sounds so very pious; but if they really meant what they said they would give Christ the chance of doing without them. Dr. Horton once said it would be a great blessing if the pulpits were all burned; but he never set a good example by burning his own. We are often told that no one can preach like the Holy Ghost; and yet he never has the opportunity of proving even that he exists.

Preaching before the Congregational Union, the Rev. C. Silvester-Horne admitted that "Christians agreed even less than did the devilries of the age." "We have a divided Christendom," he said, "still excommunicating and anathematizing its friends, still sneering and gibbering, still more willing to condone the Devil than to condone Dissent." How very sad. Satan is riding on in triumph. Christ is powerless, and the churches in which he dwells as the Head are torn asunder by "senseless rivalries," "vulgar innuendoes," and "slandrous misrepresentations," which "would shame the worldliest society," and which, "had they been as common in commerce as they have been among the churches, would long ago have wrecked the name and fame of England, and made us the by-word of the world." All this is doubtless true; but in the face of such a deplorable state of things, how can Mr. Horne persist in asserting that the churches are divine institutions inhabited by the Holy Ghost? Mr. Horne admits that "the Devil rides on in triumph" even in Christendom; and yet he preaches an all-powerful, all-good, and all-loving God. Is not this the height of inconsistency? After all, Christ does not reign; it is Satan who reigns. Christianity has dismally failed; it is "the devilries of the age" that are regnant. This *must* be true when even Mr. Horne admits while deploring it.

The Rev. Dr. Burrell informs us that the ideal man is Jesus the Carpenter. Who would have thought it? There is no sign of it in the Churches. The people who toil with their hands and are poor never occupy the seats of honor and supreme influence in Christian society. The crossing-sweeper is never invited as an equal to the Duke's drawing-room. And yet Jesus the Carpenter is held up as the ideal man! What an intolerable farce!

The Bishop of Ely believes in "the Holy Catholic Church." Yes; but what on earth is the good of believing in it? "Millions and millions without God and without hope in the world; what does it all mean?" I don't know, said his lordship of Ely, but I find great comfort in the confession of my belief in the Holy Catholic universal Church. Then he adds: "He does not look out upon the sinful and sorrowing world without hope who has learnt to say, with something of its true meaning, 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church.'" If this is not "drivel for the dregs," pray, what is it? No wonder that intelligent people despise and turn away with disgust from the utterances of the pulpit!

The current number of the *Hibbert Journal* is a most remarkable production. The editor, in a lucid article, contends that the Church as a supernatural institution, or "as a power external to the world, is ceasing to exist, while a new Church within the world, bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh, is slowly taking form." Mr. Henry Sturt in a readable contribution argues that a substitute for Christianity is sadly needed. He wants a God that evolves with the world. One would have thought that the Christian God has undergone a sufficient number of evolutionary changes. No two people have precisely the same deity. In another article

we are assured that all historical religions have turned out melancholy failures, and that the only genuine hope of the world now lies in spiritualism.

It is astonishing and a truly hopeful sign to find such a bill of fare in a magazine edited by a Christian minister. It indicates that superstition is dying out, that all external authority is crumbling to pieces, and that the orthodoxy of our fathers is becoming obsolete. Even preachers are shifting their ground, and losing their tone of infallibility. Not one of them is to this age what their fathers were to theirs. "In the tops of the mulberry trees" we can now hear everywhere the sound of the progressive march of Secularism.

For his sensible criticism of Dr. Fitchett's *Ithuriel's Spear*, Dr. Robertson Nicoll has just been thrashed within an inch of his life, in an "open letter" in the *Methodist Recorder*. Here is an angry, spiteful man, slashing away with divine fury, and saying, "There! I have waited fourteen long and weary years for this opportunity, but I have got you now, and I won't let you go till I have had my revenge in full. Ha, ha." Listen to this pre-eminently Christian man, who signed himself "Arthur Hoyle": "Just about fourteen years ago this month you called me a cur in your *British Weekly* because I ventured to differ with you upon a book." Poor fellow! For fourteen years he trampled the law of his Lord under foot by nursing his Christian grudge against a brother saint. Here is a spectacle sad enough to make the angels weep and to break the very heart of God. The *Methodist Recorder* deserves our sincerest congratulation for its Christian courage in publishing such a gentlemanly, polite, and pious "open letter." We wonder if the editor of the *British Weekly* is still alive.

The other day the Rev. H. A. Redpath, D. Litt., M.A., Rector of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East, preached what he called an "evidential sermon." His subject was, "Christ in the Gospels." Dr. Redpath's idea of evidence must be somewhat peculiar. He ignored the most essential points. He declined to discuss the problem "as to whether such a person as Jesus, the son of Mary, ever existed at all." "That, for me," he said, "is beyond controversy." But the historicity of Jesus has been, and is being, seriously controverted by many. This is a fact, whether Dr. Redpath likes it or not; and to ignore it is cowardly.

Dr. Redpath likewise refused to concern himself with "the sources, or authority, or authenticity of the Gospels." And yet this is a most vital question. What can be the value of the Christ of the Gospels if the Gospels themselves are unreliable? For example, Dr. Redpath said: "Jesus is represented to us as one of unusual and extraordinary Birth." Where? At the beginning of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke; and the scholarship of the age, even Christian scholarship, has proved conclusively that the birth-stories did not originally belong to those Gospels, but were borrowed from Paganism and inserted at a comparatively late date. To this Dr. Redpath was careful not to make any reference.

Again, Dr. Redpath contended that the Gospels "point to Christ as one 'who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.'" Here also we ask, Where? There is not a single sentence in the four Gospels which points to Christ as sinless; and the very quotation Dr. Redpath made came from an Epistle. If one such sentence exists, let it be produced.

Dr. Redpath's next point is equally baseless. "The Christ of the Gospels," he said, "was the greatest of Teachers that ever lived." That is but a matter of opinion. There are many in Christendom who hold a contrary view. This is, therefore, a disputed point, on which Dr. Redpath gives us, not evidence, but naked dogmatism. This divine misnamed his sermon; it ought to have been designated by the adjective, dogmatic. There is not a scrap of evidence in it from beginning to end.

In the *Church Times* a discussion is going on as to whether prayers for the dead are allowable or not. The Bishop of Oxford also dwelt on the same question in his recent Charge. He seems to think that prayers for the dead may be permissible in private, and perhaps in the family, but not in public. Well, what objection can there be against praying for the dead *anywhere*? The real question is, What is the use of praying for them? We know nothing at all about them; they are utterly out of our reach. Indeed, what is the use of praying for anybody? This is a most unprofitable discussion.

Rev. R. E. Roberts leaves Mold parish church to be minor canon of Peterborough Cathedral. Having received from

the Lord this call to "go up higher," the reverend gentleman is more in love with religion than before. He seems to be in love with it, indeed, to the point of blind infatuation; although we are unable to say whether his passion is reciprocated. His farewell sermon to his old Mold (and perhaps mouldy) congregation was a fine piece of ranting eloquence. "What would England become," he asked, "without the Bible?" "Nothing," he replied, "but a sea of reckless competition and a hell of natural lust and vice." Well now, we should hardly have thought it. How strange that people should become so vicious by ceasing to read the blue and black parts of the Bible—such as the story of Lot and his dainty daughters, of Judah and Tamar, of the Levite and his dissected concubine, and of the massacre and violation of the Midianite men and women. It never occurred to us that these narratives were the only safeguards of the virtue of the English nation. Yes, it *is* strange. But then, as Byron said, truth *is* strange—stranger than fiction.

"Speaking for himself," Mr. Roberts said, "he would say that if he were convinced that the Bible was a myth, and that there was no life hereafter, he would not think it worth while to restrain his lowest and most natural passions." We sincerely hope he libelled himself on that occasion. We don't like to think of him as being as bad as he describes himself. But if he tells the truth about his own character it is easy to see what he would be at. He reminds us of the title of an old play—"She Would if She Could"—which, as Dr. Johnson said, needs very little explanation. Mr. Roberts would if he could. He is only restrained by the hope of future reward or the fear of future punishment. Without that restraint he would wallow in sensuality. We venture to remind him, however, that there are other restraints. Human society, without troubling the lords of heaven and hell, will take care that he is kept under some control. His "lowest passions" might suggest an act that would lead to twelve years' penal servitude. Surely it might be "worth while" to practise self-restraint if only to avoid that unpleasant experience. We hope the reverend gentleman's head (letting his heart alone) is equal to this simple calculation.

Rev. William Ewing, a clergyman acting as a tutor at Birmingham, has been fined forty shillings and costs, with the alternative of a month's imprisonment, for assaulting two little girls. He explained that they had "misunderstood" him. Very likely.

Rev. Henry Treweeke Briscoe is in the bankruptcy-court. He seems to have had some twenty years' experience of money-lenders. There is also trust money missing. His discharge is suspended for four years, the judge calling it "a painful case." That is all. The reverend gentleman is lucky.

Rev. J. Morton Barnes asked the King's Lynn County Court judge to excuse him from paying his grocer's bill, to the tune of £2 18s. 1d., on the ground that, ethically speaking, he could not regard himself as a debtor, until the State guaranteed him employment of a kind in keeping with his education, and with sufficient remuneration on which to support himself, his wife, and his family. While the reverend gentleman had the pen in his hand he might have stated how much he ought to be paid. Perhaps a thousand a year would do. But you never can tell. In the meantime he ignores the poor grocer, who is also without a State guarantee. Fortunately the judge did not overlook the tradesman whose tea and sugar Mr. Barnes had consumed. He ordered the man of God to pay ten shillings a month.

A bachelor clergyman advertises in the *Daily Telegraph* for a lady housekeeper. She must have private means. The honor of living with a clergyman should be sufficient.

Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. Mr. Tom Bennett, a middle-aged grocer, of Cinderford, expired suddenly in the local Baptist Chapel. He had over-exerted a weak heart in cycling home after conducting a morning service outside the town. Had he been less fond of religion he might have been alive still. But perhaps we ought to congratulate him on his translation.

More English hypocrisy! Two more Peculiar People—Mr. and Mrs. Sibley, of Hogg's-lane, Grays, Essex—have been committed for trial on a charge of manslaughter. Instead of calling in a doctor to their seven-year-old daughter, Lavinia, they obeyed the Bible and called in an elder of their Church to pray over her and anoint her with oil in the name of the Lord. Obeying the Bible in this country is a crime. Yet the Bible is to be taught in the schools, under Mr. Birrell's Bill, as "the rule of faith and conduct."

A sporting paper draws attention to an odd thing in Marie Corelli's last novel, *The Treasure of Heaven*. The lady represents one of her characters as having "an evening job of a shilling a week for bringing home eight Highland *bull-heifers* from pasture"—the man who owned them having valued them very highly. Our sporting contemporary says it should think he did; those interesting animals "would have been a 'Treasure on Earth' to the owner of a freak-show."

Dr. Bickersteth, vicar of Leeds, raises a strange objection to two sermons on Sunday. If you have heard one sermon, he says, you ought to have enough to think about for the day. Doesn't he know that you might hear twenty sermons without having anything to think about? If he doesn't, let him listen to some.

Canon Newbolt preached to the doctors belonging to the Guild of St. Luke who recently assembled in St. Paul's Cathedral. "He would only insult them," he said, "by supposing them to be only interested in making man a healthy animal, with a highly developed reason." We quite understand the reverend gentleman's objection to healthy animals. We also understand his objection to a highly developed reason.

A man went to Mr. Plowden, at the Marylebone Police Court, and complained that his wife had run away with the children in a perambulator. "Where has she taken them?" asked the magistrate. "God only knows," replied the applicant. "Then," said the magistrate, "it is no use coming here." The poor man had applied at the wrong court. But how is he to reach the right one?

Professor Peake is a man of brains; but unfortunately his brains are held in bondage by his Christian faith. He says he believes in democracy, but only on the condition that it is a Christian democracy. As a matter of fact, however, the democracy, so-called, has turned its back upon Christianity, and therefore, Professor Peake is not a believer in it. And why is the democracy out of touch with religion? Because religion has been out of touch with the democracy. But the Professor is decidedly wrong when he affirms that "a democracy inspired by a sense of justice, by high humanitarian principles, by wide-embracing sympathies" is of necessity inspired also, "and above all by a passionate devotion to the living God." Through all the ages, religion has kept the common people down, and allowed them to be cruelly trodden upon by the worst forms of tyranny; and now that the common people are beginning to come to their own they are indignantly throwing off the yoke of allegiance to Christianity. This is history.

Mr. Jowett, chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, is quite right in his insistence on the necessity of capturing the child for Christ at the earliest possible moment. His address from the chair at Wolverhampton was a passionate cry for what he called "a Transfigured Home," that is, an intensely religious home. From his point of view, the appeal was eminently timely, because nothing is more evident than that the homes of the British people are every year becoming less religious. And this is the surest sign that religion is doomed in our land, and that the tide of Secularism is irresistibly flowing in. Mr. Jowett is a most impressive speaker; but even his impressiveness and eloquence are powerless to stem this on-rushing stream of human progress.

Gipsy Smith has gone over to save America—partly, no doubt, as a set-off to Dr. Torrey's salvation of England, and partly for the usual consideration. At New York he was announced to address the Twenty-third Street branch of the Young Men's Christian Association; but he did not put in an appearance, and it was announced that he had refused to speak because he was looking for the really wicked, and did not expect to find any in the Y. M. C. A. This pretty compliment, however, was spoilt by Gipsy Smith in the evening, when he announced that the managers had overlooked the fact that the state of his health did not permit of his speaking at more than two large meetings daily. The state of his head hardly permits of that.

They have got a fresh New Testament in the Wisbech Police Court. The old one had been in use for seventy years. What a lot of lies have been told over it! The calculation is beyond mathematics.

Perhaps the greatest triumph of all moral writings, including sermons, is that they have produced some sweet and innocent sleep.—*Helps*.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 28, Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, Leicester, at 6.30, "The Lords and the Education Bill: a Study in National Inefficiency."

November 4, Woolwich Town Hall; 18, Birmingham.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 4, Birmingham. December 2, Forest Gate; 9, Glasgow; 16, Belfast.

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

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

GLASGOW.—Glad to read your slap at the humbug. Carlyle said many years ago that the "philanthropists," especially of the orthodox Christian variety, too often see nothing interesting in the needy until they become criminals. Certainly we should be as kind as possible to all men, but it injures society to give a preference to the worst, and you do right in pointing this out. We note your suggestion that a fund should be started for holding Freethought demonstrations throughout the country—partly with a view to making the *Freethinker* better known and extending its circulation.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Are you quite sure about that Post Office regulation? Thanks for cutting. See "Acid Drops."

R. ALGER.—May be useful. Thanks.

P. W. MADDEN.—Thanks for cuttings. You will see that we have dealt with Mr. Lobb's book this week.

E. LECHEMERE.—We have posted it, but cannot do more.

J. DRISCOLL.—The verses are not new; their origin is American. Still, thanks.

G. ROLEFFS.—Your cuttings are welcome.

R. F. JONES.—We wish the effort all success. See "Sugar Plums."

G. SCOTT.—Thanks: proof in due course. Glad to hear that the comments on Mr. Lloyd's lecture at Glasgow were "highly eulogistic," and that "he appears to be thoroughly at home now on the Secular platform."

A. MARK.—Pleased to hear that you enjoyed what you are good enough to call our "beautiful tribute" to Burns in our Glasgow lecture; still more pleased to know that you have since then secured us two new subscribers, and will consider yourself our debtor if you do not get us at least one new reader every week. If all our friends would act in the same spirit we should see more progress.

F. C.—Pamphlets will be sent as promptly as possible. We have read your letter with much interest, and are sending it on to Mr. Bonte, who will find it interesting too.

A. MOLE.—Nothing of the sort; your Christian friend has been "sold."

J. POLLITT.—Mr. Foote is well at present. See paragraph in "Sugar Plums." Regret we could not make it longer.

H. SPENCE.—Glad you are getting subscriptions for Councillor Leggatt's election expenses, and hope you will get more, but we cannot run acknowledgments through the *Freethinker*, and you appear to agree with us.

J. BROUGH.—Always pleased to hear from you. Thanks for cuttings.

F. BALL thanks us heartily for specimen copies of the *Freethinker* sent to him for six consecutive weeks, and, in becoming a regular subscriber, wishes us every success. This should encourage our friends to forward us fresh addresses.

E. MOORCROFT.—A parcel of "specimen" *Freethinkers* is being sent you. The other matter will be attended to by the N. S. S. Executive presently. It was no use troubling in the summer time.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your valued cuttings.

D. BAXTER.—We note it. But such things should be sent direct to the editor.

A. G. R.—Sorry it had to stand over till next week.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

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

### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote pays his annual visit to Leicester to-day (Oct. 28) and lectures at the Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, in the evening. The subject chosen by the Committee is "The Lords and the Education Bill: a Study in National Inefficiency." Of course Mr. Foote will champion the "secular solution," and attack the policy of all the religious sects.

The Woolwich Town Hall has been engaged by the local N. S. S. Branch for a lecture by Mr. Foote on "Is Christianity True?" Already the pious folk are talking about the letting of *their* Town Hall to *infidels*. It would be well, therefore, if the local Branch were well supported by "saints" from other parts of London next Sunday evening (Nov. 4).

Mr. Cohen's eight-page tract on the Salvation Army will be ready for distribution next week—say Thursday, November 1. We hope so, at any rate, though it may possibly be a day or two later. Meanwhile we have to acknowledge the following contributions towards the cost of its production:—F. S., £1; Glasgow Branch, 10s.; J. Roberts, 5s. *Per Miss Vancs*:—G. Brittain, 2s. 6d.; B. Coleman, 3s.; Dr. R. T. Nichols, 2s. 6d. Of course a great deal more will be wanted if the tract is to be printed in any considerable number. It is an admirable tract, is bound to be very useful, and ought to be widely circulated. Will the "saints" subscribe, therefore, promptly and cheerfully? We hope to have a better list of acknowledgments next week.

Mr. Joseph Symes visits Manchester to-day (Oct. 28) and delivers two lectures, afternoon and evening, in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints. We hope the South Lancashire Freethinkers will give him the heartiest of welcomes.

The Failsworth Secular Sunday School's grand bazaar and sale of work takes place on Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday, Oct. 27, 29 and 30. On the first day the bazaar will be opened by Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, of Leicester, at 2 p.m.—the chairman for the occasion being Mr. Joseph Symes. The object is to clear off a debt of £400, and we hope it will be thoroughly successful.

Circumstances over which we have no control have caused an unexpected delay in publishing the now and revised edition of Mr. F. Bonte's pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*. It is no use going into particulars. We have often had to "tear our hair," as the saying is; and those acquainted with the printing business will understand—those who are not couldn't understand if they tried. We expect to have the pamphlet on sale by the date of this week's *Freethinker*. Having said that, we mop our brows.

One of the Progressive candidates for the Hackney Borough Council is Mr. W. J. Ramsey, who went to prison with us in 1883. This ought to be enough to make all the local "saints" support him earnestly, if they have no objection to his municipal program.

There are 191 elementary public schools in which no religious teaching is given; 176 being Welsh and 15 English. We did not think there were so many. But we hope the numbers will increase.

The *Humane Review* is always acceptable. It is published quarterly at the price of one shilling, and is conducted by friends of the Humanitarian League, although it has no official connection with that body. The October number opens with a well-written, interesting article by Ernest Bell on "Why Do Animals Exist?"—showing conclusively that the lower animals were not produced by nature for man's convenience, but have always had an independent life of their own, except when they have been compelled into man's service. "Humane Education" is an admirable paper by the Rev. A. M. Mitchell. We are glad to see that he leaves the Bible theory of the rod behind him, and repro-

bates all violence towards children by their teachers. In this respect it is well to remember how much Japan is ahead of us. A teacher who struck a child in Japan would be discharged upon the spot. "A Note on Leigh Hunt" comes probably from the practised and graceful pen of Henry S. Salt, who also contributes a very able signed article on "The Sportsman at Bay." There is also a very sensible article on "Gambling" by "Nemo." We hope the *Humane Review* is surely, if slowly, making its way into public favor.

Mr. F. J. Gould is making another effort to corner the "religious educationists" at Leicester. He gave notice that he would ask the Education Committee *what is taught in the schools*. It does not seem unreasonable to ask *that* question. Nevertheless the local *Daily Post*—a Nonconformist organ—is in a dreadful passion with Mr. Gould for putting it, and talks very pompously about "unwavering confidence in the knowledge and wisdom of the teachers." Of course this is a Nonconformist dodge for avoiding a plain issue. Curiously enough, the Leicester Committee has no Bible syllabus. Which is another dodge. For, although the teachers are given a free hand in Bible teaching, everybody knows that any one of them who taught what the majority of the Committee objected to would soon be brought to book.

Mr. Gould proposed his motion on Monday night, and was defeated by a large majority. He could not find a seconder for a resolution to defer consideration of the West Riding judgment until the Committee had ascertained the character of the religious instruction in the Leicester denominational schools, and reported how far it differed materially from that given in Council schools. The long and the short of it is that the Leicester Christians, and especially the Nonconformists, do not mean to be drawn. They intend to play their own game and keep it dark. Mr. Gould's merit is that he has demonstrated this—or made *them* demonstrate it, which is better.

The Merthyr Ethical Society had good meetings at one time, mainly because it engaged some Secularist lecturers. But it was decided that it would "ruin the movement" to have any more of "those Secularists." So the movement went on without them, and got "ruined" just the same. A few Freethinkers have now resolved to see what can be done on more definite lines, and a meeting has been called at the Ruskin Institute, in Castle-street, to-day (Oct. 28), at 2 p.m., when it is proposed to start a working Branch of the National Secular Society. Local "saints" are earnestly invited to attend.

Many readers expressed a wish that the lecture on the Martyrdom of Hypatia, by Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, of Chicago, which appeared in our columns lately, might be available in a separate and permanent form. We have had it neatly reprinted as a pamphlet, and have placed upon it the low price of one penny, in order to obtain for it the widest possible circulation. We look upon it simply as a piece of propaganda.

Messrs. Wyman & Sons, as our readers will have seen from an answer to a correspondent lately, have been boycotting the *Freethinker* lately; and if they persist in this folly we hope Freethinkers will refuse to deal with them. Where they place their orders for this journal they should place their orders for other literature too. Judicious and steady pressure in this direction would probably be more efficacious than appeals to mere justice and fair play.

This week's *John Bull* (Mr. Bottomley's paper) contains an article, written by special invitation, from the pen of the editor of the *Freethinker* on "Church, Chapel, and Child: the Secular View." Our readers should try to place this article in the hands of as many of their friends and acquaintances as possible. There are people, of course, who might read it in a neutral paper like *John Bull* who could not be induced to look at it in the *Freethinker*.

### Cell or Sell.

"To be, or not to be; that is the question";  
Ever presenting itself for man's digestion:  
"To be," he has to start life as a cell;  
When "not to be"—life ended, ill or well—  
A sell is what he meets with—one not telling,  
But a mere matter of word-spelling.  
Be there such places, who can tell,  
As select Heaven, cellar-less Hell?

NUO-SPEL-IN.

### Was the World Designed for Man?

"The scheme of Nature, regarded in its whole extent, cannot have had for its sole or even principle object the good of human or other sentient beings."—J. S. MILL, *Three Essays on Religion* (1904), p. 33.

"An examination of the actual facts at once destroys in the most merciless manner all belief in a preordained harmony of the inner and external world."—HELMHOLTZ, *Popular Lectures* (1873), p. 399.

"How can I adequately express my contempt for the assertion that all things occur for the best, for a wise and beneficent end, and are ordered by a humane intelligence! It is the most utter falsehood, and a crime against the human race."—RICHARD JEFFRIES, *The Story of My Heart*, p. 134.

IF the question forming the title of this article were put to the casual passers-by in the street, probably the great majority of those who understood the question and condescended to answer it would reply in the affirmative. They have been brought up to believe it from childhood, and it has become a habit of thought with them. If you were to argue the point they would become either very angry or very contemptuous.

Fifty years ago the majority of our scientists and philosophers would have given the same answer to the question. Even great men like Sir John Herschel, Sir David Brewster, Whewell, Owen, Oersted, and Chalmers supported the view that the fitness of means to ends sometimes found in nature proved the existence of a designer. Charles Darwin gave the death-blow to this superstition. Helmholtz was one of the first to recognise and point out this important result. He says: "Darwin's theory contains an essentially new creative thought. It shows how adaptability of structure in organisms can result from a blind rule—a law of nature without any intervention of intelligence."\* Where the theologian sees design in nature the scientist sees only adaptation. As Professor Romanes put it, "For all such cases of apparent design consist only in the adaptation which is shown by organisms to their environment."†

Besides Helmholtz and Romanes, we may mention Professors Huxley, Tyndall, Clifford, Bain, and Ray Lankester, who, with Herbert Spencer, Letourneau, Vogt, Lange, Cope, and Topinard, have definitely declared against the design argument.

To-day the position is reversed; the fingers of one hand would more than suffice to count those among our more prominent scientists and philosophers who we could imagine as defending the question. It is very doubtful whether Lord Kelvin, Sir Oliver Lodge, and Dr. Wallace, who countenance religion—of an amorphous kind—would defend the design argument without many and large qualifications. At any rate, they are not rushing into print on the matter; and if they refrain it is not from any want of urging from the religious press and pulpit, which beslayers them with adulation in return for any crumb of patronage they let fall by the way.‡

When the Atheist points to the imperfections in nature, in reply to the design argument, he is generally denounced as a gloomy pessimist. But the Atheist is not necessarily a pessimist. There must be a balance of good conditions over bad, or the human race could not exist at all. But we expect more than a mere balance of good over bad from an almighty and benevolent Deity. We expect nothing short of perfection from such a being.

\* *Popular Lectures on Scientific Subjects*, p. 385.

† *Organic Evidences of Evolution*, p. 78.

‡ It would be a matter for curious speculation as to whether, if the three philosophers each wrote a book containing their religious beliefs, the divergence would be greater between themselves, popular Christianity, or Atheism. We suspect that the only point upon which they are agreed is their opposition to Atheism. For instance, what would Lord Kelvin and Dr. Wallace say to Sir Oliver's dictum that "God undoubtedly has a sense of humor"; and what would Dr. Wallace and Sir Oliver say to Lord Kelvin's statement that life is not evolved, but is the result of "Creative Power"? And what would Sir Oliver and Lord Kelvin say to Dr. Wallace's strange aberration as to the earth being the centre of the universe?

Moreover, it does not become Christians to complain of pessimism; Christianity—with regard to this world and this life—is a thoroughly pessimistic religion. The fundamental dogma of Christianity, the base supporting that colossal pyramid of error and superstition, is the doctrine of the Fall; that through the sin of Adam the world lay under a curse. Jesus Christ himself taught that the prince or ruler of this world was the Devil. St. Paul declared "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. viii. 22). All the great distinctively Christian works, like the *Imitation of Christ*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Serious Call*, *The Saints' Rest*, the hymns of Wesley, Watts, and Cowper, the writings of Luther and Calvin, all breathe a pessimistic view of life; all of them teach that the world is a place of "exile," to be hated and despised; that we should live here as "strangers and pilgrims," in daily expectation of the second coming of Christ, when the world and all its works would be utterly destroyed. The great Cardinal Newman declared, in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, that the evil, pain, and wickedness in the world were so great that nothing more was needed to prove that the world lay under a curse through the sin of Adam.

We cannot imagine Luther, Bunyan, or Wesley writing works praising the beneficence and benevolence displayed in nature. How could they, when they believed that nature lay under a curse? Schopenhauer, the great pessimist, who regarded Christianity as a monstrous fable, nevertheless considered that it contained a kernel of truth in its hatred and renunciation of the world. He classed it with Brahmanism and Buddhism as teaching the vanity and emptiness of this life. "The New Testament," he says, "must be in some way traceable to an Indian source," because of its ineradicable asceticism and pessimism. The fact is that the design argument is not a legitimate Christian argument at all; it was forged by the Deists, and has been adopted by Christians, who either failed to see the contradiction involved or did not believe in the doctrine of the Fall. To-day most Christians have got so far away from Christianity that they can see no contradiction at all.

Does the world give any indication of having been designed for man's benefit? We may at once concede that the arrangement of things might have been much worse than they are; but in that case, as Professor Garrison remarked, "we should not have existed at all. In the case of our moon a worse arrangement is actually seen, and, as a consequence, life is believed to be absent from that body."† It is vain, says Hume, to insist upon the adjustment of life on the earth. "I would fain know how an animal could subsist unless its parts were so adjusted? Do we not find that it immediately perishes whenever this adjustment ceases, and that its matter, corrupting, tries some new form."‡ The living forms we see on the earth to-day are the survivors from the struggle for existence; they are here, not because the earth was designed for them, but because they are better adapted to their environment than those which have been crushed out in the struggle.

"A certain degree of adaptation is necessary to the existence of a form; therefore, for forms to exist at all, they must be to a certain extent adapted. If those forms that now exist had not existed, others would have existed. These, like the present ones, would also have been adapted. They would have stood the same chance to be higher as to be lower forms. We have as much reason to wonder that we do not see higher forms as that we see forms as high as those actually existing. Were men not sufficiently adapted to their surroundings, they would not exist to contemplate the want of adaptation. If animals and plants were not similarly adapted, they would likewise be wanting. Therefore, instead of wondering at the degree of adaptation displayed, the only true object of wonder would be the existence of

wholly unadapted forms. But these are never seen, because they cannot exist."\*

That is a complete answer to the Design argument. Life on the earth must be to a certain extent adapted to its surroundings, or it could not exist at all; but the adaptation is by no means perfect and most certainly could not have been designed by an all-good and all-wise Creator. To begin with, three parts of the surface of the earth consists of water. An intelligent fish—if such existed—would argue from this that the world was designed for the benefit of fishes. Moreover, the human body is heavier than water and immediately sinks to the bottom when immersed in it, unless sustained by the muscular action called swimming; an art which has to be separately acquired by each individual, as it does not come naturally to man, as it does to nearly all land animals. The horse, the dog, and the cat are superior to man in this respect, being able to swim naturally without training. Even when man has acquired the art by much painful effort, he cannot support himself in the water for long without extraneous help.

Of the remaining solid portion of the earth's surface, much of it is uninhabitable, like the Polar regions, Sandy deserts, of which the great Sahara is an example. The salt plains of America and Cashgar. The rocky deserts of Arabia, Labrador, Patagonia and Atacama. The Never-never land of Australia, and the immense barren plains or Steppes of Central Asia and south east Europe. Other parts, like the West Coast of Africa, are so unhealthy as to be uninhabitable by any but low races.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

## Angels.

(CONCERNING WOMEN.)

SHORTLY after the creation a fall of angels occurred. The creator had commanded them to watch over inanimate nature; but, instead of minding their business, they and their ringleader, "the Angel of Matter," occupied themselves in admiring the beauties of animate nature, viz., fair women.

Such a fanciful and slighty visitation of course, is ridiculous, and persons of the mustard-grain faith smile when declaring such a story untrue, because it is only a fable.

For once, Christians are right. The "fair women" story is antique imagination known as the "Athenian Legend," and the following quotation is from it:—

"The angels of God beheld the daughters of men that they were fair, and chose themselves brides from among them."

When Bibliolaters see those words, which now form part of Genesis vi., they do not smile but assume sanctimonious airs and declare, "that is inspired truth"; and they believe it because it is in their Bible.

Such is a sample of their inconsistency. They are void of respect even for their "Blessed Lord," who, if reported correctly, denied angelic connubial performances (Matthew xxii. 30) where it states that angels are incapable of affectionate embraces, and thereby contradicts the Genesis account.

This is one instance from many in which whole schools of priests reject their "Master's" teaching, when it pays them, and substitute a counterfeit because it suits them. In the case under consideration, Paul, after annihilation in Matthew, resuscitates Genesis vi., and the old legend flourishes once again. Thus holy clerks prefer a "woman-hater," and taking their cue from him, point to 1 Corinthians xi. 10, as their authority when impudently dictating to women regarding their dress. "Woman," whines the man of God, "you sin when the hair of your head is exposed, because of the angels." A prohibition said to be needful because of the suscepti-

\* *Religion and Other Essays* (1899), p. 115.

† *The Absence of Design in Nature*, p. 15.

‡ *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, p. 73; Scott's edition.

\* Lester Ward, *Dynamic Sociology*, vol. ii., p. 8. A valuable work, to which I acknowledge my indebtedness.

bility of the divine messengers' tender emotions; for this same reason, perhaps, bald-headed priests wear a biretta.

Besides pointing out the grossly absurd position in which Christianity flounders, its adherents are shown the cause also. This Greek legend found favor with, and was consequently boomed by the "Christian Fathers," especially Justin Martyr, who repeatedly referred to it in his *Apologies for Christianity* and in his *Dialogue with Trypho*. Both of these works, be it remembered, exercised powerful influence over the early church, which adopted the legend, and henceforth it became "inspired truth," gradually sprouting an abundant crop of false and foolish doctrines taught by the Church to-day.

The clergy know all this, and for them to persistently teach fable as fact is dishonesty. They cannot plead ignorance, for theirs is the business of omniscience. Not the slightest ill-will is intended when introducing reverend gentlemen to "Morton's" fork—either prong is well pointed.

There we must leave them and direct our attention to the women, many of whom, unfortunately, are so far led by superstition—a belief in which is still a mark of religious piety. Fortunately, however, some women have their thoughts free. These are neither dragged by force of prejudice—a considerable obstacle to freethought progress—nor enthralled by a domineering ecclesiasticism.

To such women is given a noble opportunity: to warn their less fortunate sisters against pernicious Bible teaching, and above all, to save children from the atmosphere of the Church. And to those who help to eradicate superstitious credulity, honor is due among the world's benefactors.

ICHABOD.

## Is Corporal Punishment Degrading?—I.

By R. G. INGERSOLL.

THE Dean of St. Paul's protests against the kindness of parents, guardians and teachers towards children, wards and pupils. He believes in the gospel of ferrule and whips, and has perfect faith in the efficacy of flogging in homes and schools. He longs for the return of the good old days when fathers were severe and children affectionate and obedient.

In America, for many years, even wife-beating has been somewhat unpopular, and the flogging of children has been considered cruel and unmanly. Wives with bruised and swollen faces, and children with lacerated backs, have excited pity for themselves rather than admiration for savage husbands and brutal fathers. It is also true that the Church has far less power here than in England, and it may be that those who wander from the orthodox fold grow merciful and respect the rights even of the weakest.

But whatever the cause may be, the fact is that we, citizens of the republic, feel that certain domestic brutalities are the children of monarchies and despotisms; that they were produced by superstition, by ignorance, and that they are not in accord with the free and superb spirit that founded and preserves the Great Republic.

Of late years, confidence in the power of kindness has greatly increased, and there is a widespread suspicion that cruelty and violence are not the instrumentalities of civilisation.

Physicians no longer regard corporal punishment as a sure cure even for insanity—and it is generally admitted that the lash irritates rather than soothes the victim of melancholia.

Civilised men now insist that criminals cannot always be reformed even by the most ingenious instruments of torture. It is known that some

convicts repay the smallest acts of kindness with the sincerest gratitude. Some of the best people go so far as to say that kindness is the sunshine in which the virtues grow. We know that for many ages governments tried to make men virtuous with dungeon and fagot and scaffold; that they tried to cure even disease of the mind with brandings and maimings and lashes on the naked flesh of men and women—and that kings endeavored to sow the seeds of patriotism—to plant and nurture them in the hearts of their subjects—with whip and chain.

In England, only a few years ago, there were hundreds of brave soldiers and daring sailors whose breasts were covered with honorable scars—witnesses of wounds received at Trafalgar and Balaklava—while on the backs of these same soldiers and sailors were the marks of English whips. These shameless cruelties were committed in the name of discipline, and were upheld by officers, statesmen, and clergymen. The same is true of nearly all civilised nations. These crimes have been excused for the reason that our ancestors were, at that time, in fact, barbarians—that they had no idea of justice, no comprehension of liberty, no conception of the rights of men, women, and children.

At that time the Church was, in most countries, equal to, or superior to, the State, and was a firm believer in the civilising influences of cruelty and torture.

According to the creeds of that day, God intended to torture the wicked forever, and the Church, according to its power, did all that it could in the same direction. Learning their rights and duties from priests, fathers not only beat their children, but their wives. In those days most homes were penitentiaries, in which wives and children were the convicts and of which husbands and fathers were the wardens and turnkeys. The king imitated his supposed God, and imprisoned, flogged, branded, beheaded, and burned his enemies, and the husbands and fathers imitated the king, and guardians and teachers imitated them.

Yet in spite of all the beatings and burnings, the whippings and hangings, the world was not reformed. Crimes increased, the cheeks of wives were furrowed with tears, the faces of children white with fear—fear of their own fathers; pity was almost driven from the heart of man, and found refuge, for the most part, in the breasts of women, children, and dogs.

In those days, misfortunes were punished as crimes. Honest debtors were locked in loathsome dungeons and trivial offences were punished with death. Worse than all that, thousands of men and women were destroyed, not because they were vicious, but because they were virtuous, honest, and noble. Extremes beget obstructions. The victims at last became too numerous, and the result did not seem to justify the means. The good, the few protested against the savagery of kings and fathers.

Nothing seems clearer to me than that the world has been gradually growing better for many years. Men have a clearer conception of rights and obligations—a higher philosophy—a far nobler ideal. Even kings admit that they should have some regard for the well-being of their subjects. Nations and individuals are slowly outgrowing the savagery of revenge, the desire to kill, and it is generally admitted that criminals should neither be imprisoned nor tortured for the gratification of the public. At last we are beginning to know that revenge is a mistake—that cruelty—not only hardens the victim, but makes a criminal of him who inflicts it—and that mercy guided by intelligence is the highest form of justice.

The tendency of the world is towards kindness. The religious creeds are being changed or questioned because they shock the heart of the present. All civilised churches—all humane Christians have given up the dogma of eternal pain. This infamous doctrine has for many centuries polluted the imagination and hardened the heart. This coiled viper no longer inhabits the breasts of a civilised man.

\* This unfinished and unrevised article was found among Col. Ingersoll's papers, and is here reproduced without change. It is a reply to the Dean of St. Paul's contribution to the *North American Review* for December, 1891, entitled "Is Corporal Punishment Degrading?"

In all civilized countries slavery has been abolished, the honest debtor released and all are allowed the liberty of speech.

Long ago flogging was abolished in our Army and Navy, and all cruel and unusual punishments prohibited by law. In many parts of the republic the whip has been banished from the public schools—the flogger of children is held in abhorrence and the wife-beater is regarded as a cowardly criminal. The gospel of kindness is not only preached, but practised. Such has been the result of this advance of civilisation—of this growth of kindness—of this bursting into blossom of the flower called pity, in the heart—that we treat our horses (thanks to Henry Bergh) better than our ancestors did their slaves, their servants, or their tenants. The gentlemen of to-day show more affection for their dogs than most of the kings of England exhibited towards their wives. The great tide is towards mercy—the savage creeds are being changed—heartless laws have been repealed—shackles have been broken—torture abolished, and the keepers of prisons are no longer allowed to bruise and scar the flesh of convicts. The insane are treated with kindness—asylums are in the midst of beautiful grounds, the rooms are filled with flowers, and the wandering mind is called back by the golden voice of music.

In the midst of these tendencies—of these accomplishments—in the general harmony between the minds of men, acting together, to the end that the world may be governed by kindness through education and the blessed agencies of reformation and prevention, the Dean of St. Paul's raises his voice in favor of the methods and brutalities of the past.

(To be continued.)

### Death of Dr. E. B. Foote.

A COPY of the *Larchmonter* has been forwarded to us, containing the report of the death of Dr. Edward Bliss Foote, which occurred early in the morning on October 5, at his home on Prospect-avenue. Dr. Foote was born at Collamer, then a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, on June 29, 1829. He began life as a newspaper man, but soon followed his strong inclination towards the medical profession, and became widely known as a popular medical author and specialist. His *Plain Home Talk* had an immense sale in America, and a wide circulation in Great Britain. Dr. Foote was a faithful friend of the Freethought cause in America. His purse was always open for its necessities, and his moral support was invaluable in times of adversity and trial. He had the sense and courage to recognise that great principles should be fought for when they are attacked, without regard to the personal merits or demerits of those who were struck at by their assailants. Dr. Foote's head and heart were both sound. He was wise and benevolent. We made his acquaintance during our visit to America in 1896, and the acquaintance ripened into a friendship. On the whole, we have always thought of Dr. Foote as being, after Colonel Ingersoll, the finest and most lovable personality we had the pleasure of meeting on that continent. We exchanged letters with him from time to time, and he was a regular reader of the *Freethinker*, which he much admired. His name will ever be sweet and fragrant in our memory. And from what we know of him we must believe that his loss will be felt by hundreds in his own country, while thousands will be aware that a strong pillar of Freethought has fallen. Fortunately, two sons are left to carry on the family traditions of liberalism:—Dr. H. T. Foote, of New Rochelle—a place consecrated by memories of Thomas Paine—and Dr. E. B. Foote, Junior. The latter is well-known to Freethinkers throughout America as a stalwart champion of mental liberty. May he long live to sustain the noble name he inherits.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Correspondence.

### PHYSICAL MORALITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—I notice that a correspondent refers to Mr. Cohen's recent remarks on morality, and you reply that you felt sure, that if Mr. Cohen elaborated the passage on personal and social morality referred to, your correspondent would find himself in agreement with Mr. Cohen. Doubtless reference is made to Mr. Cohen's remarks in the *Freethinker* of September 23. Mr. Cohen is always interesting, but it struck me, on reading his remarks on morality, that he overlooked for the moment, the importance of personal or physical morality. As the point is of some importance, perhaps one or two observations might be of interest. Mr. Cohen wrote: "Place a man upon a desert island and his morality disappears, or lingers only as a memory." In one sense, that may be true; but as the man will probably continue to live, it would be to his advantage to recognise the importance of physical morality. He might also desire to live on good terms with the brute creation. In regard to the former, he might easily eat or drink too much, and his personal safety might depend on his considerate treatment of the lower animals. In civilised life we hardly pay sufficient attention to physical sin. It is undesirable to shout too much about the weaknesses of humanity, but we can be too squeamish. A little more discreet speaking on certain subjects might prevent much unnecessary suffering. Medical men might do more than they have done in this direction. But medical men are curious people. Many of them seem almost as superstitious as the clergy. At any rate, they are very orthodox. The other day, at the re-opening of one of the medical schools, a bishop was allowed to speak about miracles recorded in the Bible, as if they had occurred. This greatly pleased one of the Church organs. Physiology has nothing to do with theology, and the sooner medical men recognise this fact the better. In this connection, it is worth remembering that Huxley was, at one time, a medical man, and his knowledge of anatomy was almost unrivalled; so that medical men might very well take him as their guide.

J. A. REID.

### Do Sermons Grip?

(A "Silly Season" correspondence has recently been going on in the *Daily Mail* on this question.)

Do sermons grip?

The priests with the lies that they lip

Send off their flocks

To sleep, like a cradle that rocks

A babe to sleep;

Their slumber is peaceful and deep.

The drones of God

Cause numerous noddles to nod.

Do sermons grip?

They drop, like the waters that drip

From off ducks' backs,

As soon as the parsons make tracks,

From people's minds;

They might as well talk to the winds.

Do sermons grip?

They die like the flame from a "dig"

Or turned-off gas;

They send folks to sleep, or they pass

In at one ear

And out of the other, that's clear.

Do sermons grip?

To stop us from taking a trip

On Sabbath days,

To alter our "infidel" ways

Of shunning church?

Some priests when they get on their perch

Now cut them short,

Allow, so the papers report,

Ten minutes—and

It's more than a fellow can stand.

Do sermons grip?

No, no, for they give us the pip!

ESS JAY BEE.

Mankind at large always resemble frivolous children: they are impatient of thought, and wish to be amused.—Emerson.

**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, *Conversazione*.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES HUMANITARIAN SOCIETY (Fife Hall, Fife-road): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "Christianity and Woman."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate): 7.30, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, a Lecture.

**OUTDOOR.**

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Brockwell Park, 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, "Christian Theism v. Haeckel's Monism."

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

**COUNTRY.**

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Joseph McCabe, 12 noon, "The Glasgow Observer on Haeckelism"; 6.30, "The Story of World-Development.—I. The End of the World." With limelight illustrations.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Wednesday, Oct. 31, at 8, Alex. Hope, "George Eliot."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): 7, W. H. Quilliam, "Buddhism in Christianity."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): Joseph Symes, 3, "The Christian God Neither Probable Nor Possible"; 6.30, "A Few Interesting Events in My Thirty Years' Platform Life."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Nov. 1, at 8, T. H. Elstob, "Simple Bible Teaching."

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Room, Town Hall): 6.30, Owen Hughes, "Some Objections to Christianity."

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Mr. G. W. FOOTE,

Entitled:

“Church, Chapel, and Child.”

THE SECULARIST'S VIEW OF

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