

# THE Freethinker

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*Your very citadel is but a mud fort, fenced about with a few rotten bamboos; it is taken, and in its very midst we have planted the flag of truth, and it flies there and has not been touched.*—CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

## Talks With the Dead.—II.

MR. LOBB believed in a future life for fifty years before he became a Spiritualist, but during that period he walked by faith, whereas he now walks by sight—or as much as he can see in “semi-darkness.” “I have added,” he says, “to my faith knowledge.” Yes, but what is knowledge to him at first-hand is only hearsay to other people at second-hand. Nor does it appear, after all, that he has any such knowledge as he believes he possesses. We have already said that while he makes plenty of statements he never furnishes any evidence. We have only his word, therefore, to trust to; and we must judge of the value of that, as far as possible, from its internal character.

Let us take the following extract from his Preface:—

“Upwards of seven hundred of the so-called dead have appeared at circles where I have sat during the past three years.

I have looked into their faces, received messages from their spirit-lips, been amazed at their intimate knowledge of my early life, have felt the touch of their celestial hands.”

Now it must be obvious to anyone who will take the trouble to think for a minute that there is only one of these points on which Mr. Lobb can be checked. Whether he looked into the faces of the so-called dead, or felt the touch of the celestial hands, we cannot possibly tell. Even if he is not deceiving us, he may be deceived himself. But when he says that he has received messages from spirit-lips, and calls some of them by very distinguished names, and actually prints their messages so that we may read them as he heard them—we are in a position to form an opinion for ourselves.

All sorts and conditions of men (and women) have spoken to Mr. Lobb from what he calls “the great beyond.” Some of them are nobodies. Others are of startling eminence. Mr. Lobb tells us what Spurgeon said to him, he tells us what Harriet Martineau said, he tells us what Charles Dickens said, he tells us what John Stuart Mill said, he tells us what Carlyle said, he tells us what John Dryden said, he tells us what Richard Wagner said—and then, attempting the very highest flight, he tells us what Shakespeare said.

All those dead persons left writings behind them; and the question arises, Is what they are reported to have said to Mr. Lobb anything like what they said while they were living in the flesh? Upon this question we may form a definite and decisive judgment.

What we have to say, first of all, upon this matter, is that all the dead people who communicate with Mr. Lobb talk exactly like each other—and they all talk exactly like Mr. Lobb.

Now it happens that Mr. Lobb is not a literary genius of the first water. His taste in composition strikes us as rather crude. He is fond of quoting

inferior poetry. Not once, but twice, in this little book, he quotes “these stirring lines” which were sung in a Drury Lane pantomime:—

“Every British heart will throb  
At the name of Mr. Lobb,  
For Lobb is on the job  
Down there.”

These “stirring lines” did not make our heart throb, but they nearly broke our ears.

Mr. Lobb's prose style is not graceful, refined, or accurate. To speak plainly, it is common-garden journalese, with an added flavor from the Evangelical pulpit. Redundancy of words is one of the most besetting sins of that class of writers. Having said, for instance, that his Blessed Master (Jesus Christ) “came back, not as an angel, but a living, breathing human form”—as though it could be living without breathing, or breathing without living—Mr. Lobb must add that it was “substantial, palpable, tangible,”—three words, in this connection, of precisely the same meaning. We take it that he wanted to finish off the paragraph with a big mouthful, and sacrificed sense to sound. But, of course, another theory is possible; namely, that he did not appreciate the significance of the words he was using.

We will now deal with a few of Mr. Lobb's messages from distinguished “spirits.”

Harriet Martineau starts off in this fashion:—

“In the latter portion of my life on earth I accepted the theory of the non-existence of the soul, as expounded by those eminent investigators into natural causes—viz., Darwin, Huxley, Arnold, Comte, and Herbert Spencer.”

We beg to inform Mr. Lobb that Harriet Martineau could not have said this. It is merely an expression of his own ignorance. Arnold would have been amused to hear himself described as an “investigator into natural causes.” He never wrote anything specifically about the soul; neither did he begin writing on religious questions at all until 1871, when he published *St. Paul and Protestantism*. It was in 1873 that he first caused a stir by his *Literature and Dogma*. Harriet Martineau, who was nearly twenty years older than Arnold, was then nearing her death. It was in her *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development*, written in conjunction with H. G. Atkinson, that she expressed herself as a Materialist; and that book was published in 1851, when Arnold was just beginning to be known as a promising young poet. Spencer's great philosophical works were then unwritten; Darwin had not begun his first great scientific work, the *Origin of Species*, which appeared in 1859; and Huxley was an unknown young man of twenty-six. Harriet Martineau was certainly indebted to Comte. But in every other respect what Mr. Lobb makes her say is the veriest absurdity.

So much for that message from the spirit-world. We need not trouble about the rest of it—which is sheer twaddle.

The message of John Stuart Mill is written in Mr. Lobb's most gushing style; and readers of that great thinker (we mean Mill, not Lobb) will know how the gushing style would have nauseated him—before he died and fell into the hands of the “mediums.”

Carlyle's message may be dismissed very summarily. He begins it in this way: “The world expects a literary man to make a good appearance.” Fancy Carlyle writing in that style! How he would have roared at the idea!



With respect to Carlyle, again, Mr. Lobb shows his ignorance—or confusion. He makes the Sage of Chelsea say:—

"I was a medium and knew it not. My first work, the *History of the French Revolution*, on which I had labored, and which was destroyed by fire, as I then thought by an untoward destiny, was rewritten by the aid of spirits, and was the means that first brought me *en rapport* with invisible influences, and caused me to give to the public a work of far greater power than the first one, whose loss I bemoaned."

Mr. Lobb could easily be mistaken about Carlyle's "first book," but how could Carlyle be mistaken? As a matter of fact, his "first book" was *Sartor Resartus*. And it was not the whole of the book on the French Revolution that was destroyed by fire (through an accident while the manuscript was in Mill's hands) but only a part of it; so that the "aid of spirits" in rewriting it is sheer nonsense, for the part that was rewritten could not have been discriminated from the rest of the work by any internal characteristics; and if Mill and Carlyle had both held their tongues the world would never have known of the matter—nor would Mr. Lobb, we believe, have ever received any message about it from the "great beyond."

Amongst the spirit visitors of Mr. Lobb we find the late Dan Leno. Dan not only talked but got photographed with Mr. Lobb. It is evident, however, that Mr. Lobb did not *see* Dan himself, nor *hear* him. The photographer, who was "clairaudient," told him what Dan said. We are told that Dan grasped his hand at a certain *séance*, but how did he *know* it was Dan? In the circumstances, it was impossible for him to tell *who* grasped his hand in the "semi-darkness"—which we dare say was thick enough to be sliced.

On one point in relation to Dan Leno there is something in Mr. Lobb's autobiographical introduction to this book which he must know to be—well, let us say inaccurate. He refers to Mr. Bottomley's business joke—though he does not call it so, for Mr. Lobb is always serious—of getting first the Rev. Dr. Parker, then George Jacob Holyoake, and finally Dan Leno, to edit the evening *Sun* for a brief space in three successive years. Dr. Parker and Mr. Holyoake had a week each, we believe; Dan Leno had a single day—and if we recollect aright it was the first of April. Mr. Lobb states that a million copies of the *Sun* were sold "on the day of Dan's editorship." He also speaks of Dan as filling the editorial chair on that April day. But the truth is that Dan did nothing of the kind. He merely lent his name to the performance. Dan Leno was an illiterate man. He couldn't write a letter of a dozen lines accurately. The letter of his which we once printed in the *Freethinker*, threatening us with a prosecution for libel if we did not apologise for a compliment we paid him, had to be doctored before it appeared in our columns. It would have been unkind to print the letter as Dan wrote it.

Our readers will see, then, that Mr. Lobb is misleading his own readers with respect to Dan Leno's "editorship" of the *Sun*. We say so because Mr. Lobb was engaged in the *Sun* office at the time.

We will not bore our readers with Mr. Lobb's rubbishy messages from the great John Dryden and the great Richard Wagner. All we have to say is that if Dryden and Wagner talk like that now, death is a terrible degradation. Mr. Lobb actually presents us with some new Christmas Carols, which he says he obtained from the spirit of Charles Dickens. Let anyone who knows and appreciates Dickens read but three lines of any one of Mr. Lobb's "Carols" and he will see how much the great novelist had to do with these productions.

Mr. Lobb and his "spirits" actually lay their sacrilegious hands on Shakespeare. Between them they make the Master talk several pages—and *such* pages! Shakespeare says he was a son of John Shakespeare and Annie Arden. Indeed! His mother's name was *Mary* Arden. Shakespeare says, "I was the eldest of ten," which it is pretty certain he was not. But the reason he gives for this

statement is exquisite. "John Shakespeare, my father," he says, "told me, and he knew best about it." Wonderful! Shakespeare was the *eldest* child; he must have known, therefore, how many brothers and sisters he had, without troubling his father in the matter.

Shakespeare informed Mr. Lobb that the plays acted under his name were all written while he was "spiritually controlled." One night, after a drinking bout with Drayton and Ben Jonson (note Mr. Lobb's originality!), he "stopped at the inn where it took place and filled seventy-four sheets of manuscript from 2 a.m. to 4.35." What he wrote on that occasion was the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Now that comedy is a fairly long one—quite as long as the *Merchant of Venice*. No man that ever lived could have written it, even under dictation, in two hours and thirty-five minutes. The feat is physically impossible—and Mr. Lobb ought to know it. On the whole, we incline to think that it was not Shakespeare who had been "having a social glass" before he wrote that play, but Mr. Lobb who had been doing it before he made this calculation.

"Five plays I think I wrote in all," said Shakespeare. This is very interesting. It throws quite a new light on the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy. Shakespeare further said that Byron, Coleridge, and Shelley were not in his sphere, but "there is one whom I do not think you have heard of—I mean Robert Southey; I love him." Fancy! Shakespeare unacquainted with Byron, Coleridge, and Shelley, and in love with Bob Southey! We don't know whether to laugh till we cry, or cry till we laugh. We shall want our handkerchief, in any case. But stop! We put it back again. The ghastly joke only shows Mr. Lobb's taste in poetry. That is all.

And now, dear reader, just listen to Shakespeare's concluding words to Mr. John Lobb:—

"What I have further to say than what I have already said is, that after a successful life upon earth I had a happy, joyous transition, and a welcoming reception in the spirit spheres."

Shakespeare's last play is believed to have been the *Tempest*. There was no falling off in his genius when he wrote that. All his highest qualities shine in it with richest splendor. It is like the golden evening light of a long and perfect summer day, touching everything, it falls upon with indescribable beauty. Such was Shakespeare's farewell to the world. And now, after the lapse of three hundred years, the Prospero of the matchless outburst, which anticipated the teaching of modern science in language of almost superhuman majesty, chatters very like an ape into the ears of Mr. John Lobb.

We ought to apologise to our readers for wasting their time over this rubbishy production. From one point of view we *certainly* ought to. But from another point of view we may be pardoned for showing what a thing superstition still is, and what a peril it still is in the path of human progress.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Notes on Morals—A Reply.

IN last week's *Freethinker*, Mr. J. A. Reid raises a point in connection with a recent article of mine dealing with social *versus* individual morality. The same point was also raised by a correspondent in the previous week's issue. I do not think that I disagree, ultimately, with either of these gentlemen, and they, therefore do not disagree with me. But there does seem to be a little confusion on one side or the other, or if not confusion, we have different ways of looking at the subject, and for that reason, a word or two further on the same topic may not be out of place. The sentence criticised is this: "Place a man upon a desert island and his morality disappears, or lingers only as a memory," and it was used, in the article from which it was taken, in connection with



the thesis that individual morality is derived from and dependent upon human beings living in association. I may say, at the outset, that putting it in the form criticised may not have been the most accurate form in which it might have been cast, but my excuse must be that the sentence is only a portion of three rather lengthy paragraphs, and that it was intended to call attention to an aspect of the question that is too often overlooked or undervalued. I may also add, that there is no question between us as to the existence of a morality that may be properly called individual; it is simply a question as to its nature and the conditions of its existence. Nor is there any question concerning "physical morality." That is included whenever I refer to morality in general. I do not think it is quite correct that we hardly pay enough attention to "physical sin"—although certain forms of it, through reputable authorities remaining silent, are thrown for treatment into the hands of quacks and charlatans. But, on the whole, I should be inclined to say that, thanks largely to Christian influence, the lack of emphasis has been rather in the other direction. Christian prurieny, by fixing attention on sexual vice, has had a depressing influence upon the conception of morality as concerning the whole of the mental, moral, and physical relations of an individual to his fellows.

To discuss Mr. Reid's letter adequately, two questions have to be dealt with. One is the nature of the individual, the other, the nature of morality. Now if it be true that society is nothing more than a general name for a number of individuals, as a "heap" of stones is a general name for an indefinite number of separate stones, and if all that exists in any given society, at any given moment, is all that is contained in its individual members; then, in the absence of society, while certain virtues would have no existence, there would still conceivably be a morality in the strict sense of the term. But I know of nothing to justify such a view. On the contrary, if we thoroughly abstract man from society—a process so impossible in fact that we can only do it in thought—we shall find the known individual vanishing under our analysis. We find ourselves discarding the language that has been hammered out for him by social intercourse, the thoughts that have been elaborated, and the habits that have been acquired by the same means. His culture, his learning, the form of his clothing, to say nothing of other things, are all, in the proper sense of the word, social products. He could have acquired none of these in the absence of a social medium, and most of them deteriorate even now in such cases where, by some accident or other, the individual is removed from its influence.

It is fallacious, therefore, to imagine that we can separate the individual from his fellows as we can remove one brick from another, and that he will yet remain the same. Separated from society, man ceases to be an individual and becomes a mere object. Society, we may be told, is a pure abstraction, and does not exist apart from his fellows. This is true enough; but the individual apart from his fellows is no less of an abstraction. Either will cease to exist without the other, for the reason that both of them can only exist in relation to each other. We are all familiar with the biologic truth that it is the species that is of importance, and that the individual is only important as it subserves the interest of the whole of which it is a part. The statement that the individual is what he is as the result of all past and present social aggregation, is a psychological expression of the same truth.

What is the nature of morality? It will clearly not do to use this as synonymous with all those actions that preserve life, since there are a number of actions which serve this end, and which no one would dream of calling moral or immoral. The action of the lungs or of the heart, for instance, promote life; but no one, I think, has ever called either one or the other moral. One element all actions must contain if they are to become the subject of ethical judgment—they must be con-

sciously performed in view of some particular end. It will not do for the action to be consciously performed only, for there are a number of such actions that are neither moral nor immoral. I consciously act when I fold a newspaper for reading; but no one would say that *how* I fold it has any ethical significance. The action must have a particular end in view. What is that end? Well, as all acts involve adjustment, the question really is, "What adjustment is it that moral actions involve?" What the adjustment is may be seen plainly enough in such things as truth, justice, honesty, and the like, since their existence is a simple impossibility except as between human beings. It is not, perhaps, quite so obvious with certain other things, although I think the same will hold good right through. And what I think holds true of all ethical actions is that their ethical quality is derived from their relation to a social medium; and this social medium I take to be established wherever human beings are living together, quite irrespective of their number or the form of organisation.

Are there, then, no personal virtues whatever? may be asked. To which I reply, certainly; but these again refer us back to the same thing. Drunkenness, with various other forms of vice, are primarily personal matters; but they owe their real importance to the fact that a man's functions as parent, husband, or citizen, are vitiated thereby. And in society, all ethical actions are such because they improve or impair the relations between an individual and the society to which he belongs. By lowering one's mental or physical tone one becomes less able to discharge one's duties to all around, and for this reason society is warranted in passing judgment on all such conduct. But, presuming that one's actions do not impair one's fitness, nor serve to lessen the serviceability of others, I fail to see that such actions are of any more moral significance than sitting on a fence or flying a kite.

But there are still left, I shall be told, duties to one's self. But this self, if I am right in what I have said above, is a sheer abstraction. Separate man from his fellows and we have a mere animal object and not a civilised individual. Duties to one's self exist in fact and in feeling because of the insistent pressure of society upon the individual during thousands of generations of evolution. We feel that we have a duty to ourselves apart from social pressure, and the feeling is genuine enough, but it is a feeling with reference to a fact outside ourselves—or, to put it in another way—within our larger selves, which is cunningly disguised by nature to secure its efficacy. This, I think, also answers the question of physical morality as raised by Mr. Reid. Without this the existence of the family, upon which so much of the development of the race depends, would have been far more precarious, if not impossible. But, as usual, nature disguises its purpose, covers up its tracks with the carefulness of one of Fennimore Cooper's Red Indians. The primary feelings are covered by secondary and tertiary ones, so that the primitive sexual impulse is masked by the noblest and most ideal aspects of family life. And in the same way the feeling of personal physical morality serves its disguised purpose as one of the conditions of human development.

I have gone, apparently, a long way round to answer Mr. Reid's criticism, but I think I have made it plain how I regard the man upon a desert island. It is quite true that a man in such a position would still retain all the feelings associated with the current morality, for the simple reason that his nature has been fashioned by it. But that under such conditions he could be called moral or immoral I quite fail to see. Mr. Reid says, he will continue to live and, therefore, physical morality is of importance. Important to him in view of this desire, I grant, but if he shortens his life by his conduct, I quite fail to see why he should be called immoral. He has relations with none, he has duties towards none, he has responsibilities towards none. And in the absence of all these what room is there for morality? I quite



fail to see that the mere act of an individual living, divorced from all other contingencies, is enough to create a morality. He might, we are told, wish to enter into friendly relations with the lower animals. Quite so, but under the conditions given in my article, a man divested of all that social intercourse gives him would become *ipso facto* one of the animals themselves, and his setting up relations with them would again establish a morality in accordance with the new conditions. And my whole point was, it will be remembered, that morality is essentially a matter of relation. Abolish all relations and the condition of morality disappears. Either, it seems to me, we must believe this, or we are thrown back upon a more or less modified supernaturalism.

C. COHEN.

### Hymns.

IN that excellent book, *The Religion of all Good Men*, by H. W. Garrod, there is a suggestive essay on "Hymns." Mr. Garrod does not think highly of hymns as literature. "There is always silliness and sentimentality in the world," he says, and "to conquer a weak and womanish human nature, to captivate silliness and sentimentality, is not to achieve a real success in literature." Above everything else, literature must be characterised by power; and to "captivate silliness and sentimentality does not evidence real power." Therefore, hymns being, as a rule, appeals to "silliness and sentimentality," cannot take high rank as literature. They very seldom rise to poetry. Indeed, many of them descend to doggerel. One reason for this, doubtless, is that hymn writers are not as a rule poets. They lack imagination. They take everything too literally. They do not know the meaning because they have never experienced the power of exalted emotion. This is why so many hymns are marred by a species of sickly and sickening sentimentalism. They are "so sweetly mawkish and so smoothly dull."

What is poetry? No exact definition of it is perhaps possible. Byron says that "so far are principles of poetry from being invariable that they never were nor ever will be settled." But while this is true, we must not forget that poetry is an energetic expression of imaginative feeling. This applies to Virgil as well as to Homer, to Sir Walter Scott no less than to Dryden. Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton and Goethe, stand out clearly as front rank poets, and when we come into sympathetic touch with them we find that they are at once consummate artists and perfect exponents of poetic feeling. But whatever definition of poetry be accepted, the fact remains that the poet's function is to express emotion imaginatively, to portray in rhythmic language the emotional contents of the human mind. The poet has his home in the realm of imagination. He gives reality to the unreal and bodies forth the invisible and intangible. We find such poets in the Old Testament, but not in the New; in Judaism but not in Christianity. We would not be very wide of the mark were we to affirm that *Christianity is the least poetic of all religions*, Macaulay notwithstanding. In the New Testament, we are face to face with a hard, stern literalness. Neither fancy nor imagination is allowed any play whatever in it. John was a mystic philosopher, while Peter and Paul were severe dogmatists. Now, practically all hymn writers have been, and are, fervent believers in the objective reality of supernaturalism. To them, God exists as a person, and all the deeds ascribed to him have actually been performed by him. Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a life of miraculous displays, died a death of sacrifice to God for human sin, and on the third day rose triumphant from the tomb. To them, I repeat, the Christ of theology is a historical character; even his resurrection and continued life in the heavenly sphere being regarded as literal facts. A mere peep into any hymnary will show how true this is.

Mr. Garrod, though by no means orthodox, is yet a believer in religion. As a believer in religion he says: "That the spirit of Religion and the spirit of Poetry are in any way antagonistic, no serious man will maintain." But to the bulk of hymn writers the spirit of religion is an unknown quantity. At any rate, the most popular hymns are grossly materialistic. They are theological treatises in rhyme. As Mr. Garrod says, "the hymn, as we understand it, is a product of Christianity," and Christianity is distinctly a dogmatic system. Homer and Pindar are said to have written hymns; but Mr. Garrod admits that "they did not write hymns in the sense in which we employ the word." Then to the question, "Why are there so few hymns which are really good, so few which can truly be called literature?" we answer, "Because so few composers of hymns have transcended the letter of religion. Take Faber and Keble, and you will see that primarily they are theologians, and that most of their hymns are theological statements. Or take the collection known as *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, and you will readily acknowledge that it contains scarcely one poem. There may be many poetic lines, or a whole verse may be genuine poetry; but almost every hymn is vitiated by theological dogmatism. "It is possible," says Mr. Garrod, "to turn religion into poetry;" but hymn writers have rarely accomplished such a task. As a rule, indeed, hymn writers have been only second or third-rate theologians even.

Mr. Garrod says: "It is certain that the Christian religion contains a good deal that is poetry, whether latent or patent. I will not upon this point appeal to any consensus of religious men. I will appeal simply to the fact that some hymns are good: that is, some things in Christianity we can turn into poetry." We beg to differ on the ground that Christianity turned into poetry would no longer be Christianity, and also on the ground that what is peculiar to Christianity is not in the least degree poetical. Mr. Garrod himself admits that the doctrine of the Trinity, for example, "is not in itself a dogma out of which it is possible to draw very much poetry." But he contends that "the dogma of the Resurrection is full of poetry." "Its poetic possibilities," he adds, "seem to me quite as great as those of even the most beautiful of the Greek legends, the beauty of which no one calls in question." Here, however, Mr. Garrod is almost disingenuous. He admits that "we have few good Easter hymns, few which draw out of their theme one hundredth part of the emotion in it." But he seems to forget that the Easter hymns are so bad because they treat the Resurrection as a hard dogma, as a literal fact, and not as poetry. He points to Goethe and Clough as poets who have done something like poetic justice to the Resurrection. These are his own words:—

"Compare with any of them [Easter hymns] the scene in *Parus* (when the jangled bells fell upon his ears in the moment of his supreme despair and proclaimed the risen Christ to a heart that believed and yet did not believe), or the scene that follows it—the Easter festivities of the common folk who 'feel a kind of resurrection in themselves.' Or compare with any of them Clough's 'Easter Day in Naples.' The ordinary Easter hymn misses—does not attempt to express, or bungles the expression of—what Clough and Goethe see, and present, as vital and cardinal."

That passage is perfectly true; but it should be borne in mind that neither Goethe nor Clough believed in the Resurrection as a Christian doctrine. They treated the subject as they would have done any of the beautiful Greek legends. Everybody remembers Clough's lines—

"This is the one sad Gospel that is true—  
Christ is not risen!  
Save in an after Gospel and late Creed,  
He is not risen indeed,—  
Christ is not risen!"

When in the second part of the poem he exclaims—  
"Though He be dead, He is not dead,"  
we know that he is treating the alleged event poetically.



Mr. Garrod regards the hymn as, "in the main, a Teutonic creation." He says:—

"I do not believe that the Teuton is the best Christian in the world. But I think him a fine fellow; and just because I do not think him the best Christian in the world, I think him the best man among men who call themselves Christians.....The Teuton is an official Christian. He pays to Christ the service of his lips but not that of his life.....He mistakes his mildly Christianised Teutonism for Teutonic Christianity. He is not aware how much what he calls the transition from Teutonism to Christianity was merely an exchange of name. Christianity is the official designation of his religion: but his creed consists really in the best of Teutonism *plus* so much of the religion of Christ as does not conflict with that."

How many Christians are there who can subscribe to that? And here is the bearing of it all on the subject of hymns:—

"No poetry is so uneven as that of the hymns. The good in these strangely uneven and heterogeneous compositions comes in when the genuine Teuton breaks through, as he again and again does, his official creed and attains to genuine self-expression. When either for the moment the Teuton brushes the Christian rudely aside, or they find themselves upon ground where they ultimately agree—on some common meeting-place of all human feelings and desires—then we get a good hymn or a piece of one."

No condemnation of hymns could be more severe. When they are true they are not Christian, and when they are distinctively Christian they are not true. As at least three-fourths of them *are* distinctively Christian throughout, and as almost every one of them contains some positive Christian elements, it is safe to condemn them all, and to characterise the use of them as decidedly injurious in its effect upon character. Many of them are wedded to thoroughly good tunes, which greatly enhances their mischievousness. Because of their conjunction with music, because of their nauseous emotionalism and because so many of them "are soiled with nastiness concerning the blood of Jesus" and other things, hymns do infinitely more harm than all other forms of religious literature put together.

J. T. LLOYD.

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

(Continued from p. 678.)

NOT content with what he had so far done, the man Ripper, who must have been on the watch, actually chased my wife one day when she was out with the baby in her arms, chased her right up to the door. This series of outrages, I need not say, roused me to white heat; and I published a full account of it in my *Liberator*. The story was about as hot as I could make it, though I had no need to embellish it. When Ripper and his friends read the article they gnashed their teeth with rage, and he resolved to prosecute me for libel. He did so. I attended the police court, reserved my defence, and was committed for trial. The Attorney General, however, declined to proceed with the case; and Ripper, led and misled by the lawyer who had, as before related, sold us in the Hall case, determined to call for a Grand Jury and make the case a criminal one. In granting the Grand Jury, the Chief Justice showed his bitter animus against me in a speech that might have been appropriate enough for a prosecuting counsel; for a Judge it was just monstrous. Besides, the three Judges who granted Ripper the Grand Jury blundered at every step they took and made a perfect hash of the law relating to that subject. The Act was a new one, and this was either the first or second time (the first, I think) the Grand Jury had ever been applied for.

The Grand Jury gave Ripper "a true Bill" late in November, 1894; and now he and his lawyer were resolved to "jug" me before Christmas. The lawyer himself served upon me a notice to appear in Court at a specified time. Knowing this to be illegal I ignored it. Thereupon they applied to the Chief

Justice for a Bench warrant for my apprehension. A friendly officer of the Court came and informed me of this, or I should have heard nothing of it until arrested. As soon as I knew I went to Court, addressed the Chief Justice, and told him I had come to surrender myself. This was two days before Christmas. I asked for a remand. The good man couldn't think what I wanted a remand for! I explained that the present proceeding had been sprung suddenly upon me, that I had had no opportunity to consult a solicitor, nor a moment to prepare for the trial. He spoke as if I could not possibly have any defence to offer, and therefore did not see why I needed a remand. I pointed out to him the difficulty of consulting any one now at the fag-end of the Court and in the midst of the holidays; and at length he said, "If you ask for a remand you must go into the dock and plead." This I did. I pleaded "Not Guilty"; and the trial was postponed till February, a fact that spoilt several Christmas dinners, which my imprisonment would have sauced to perfection.

February arrived, and my case was not reached. In March it was called on, and then adjourned; in April ditto. On the latter occasion Mr. Johnson, now a Judge, then counsel for Ripper, showed himself very much concerned for my welfare, and urged that I ought to amend my plea of "Not Guilty." The Judge, Mr. Justice Hodges, rather sneeringly echoed what the barrister said, evidently thinking I had put my foot in it by tendering such a plea. These two gentlemen were not alone in assuming that I had blundered, and fatally blundered, in my plea. But I stuck to it and told the Judge that I had no wish to amend it. The case was once more adjourned, and was finally heard May 29th.

Mr. Justice Hodges heard the case, and he and I came to blows at once over the Jury. He held that the case was a crown case, I contended that it was nothing of the kind, that the Attorney General had refused to proceed, and that therefore this was not a case of the Queen *v.* Symes, but of Ripper *v.* Symes. Therefore, I said, the prosecutor has no right of challenge in empannelling the Jury. This first skirmish we never settled, but I got a capital Jury.

When I rose to defend myself I called attention to my plea of "Not Guilty." I quoted an ancient law to the effect that under the plea of "Not Guilty" a defendant was at liberty to plead anything; that he had unlimited scope in his defence. This the prosecuting lawyer had denied, and the Judge for a time seemed to agree with him. After quoting that ancient authority, I said, "I may be told that this is old law. I will therefore quote Lord Campbell's Act, in which a schedule distinctly reserves this ancient right to the defendant. Under the plea of 'Not Guilty' I can say anything to the Jury that is calculated to influence them in my favor. And now your Honor knows why I declined to amend my plea."

I then commenced to expound the law of defamatory libel to the Jury, a law I had fully studied; and I also began to show the Jury the gross blunders the Judges had been guilty of in granting the Grand Jury. Hereupon the Judge stopped me and gave me to understand that I must proceed with my defence. "Your Honor," said I, "I have no guarantee that you will explain the law to the Jury. You may do so, but you are not bound. I am quite within my rights in doing that." He became a bit angry and commanded me to proceed with what he considered my defence. "Your Honor is in no danger," said I. "I am in danger of losing my liberty and my money also, if I have any. And I claim the right to say what I please to those gentlemen in the box, to lay anything before them that may honestly influence them to give me a verdict."

Our contest continued for nearly half an hour, when the Judge angrily said, "I will shut you up altogether if you do not go on with your defence." I turned at once and said, "Gentlemen of the Jury, you hear what His Honor says. I protest against his conduct; and I will ask you to remember it." I then plunged into my defence. I had quoted one big law-book and had lost the reference to another. The



Judge had now become quite pleasant, and sent for the book I wanted and found the place for me, for which I sincerely thanked him.

In a few minutes I had got the ear both of Judge and Jury and all the rest was plain sailing. I found no difficulty in showing the Court that there was no libel at all in the charge, that the prosecution had utterly failed to make out even the ghost of a case. The brother of the prosecutor shrank out of Court before I was half way through, and I gave Ripper himself the worst hour he ever spent.

The Judge summed up almost in my own words; his address to the Jury was absolutely in my favor; and the Jury, after less than half an hour's absence, returned into Court with beaming faces and said they were unanimous in finding me "Not Guilty."

This was hardly over when the prosecution brought me before the Chief Justice to answer a charge of Contempt of Court. As before explained, I had very freely criticised the action of the Judges, especially of the Chief Justice, in granting the Grand Jury, and had shown up their blunders. When, therefore, I had to appear before the Chief Justice on the charge of Contempt of Court I knew I was in for it. I certainly had *felt* contempt for the Court's conduct, and suppose I expressed something of it in my *Liberator* article. I made my defence just as if I expected acquittal; and the Judge sentenced me to a fortnight's imprisonment.

I at once told him that I was expected to appear as a witness in a case that had been adjourned till my trial was over, and asked permission to go to the other Court. That he readily granted. "What am I to do with myself after that?" I asked. "Come back to this Court," said he. I went to the other Court, mounted the witness box, affirmed and waited to be questioned. I saw a lawyer at the table, robed and bewigged, with my *Phallic Worship* pamphlet before him, which he was pushing to and fro as if he knew not what to do with it. "We shall have some fun directly," said I to myself. At length the barrister looked at me in a most insolent manner and said, "You keep a shop for the sale of filthy literature, I believe?" I bent over the front of the witness-box and said, "You must be a filthy fellow to say such a thing!" The Judge interposed and said to the lawyer, "I would not advise you to take that course; there will be reprisals, you see."

I had no idea who the barrister was till the trial was over, when I found that I had been in conflict with the worst bully of the Victorian bar—Purvis! I felt delighted to think I had given him a Roland for his Oliver.

This case was one in which we sued the lawyer who had sold us for trespass. The case was proved, and the cowardly Judge gave us one shilling damages. I should add that Purvis revenged himself for the slap in the face I gave him by trying to roast my wife when she went into the box.

After this trial I returned and asked the Chief Justice what I was to do next. "Go and deliver yourself up to the Sheriff," said he. I went to the Sheriff's office and he told me he had not filled up my papers. I could go home and get my dinner and return to him at 2 p.m. Yes, I could take as many books into the gaol as I pleased, and could receive visits as often as I pleased. I got dinner and went back. He asked me how I should like to go, "Do you want a cab?" "Not I," was the reply. One of the Sheriff's officers was an old friend of ours, and I said, "Let Hardy take me up. We can walk along together, I won't run away." And so I went to prison as a "Sheriff's Debtor." I was shown into a room that very much surprised me. The room was a large one, the walls had recently been whitewashed; a spring-mattress bed occupied the far end, a commode beside it; a good sized table stood in the right hand corner as one entered; and the rest of the floor was covered with cocoa-nut matting. Two windows looked out into a yard, and they were furnished with venetian blinds; between them there was a first-class gas jet, and opposite was a large fire-place with the fire ready

laid. Two other windows opposite to the former two looked down a long wide corridor.

I was informed that I could go to bed when I liked, rise when I pleased; go out in the yard when it suited me; that I could have my meals brought in every day—as I did; that I might have tobacco, wine, beer, etc., which I declined. A prisoner came every day to make my bed, clean up the room and lay the fire. I was charged never to speak to him, nor to give him tobacco, or the newspaper, which a warder bought for me every morning. I could read and write as long every day as I cared to, but I was to send nothing out. During my incarceration I received about twenty visits from outside. The prison doctor also came to convert me and became abundantly surprised at what an Atheist could say in justification of his position. The chaplain came, but never mentioned religion. The governor came and said, "It seems to me a farce to send a man in here and let him do as he likes!" "That's my opinion too, Sir," said I. The last time the governor called was the day before my retirement. "I presume," said I, "you do not charge me any rent for occupying these premises?" He replied by a sickly smile and left me.

When the Sunday came, by the way, I said to a warder, "You don't expect me to attend church, of course?" "Attend church! How can you do that? there are none of your sort here!"

Well, I slept in that domicile for thirteen nights, and then emerged to find that a friend had come up with a splendid conveyance and two horses to take me home.

I have ever since advised all who intend to go to prison to enter as "Sheriff's Debtors."

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

## Acid Drops.

We don't often have to apologise for blunders in the *Free-thinker*. But infallibility is not one of our attributes. It belongs to the Pope. We make mistakes sometimes—perhaps more often than we are aware, though we are seldom found out. In our issue, dated October 21, for instance, there was a paragraph in "Acid Drops" concerning Mr. Amy, one of the Rev. Stanley Parker's "converted infidels" at Plumstead, in which it was stated that he had told a public meeting what a drunkard he used to be in his unconverted days. Now this was a blunder, and we are sorry for it, and we beg Mr. Amy's pardon. It was not Mr. Amy, but another speaker—also a "converted infidel"—who had been "a drunken wreck" as well as "an atheist."

Having tendered our sincere apology to Mr. Amy, we must add that the Rev. Stanley Parker seems to have had quite a menagerie of "converted infidels" on the platform that night. The *Methodist Times* report, which we used, did not give the names of any of them except Mr. Amy. We are therefore unable to trace the others, including the drunkard. But as Mr. Amy referred to his own "activity in the sceptical camp," we should like to know what division of the army he belonged to. Will he kindly enlighten us on this point?

The West Indian colored gentleman who rose in the Strangers' Gallery to tell the House of Commons that he had come from Almighty God (the rest of his message was intercepted by the police) was not so successful as our old friend Jonah, who went with a divine communication to the city of Nineveh. The king and the people believed all that Jonah told them, and acted accordingly. The colored prophet from the West Indies was hurried off to a police-court. Other times, other manners.

George Bernard Shaw went to Manchester and laughed at the Ten Commandments. Bishop Welldon got wild. He told "G. B. S." (not in his presence) to go home and learn the rudiments of morals and religion. Mr. Shaw would probably agree that the Bishop's morals and religion are rudimentary.

Christian Birmingham has lost the "idol" trade with the heathen. Christian America has got it.



The Roman Catholic Bishop of Liverpool has sounded the tocsin of Passive Resistance. Addressing a mass meeting of the faithful, he told them it would be their duty, even through fines or imprisonment, to make the new Education Bill unworkable. We are delighted to hear this. We hope the Christians will go on fighting each other over this question. The harder and more bitterly they do it the sooner we shall have Secular Education.

The Rev. David Smith, in his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly*, fulminates against theatre-going, not because it is evil in itself, but because it militates against the realisation of the best type of spirituality. Mr. Smith is for once absolutely right. To be interested in mundane affairs is not conducive to piety. For an old-fashioned Christian "the day is never well rounded off unless it be closed with family worship," and this would scarcely be possible "after a night at the theatre." Good Christians necessarily lose taste for earthly pleasures. Theatre-going creates a dislike for church-going. That is the whole explanation of the Christian prejudice against it. Ministers know full well that they cannot successfully compete with the theatrical profession, and, therefore, they say to their followers, "The theatre is an enemy of your immortal soul: keep away from it. What have you to do any more with idols?" Mr. Smith has never gone to the theatre, and never means to go: even *his* piety would be jeopardised if he went.

Mr. Smith does not perceive, however, that his argument against the theatre is really an argument against the Christian religion. What it proves is, not that there is anything wrong in going to the theatre, but that religion, piety, spirituality, is foreign to man's nature, and can be developed only at the expense of discouraging and even suppressing all expression of many desires and instincts which all human beings share. The spiritual man can thrive only at the cost of crucifying the natural man. In other words, religion is purely artificial and demands artificial nutrition. Pleasure does not nourish it, while hilarious laughter at a theatre acts upon it like arrant poison. Consequently we say: Be natural; banish religion because of its hostility to nature; cultivate *all* your powers; and bring discomfiture upon the parsons by making clear to them that they are working against, and not for, the highest interests of humanity.

The Rev. J. Ossian Davies tells us that God "is the King of all kings," and that "all earthly kings are his vassals." Then why is not the world rightly governed? Vassals are slaves, who do as they are told, whose rule expresses the will of their superior. Is Mr. Davies prepared to affirm that the rulers of Europe do the bidding of a just and holy over-king? If not, God cannot be the supreme Governor of Europe. Either the under-kings are more powerful than the over-king, or the over-king is a myth. Dr. Davies claims that God is omnipotent, omniscient, all-holy, all-wise, and all-loving; and yet he is bound to admit that this ideal monarch has never yet actually reigned. Does the man of God not see that this is intellectual rubbish? To call God the sole Sovereign of the world, and, at the same time, to deplore the fact that mankind are not in subjection to him, is to be guilty of uttering the grossest contradiction.

Mr. Davies knows the exact size of the Divine Being. He speaks of people who "make him look smaller than he actually is." Can Mr. Davies tell us what an infinite being looks like? "To doubt God," he says, "is to limit him." How astonishing! Then, surely, to disbelieve in him is to annihilate him. If doubt limits him, unbelief must blot him clean out. Such, after all, is "the King of all kings," whose vassals are all earthly kings!

Equally absurd is the teaching of the Rev. W. L. Walker, of Shottleston. Mr. Walker says: "Perhaps there is someone who says he has for long been seeking God, yet cannot find him. Turn it the other way, my brother. It is God who is seeking you, else you would never dream of seeking God." This only makes the non-success of the mutual search all the more inexplicable. God and man are earnestly seeking each other through all the years, and yet they never meet in the open spaces of the world. If there were a God, he would not require to seek man, the offspring of his hand as well as the creature of his hand. The two would, of necessity, be always in closest touch.

Nothing is more amazing than the manner in which Christians manifest their love for one another. The Rev. W. H. Stamper, of Chapel-en-le-Frith, is an old retired and much respected clergyman of the Church of England. He holds a preaching licence for the diocese of Southwell. The other Sunday, he took services at the Chinley Congregational

Church, the minister of which was laid up with a serious illness. Immediately thereafter, the Bishop of Southwell, without asking for any explanation, called upon him to return his licence. Having officiated at a Nonconformist place of worship, Mr. Stamper was no longer worthy to take services in Church of England buildings. What a beautiful and consistent Christian the Bishop of Southwell is!

The *Irish Peasant*, a national weekly newspaper and review, while admitting that "persecutors and bigots degrade religion," deploras that the Emerald Isle is being swept by a wave of Agnosticism from England. If this be true, there is hope for Ireland yet. It is difficult to see what Catholicism has ever done for the country beyond exploiting its patriotism.

We suppose it is Henry Varley, the ex-butcher, who writes so bitterly against the Rev. R. J. Campbell in the monthly religious organ so facetiously called *Streams of Gladness*. Dr. Parker's successor at the City Temple is treated to such flattering phrases as "essentially destructive" and "scandalous," and his teaching is called "Campbell's folly." This is about as near as Henry Varley ever got to argument.

Several towns have been swept away in Mexico. "For his tender mercies are over all his works."

John William Millington, member of the Y. M. C. A., ran off with the wife of the caretaker of the West Bromwich branch of that institution. He also ran off with some money. Four months.

Mr. Joseph Hutchinson, of Ashton-under-Lyne, being in a depressed state of mind, got under a train and was killed. He was actively associated with the P. S. A. Society, and for several years he conducted the limelight lantern Gospel services. There is no moral.

Dr. Beaton, giving evidence in the Morpeth County Court in a case of £25 being claimed of a barber for a foul shave, declared, in answer to a question from the judge, that the court Testament was even more dangerous than the public razor. Yes, in *many* ways.

Dr. Macnamara is fond of preaching, but he is not yet a skilful theologian. In a recent newspaper article, after referring to a dirty and diseased "little baby hand" of a slum-child, which "God intended to be soft and pink and warm and beautiful," he suddenly turned round and asked, "What grim deity called it into being thus to be distorted?" Is this an allusion to God the Devil? Or had the writer forgotten what he had just said about God's benevolent intentions?

Solomon was clearly wrong when he said that there is nothing new under the sun. At last, after so long a time, the Rev. Dr. Horton has resolved to *reason* with unbelievers; and in order to carry out this noble resolution he earnestly solicits their co-operation. He wants them to state their case, and show him wherein he is at fault. He admits "that there are fourteen formidable difficulties which present themselves to those who are desiring to live as Christians"; and with these it is his intention to deal in a series of monthly lectures. At the close of each lecture he proposes to hold a conference with his hearers to discuss further various points raised in the discourse.

Dr. Horton is delightfully humble and docile. He is prepared to give up his whole creed if it can be shown to be contrary to reason. That this is false humility is proved by the fact that before the reasoning process begins he makes it clear that to him there are no open questions. At the very outset, he claims that Haeckel "has been answered by Sir Oliver Lodge and refuted in the fullest detail by Mr. Frank Ballard." Then he asserts that in Mr. Walker's book, *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*, the argument is "turned against Haeckel in the most beautiful way, in a way which I think might convert Haeckel himself."

The fact is that Dr. Horton, after all, will not reason things out with his hearers. He comes to them as one who occupies higher ground than the Agnostics. After stating that he was not going to dogmatise, he closes his first lecture in the most dogmatic fashion possible. He said: "Look higher! You have not looked high enough. The things of God are still in the heavens, they are visible to the upward searching eye, to the heart that lives on high altitudes of desire and achievement." That is dogmatism in its ancient tone of absolute infallibility. In this first lecture, reasoning is conspicuous by its absence.



Something else is absent too, namely, *accuracy of statement*. He deliberately misrepresents Haeckelism. Riding his humility-horse, he exclaims: "If you can prove to us that there is no soul, we also will live as beasts." That is a gross libel upon Secularism. No Secularist has ever been fool enough to teach that men ought to live as beasts; and Dr. Horton knows this as well as we do, only as a Christian minister he *must* mutilate the teachings of his opponents. Further on, he affirms that the teaching of Herbert Spencer is wholly discredited. And here is a specimen of Dr. Horton's reasoning: "The force or energy that has produced the Universe, is not unknown. At least this much is known about it, that it has produced it all, and what it has produced is an intelligible world, inhabited largely by intelligent beings; and if we know that the force that has produced all, has produced an intelligible world and a world of intelligent beings, we at least know this, that it is itself intelligent." How clear, how convincing! But is the world intelligible? Has the riddle of all the ages been solved? And surely the appearance of intelligence after millions upon millions of years of most wasteful and *unintelligent* evolution does not prove that the evolving force was itself intelligent. Indeed, if it proves anything at all, it is the very opposite that it proves.

"The author is in sympathy with the people of Siam. He realises the beauty of the Buddhist religion, and sees the impossibility of grafting Christianity upon the Siamese." So says the *Daily Chronicle* in a review of Mr. P. H. Thompson's *Lotus Land*, an account of the country and the people of Southern Siam. We commend it to the attention of the missionaries—and their dupes.

Mr. Thompson says that a certain stumbling-block to the Siamese—

"who is asked to accept Christianity is that he believes that he is asked to choose between an eternal heaven or an eternal hell. Speaking of this a monk once said to me, 'Suppose there were two men, one of whom had made just enough merit to escape from hell while the other fell short by only a little of the required standard. Would the former, for his by no means conspicuously good life, be rewarded throughout eternity with all the joys of paradise while the other, only a shade less good, suffered the everlasting torments of the damned?'"

Missionary Peery, in his able book, *The Gist of Japan*, sadly confesses that this same doctrine stands in the way of Christian propaganda farther east than Siam. Mr. Peery could not tell Shintoists that their ancestors were certainly lost; but, on the other hand, he could not say that they were saved; and, as a heaven from which their ancestors are excluded has little attraction for Shintoists, they have often told the missionary: "I would rather be in hell with my ancestors than in heaven without them." An exclamation which shows a higher level of social morality than the Christian missionary was offering. For morality, at bottom, doesn't mean what you think of yourself, but what you think of others.

Readers of Gibbon will remember his fine story of the barbarian chief who was going to be baptised in the river. As his foot touched the water, he suddenly turned and asked the Christian priest whether his forefathers were in heaven. The priest assured him that they were in the other place. "Then," said he, "I will go to hell with them." And there was no baptism.

Shakespeare, the colossal, the immeasurable, who, in his own incomparable language, shares with great creating nature, has something on this point, as he has on all others; for, wherever you go, you find he was there before you. Students of the Master will recollect the immortal saying of Bardolph when he heard of the death of Falstaff: "Would I were with him, wheresome'er he is, either in heaven or in hell!"

The Rev. Silvester Horne never walks like ordinary mortals. He is always in hot haste, and the only pace he deigns to practise is the gallop. Whenever he starts off it is at a canter, and the speed increases until he comes to a full stop. Owing to this reckless speed, he often makes serious mistakes. Preaching under the auspices of the Congregational Union the other day, he declared that this world is ruled by Jesus Christ. Of course, it was in his haste that he said so; but then he never says anything at leisure. He never has time to see how ineffably silly such a saying is.

What proof is there that Jesus is the ruler? Once a man rushed up to Mr. Horne and said: "Why, there is the Archbishop of Canterbury with his £15,000 a year, and then there is the Pope of Rome not satisfied with less than £100,000 a year." "Never mind them," said Mr. Horne, "what the Book says is not 'What think ye of the Arch-

bishop of Canterbury or the Pope of Rome,' but 'What think ye of Christ?'" Then the man said, "Oh! if that is what you are at, I take off my hat to that gentleman, sir." Mr. Horne gloats over that incident and then adds: "I have seen men in Hyde Park take off their hats similarly for Jesus Christ. I have heard men, not long ago, either, in a great crowd in St. Pancras, shout that Jesus Christ was the only labor leader for the world." What then? Does Mr. Horne mean to say that the working classes of England are champions of Jesus Christ? If so, then he is woefully deluded. Mr. Blatchford, for example, could tell a radically different tale, and so could all the Secularist lecturers.

Mr. Horne's talk is the merest cant. Men do not recognise in Jesus "the true Master of humanity." He has glaringly failed to master humanity. Humanity, as such, takes no notice of him. He has not mastered even those who profess to be his disciples. What is the use of trying to bamboozle congregations by telling them fairy-tales? Mr. Horne *knows* quite well that Jesus is not the Master of humanity, not even of those who call him such.

Rev. R. J. Campbell took the chair lately at the Lees and Raper memorial lecture delivered in the City Temple by the Rev. Dr. Dawson Burns. From the summary report in the newspapers, we judge that Dr. Burns is following in the footsteps of the late Rev. Dr. Lees, who used to argue that the wine in the Bible was simply unfermented grape juice—in short, a perfectly innocent tectotal drink. We have dynamited that position in our pamphlet entitled *Bible and Beer*. All we wish to say at present is this. The Book of Proverbs (xxi. 6, 7) contains the following:—"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." Will the Rev. Dr. Burns kindly tell us how much of that tectotal beverage, the unfermented juice of the grape, a man would have to drink before he forgot his poverty and ceased to remember his misery? Wouldn't he be likelier to gain an additional misery—in his stomach?

A highly successful "apple-dumpling supper" has been held at a leading chapel in High Wycombe. If this function continues, we hope the apple-dumplings will be well done, or it may be "the Last Supper" for some of them.

The Bishop of Lincoln preached a sermon recently on "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." But the text is not true. There are thousands upon thousands of people with pure hearts who never see God. Purity of heart is a noble quality; but the vision of deity is not its reward. Unbelievers never see God, however pure-hearted they may be, while believers, whose hearts are not spotless, say they see him. But does anybody ever really see God?

The Bishop's sermon was preached at the Festival of the Society of the Sacred Mission, Kelham. The members of this Society "have turned aside from the paths of wealth and pleasure and worldly power and fame, choosing deliberately their own free wills the life of poverty and humility"; and the Bishop believes that these people, "laying aside the study of the world and the flesh, will be able to see God more clearly in all things." But this makes God a respecter of persons. If there were a God, he would show himself to all alike; not to the pure only, but even more to the impure to make them holy. The Bishop's sermon was really an insult to his Heavenly Majesty!

The clerical conspirators against Sunday freedom assembled in strong force at the Mansion House on Monday, under the presidency of the Lord Mayor. All the Churches were represented. Generally speaking, they hate each other; but when they do agree their unanimity is wonderful. The Bishop of Stepney spoke for the Church of England, Father Vaughan for the Catholic Church, and the Rev. F. B. Meyer for the Free Churches. Of course the speakers indulged in the usual hypocrisy about religion as the only security for the day of rest. One good thing was said, however, by Father Vaughan. He said he believed it would be found that not more than 10 per cent. of the population went to worship God on Sunday. It follows, therefore, that the 10 per cent. are trying to coerce the 90 per cent.

Rev. J. N. Soden, vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Wakefield, is a strange logician. In a recent sermon, reported in the local *Herald*, he admitted that "our contact with China produced the demoralisation of the Chinese people," yet he wound up by saying that "we must give them Christianity, which can alone build up for China a true national life." We invite him to explain how Christianity will do so much for the Chinese when it did so little for the British who demoralised them?



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 4, Woolwich Town Hall, at 7.30, "Is Christianity True?"

November 18, Birmingham.

December 2, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 4, Birmingham; 18, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 25, Manchester. December 2, Forest Gate; 9, Glasgow; 16, Belfast.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—November 11, Camberwell; 25, Manchester. December 2, Liverpool.

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

H. HARRISON.—No doubt Freethought work is much needed in Ireland, but it would be a difficult thing to organise from London.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your cuttings.

R. J. HENDERSON.—An idiotic regulation truly, but one often violated with impunity. Pleased to hear you have just read our *Book of God* "with much satisfaction."

V. PAGE.—The work of advanced movements is always done by a few. You are not singular at Nelson. Keep on pegging away. We hope you will build up a strong Branch.

J. BROUGH.—Pleased to hear that "G. B. S." fluttered the orthodox dovescotes at Manchester. Thanks for cuttings.

E. MOORCROFT.—Thanks.

T. W. ALLISON.—Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* is not a new book. We believe it is twenty years old or more. What edition do you refer to? Thanks for cuttings.

A. TEMPLEMAN.—Mrs. Bonner's answer was perfectly sound. Charles Bradlaugh never resorted to violence; violence was used against him. He had a profound disbelief in any other course than peaceable persuasion; at least, while the platform and the press are free.

J. T. GRIFFITHS.—There are some, like yourself, who would pay threepence a week for the *Freethinker*, but the majority would not, neither could they afford to do so. The boycott is still severe in many quarters, but this paper is not "going down in the fight." You can rely upon that. We shall have to say something more definite shortly—before the new year.

W. VILE.—Why talk about "necessary" at all? The "connection" remains, whether it is metaphysically "necessary" or not, and that is the only thing of any importance.

R. FRIDERO.—You should give the schoolmistress formal notice in writing that your daughter is to be withdrawn from religious instruction. Your daughter must not be kept in the room where religious instruction is going on; some other work must be found for her elsewhere. If you experience any further difficulty apply to the Education Committee of the County Council.

A. BATES.—We cannot deal with such matters by post. Your verse is not up to publication mark yet. You will probably do better in time.

R. F. JONES.—We note your intimation that the Merthyr meeting referred to in our last issue was postponed, owing to the weather, until to-day (Nov. 4) at the same time and place.

F. JOYNES.—Pleased to hear from you. Yes, that night at Exeter Hall in the long-ago was ever memorable.

W. HALL.—"Vitalism" seems to us on all-fours with Swift's "meat-roasting power of the meat-jack."

PEOPLE who send us anonymous letters are once more warned that their letters go into the waste-basket.

OWING to Mr. Foote's time being largely taken up on Tuesday by a funeral some of the latest correspondence has to stand over unavoidably until next week.

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

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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.

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### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote lectures this evening (Nov. 4) in the Woolwich Town Hall on the question, "Is Christianity True?" As this is the first effort at indoor propaganda in Woolwich for a long time, as the hall is a large one, and as a well-known form of Christian opposition has been threatened, we hope Freethinkers from other parts of London will lend the support of their presence on this occasion. Trains run to Woolwich Arsenal (not Woolwich Dockyard) from Charing Cross and London Bridge. Admission is free to all parts of the hall.

Mr. Foote's article on "Church, Chapel, and Child" in last week's *John Bull* ended by referring the enemies of Secular Education to the splendid witness of Japan. It was suggested that he should write a separate article on Japan for *John Bull*. This he did, and it appears in the current number of that journal under the title of "Our Heathen Ally." Freethinkers should spread this article round as widely as possible. It contains a lot of plain-speaking which very few journals would have the courage to publish.

The Birmingham Branch has presented Miss E. M. Vance, the N. S. S. general secretary, with a handsome oak-framed inkstand "as a token of regard"—and partly in remembrance, we understand, of the last Whit-Sunday Conference.

The second (revised) edition of Mr. Bonte's admirable pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*, is now on sale at our publishing office. The nominal price of one penny is still put upon it in order to secure its judicious distribution. The only change in the form of this edition is that the outer cover has been dispensed with. We hope Freethinkers will do their utmost to circulate copies of this pamphlet, which is calculated to do great service to the Secular cause.

Mr. Joseph Symes lectures twice to-day (Nov. 4) at Nelson. The local "saints" should see that he has two crowded meetings. We are glad to hear that Mr. Symes had capital meetings and an enthusiastic reception at Glasgow, Manchester, and other places he has visited during October.

Lord Rosebery, one day last week, formally opened the fine suite of rooms in which is arranged the fine library of the University of London. Amongst its 60,000 volumes, as the *Daily Chronicle* noted, is a set of the Journals of the House of Commons that was once the property of the late Charles Bradlaugh. We believe this rare set of Journals passed into Bradlaugh's hands from those of Mr. R. A. Cooper, of Norwich, a veteran reformer, who is still alive. Mr. Cooper was in a good position in those days, and was a strong supporter of the great "Iconoclast." It was he, we understand, who advanced the deposit money for election expenses when Bradlaugh first stood for Northampton.

Midland "saints" will please note that Mr. Cohen lectures at Birmingham to-day (Nov. 4). Mr. Cohen's tract on the Salvation Army will be ready for distribution, we hope, a little before the date of this week's *Freethinker*. We shall have more leisure to write about it next week. Meanwhile we acknowledge the following fresh subscriptions towards it: C. Mascall 5s., H. Parsons 5s., J. B. 5s.

The unknown is the terrible. We become fearful the moment we confront the incalculable. Go through the history of religions, consult the various accounts of savage and barbarous faiths at present extant, and you will find that the principle of terror, springing from the unknown, is the essential feature in which they all agree. This terror inevitably begets slavishness. We cannot be cowardly in this respect without its affecting our courage in others. The mental serf is a bodily serf too, and spiritual fetters are the agencies of political thralldom. The man who worships a tyrant in heaven naturally submits his neck to the yoke of tyrants on earth. He who bows his intellect to a priest will yield his manhood to a king. Everywhere on earth we find the same ceremonies attending every form of dependence. The worshiper who now kneels in prayer to God, like the courtier who backs from the presence of the monarch, is performing an apology for the act of prostration which took place alike before the altar and the throne. In both cases it was the adoration of fear, the debasement of the weak before the seat of irresponsible power.—G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."



## Was the World Designed for Man?—II.

(Concluded from p. 683.)

MANY arguments for design are based on the supposed perfection of the solar system in relation to the needs of man. The rotation of the earth once in twenty-four hours, causing day and night. The existence of the Moon to give light by night. The inclination of the axis of the earth towards the plane of the ecliptic, causing the change of the seasons, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. This latter arrangement is a disadvantage, Buchner says:—

"If it were in our power to change this slope of the axis of the earth towards the plane of the earth's orbit, we should most certainly do it and thereby bring about a greater equality of the seasons. For if the earth's axis were perpendicular to its orbit, there would be in our latitude, for instance, a perpetual spring, calculated in all probability to lengthen human life."\*

As for the moon, that great astronomer Laplace declared that "if the moon was given to light the earth by night, nature has not attained the object which it proposed, since we are frequently deprived of the light of both the sun and moon."† Laplace points out the change required in the motions and positions of the sun, earth, and moon to bring about the most advantageous adjustment.

Again, it would be much better if the days were longer than the nights. The relative length of day and night are always changing. In winter we do not get more than from eight to twelve hours of daylight, and as the average man only requires eight hours sleep, a large part of the remaining sixteen hours must either be spent in darkness, or by the aid of artificial light, often to the injury of his eyes. But as Mr. E. M. Macdonald observes "the earth was not fitted to man, but man has gradually grown fitted to the earth."

"The sun does not absent itself during the night because man wants to rest, but man rests because the sun is absent. If animals had chanced to arise on a world always lit, it is supposable that they would have remained awake continuously. Indeed, a creator designing night for men's repose would not have broken its gloom by the moon's light. And he would not have slighted the respectable residents of the Arctic zone by putting off on them any such by-products of his workshop as days six months in length and nights of the same absurd elongation."‡

Another argument, of which Count Rumford appears to have been the originator, is based upon the fact that ice is not so heavy as water; if, it is argued, it were heavier than water it would sink to the bottom and the sea would be converted into solid ice, navigation would be rendered impossible, all the fish would be killed, and we should live in an Arctic climate, as the sun would never be able to dissolve such a mass again. To clinch the matter it was stated that water was the only substance that was lighter in the solid state than in the liquid. But, says Professor Tyndall:—

"Water is not a solitary exception to an otherwise general law. There are other molecules than those of this liquid which require more room in the solid crystalline condition than in the adjacent molten condition. Iron is a case in point. Solid iron floats upon molten iron exactly as ice floats upon water; bismuth is a still more impressive case, and we could shiver a bomb as certainly by the solidification of bismuth as by that of water. There is no fish to be taken care of here, still the 'contrivance' is the same."§

Moreover, it is certain that if ice were heavier than water, the ocean would never be frozen over at all. For as Mr. Lester Ward points out:—

"Its authors in laying it down failed to discover that, by thus sinking, the upper stratum of water would immediately find itself surrounded by a warmer stratum,

and again become liquid, the result of which would be that there would be no ice at all upon our streams and lakes until the whole body of water reached the freezing-point, which would require the same intensity of cold which it now requires to freeze them solid.....It was even supposed that water was the only substance which reached its maximum density above the point of solidification. But it was at length discovered that glass possesses the same property, and now it is asserted that also is the case with many other substances, such as bismuth, antimony, and even iron."\*

But the most decisive of all the arguments against the theory that the earth was created for man, is the shortness of man's existence upon it. According to modern science, the world has been evolving at least five hundred million years.† Our leading geologists hold that life has existed upon the earth for about one hundred million years. But the most advanced geologists do not claim for man a higher antiquity than a million, or a million and a half years, and many of them consider this far too high. Moreover, the world will not remain permanently in its present condition. There is no rest in nature. The earth is approaching the time when it will be too cold to support life; the poles even now are permanently covered by ice caps, it may become uninhabitable in a million years, it may be ten million years, but the end is inevitable unless a miracle happens—and miracles do not happen now—and then for untold millions of ages the earth will roll through space a barren world. "It matters little then," says Richard Proctor, the astronomer, "whether we take life itself, without distinction of kind or order, or whether we take only the life of man, we still find a disproportion which must be regarded as practically infinite, between the duration of such life and the duration of the preceding and following periods when there has been and will be no such life upon the earth."‡ This argument applies with tenfold force against those who point to the beauties of nature as an argument for the existence of a beneficent Creator. As Proctor goes on to say:—

"It is rational life alone to which the arguments of our Brewsters and Chalmers really relate. Nor would it be difficult to raise here another perplexing consideration, by inquiring what degree of cultivations of the intellect in human races accords with the 'argument from admiration,' which the followers of Brewster delight to employ. The savage, engaged in the mere effort to support life or to combat his foes, knows nothing of the glories whereof science tells us. The wonders of nature, so far as they affect him at all, tend to give ignoble and debasing ideas of the being, or beings, to whose power he attributes the occurrences of natural phenomena. Nor as we advance in the scale of civilisation do we quickly arrive at the stage where the admiration of nature begins to be an ordinary exercise even of a few minds. Still less do we arrive quickly, even at reviewing the progress of the most civilised races, in the stage when the generality of men give much of their thoughts to the natural wonders which surround them. Is it saying too much to assert that this stage has never yet been attained by any nation, even the most advanced and the most cultured? If we limit ourselves, however, to the existence merely of some few nations, amongst whom the study of nature has been more or less in vogue, how brief in the history of this earth has been the period when such nations have existed! How brief the continuance of those among such nations which belong to the past, and whose whole history is thus known to us! How few, even in such nations, the men who have been so deeply impressed with the wonders of nature as to be led to the utterance of their thoughts! If the life of man is but as a ripple where life itself is a wave in the ocean of time, surely the life of man, as the student and admirer of nature, is but as the tiniest of wave-crests upon the ripple of human life."§

\* *Dynamic Sociology*, vol. ii., p. 57.

† "It is with time intervals measurable by hundreds of millions of years that we have to deal in considering only our earth's history—nay, two or three hundred millions of years only carry us back to a period when the earth was in a stage of development long sequent to the gaseous condition we are now considering."

Proctor, *Our Place Among the Infinites*, p. 12.

‡ *Our Place Among the Infinites*, p. 62.

§ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

\* Buchner, *Force and Matter* (1884) p. 141. Macdonald, *Design Argument Fallacies*, p. 43.

† *Exposition du Système du Monde* (1835) p. 233. Cited by Ward, *Dynamic Sociology*, vol. ii., p. 65.

‡ *Design Argument Fallacies*, p. 43.

§ *Forms of Water*, p. 125.



For countless millions of years the most magnificent scenery the world has ever produced was wasted upon unintelligent animals. "One cannot help feeling," says Miss Bodington, "that the most delightful conditions upon earth had passed away before man—or, at least, man as we know him—appeared upon the scene. The exquisite beauties of the Laramie, the Eocene and Miocene landscapes were lavished upon animals incapable of appreciating them, except from a gastronomic point of view."\* This is only another of innumerable instances of the blind, aimless, wasteful, and reckless working of the laws of nature, quite incompatible with the idea of a guiding intelligence. Moreover, it does not require a religious frame of mind to appreciate the beauties of nature, as the pious seem to suppose. Richard Jeffries, the most rapturous worshiper of the beauties of nature, was an Atheist.

But there is another and darker side of nature. The destructive hurricane, sweeping desolation over land and sea; the bursting volcano, discharging its molten lava and fiery clouds of ashes with indiscriminate violence; the earthquake, swallowing up man and his habitation; the lurid lightning flash, followed by the roar of the thunder, striking terror to the heart of primitive man; floods and droughts; the illusions and deceptions in nature, forcing man into debasing and evil superstitions, which even to-day enslave the great majority of mankind. As the historian Lecky remarks:—

"We speak of the Divine veracity. What is the whole history of the intellectual progress of the world but one long struggle of the intellect of man to emancipate itself from the deceptions of nature? Every object that meets the eye of the savage awakens his curiosity only to lure him into some deadly error. The sun that seems a diminutive light revolving around the world; the moon and the stars that appear formed only to light his path; the strange fantastic diseases that suggest irresistibly the notion of present demons; the terrific phenomena of nature which appear the results, not of blind forces, but of isolated spiritual agencies—all these things fatally, inevitably, invincibly impel him into superstition. Through long centuries the superstitions thus generated have deluged the world with blood. Millions of prayers have been vainly breathed to what we now know were inexorable laws of nature. Only after ages of toil did the mind of man emancipate itself from these deadly errors to which by the deceptive appearances of nature the long infancy of humanity is universally doomed."†

Can anyone pretend to trace the actions of a benevolent God in all this? To the mind of primitive man our earth appears to be the central object of the universe. The sun, moon, and stars are there solely for his convenience. The storm, the earthquake, the pestilence, are sent to punish or torment him; he offers sacrifice—something he values; perhaps one of his own family—to propitiate his invisible tormentors. He grovels before the unknown; he has got religion. "I know of no study which is so utterly saddening as that of the evolution of humanity," says Professor Huxley. "Out of the darkness of prehistoric ages man emerges with the marks of his lowly origin strong upon him. He is a brute, only more intelligent than the other brutes, a blind prey to impulses, which as often as not lead him to destruction; a victim to endless illusions, which make his mental existence a terror and a burden, and fill his physical life with barren toil and battle. He attains a certain degree of physical comfort, and develops a more or less workable theory of life, in such favorable situations as the plains of Mesopotamia or of Egypt, and then, for thousands and thousands of years, struggles, with varying fortunes, attended by infinite wickedness, bloodshed, and misery, to maintain himself at this point against the greed and the ambition of his fellow-men. He makes a point of killing and otherwise persecuting all those who first try to get him to move on; and when he has moved a step, foolishly confers post-

mortem deification on his victims. He exactly repeats the process with all who want to move a step yet farther. And the best men of the best epochs are simply those who make the fewest blunders and commit the fewest sins."\*

Man has received no help from the gods, and he is beginning to find that out. He is awaking from his dream of a benevolent Heavenly Father, who sits up aloft and orders all things for the best. Man, who regarded himself—in the madness of pietistic egotism—as the crown of creation, the heaven-sent heir of all the ages, begins to realise that in the economy of nature he is of no more value than the other animals from whom he has descended. "If," says John Stuart Mill, "the motive of the Deity for creating sentient beings was the happiness of the beings he created, his purpose, in our corner of the universe at least, must be pronounced, taking past ages and all countries and races into account, to have been thus far an ignominious failure."†

We have by no means exhausted this subject, which we shall return to in future articles.

W. MANN.

## Is Corporal Punishment Degrading?—II.

By R. G. INGERSOLL.

(Continued from p. 685.)

THE reverend gentleman takes the ground that the effect of flogging on the flogged is not degrading; that the effect of corporal punishment is ennobling;—that it tends to make boys manly by ennobling and teaching them to bear bodily pain with fortitude. To be flogged develops character, self-reliance, courage, contempt of pain, and the highest heroism. The Dean therefore takes the ground that parents should flog their children, guardians their wards, and teachers their pupils.

If the Dean is wrong he goes too far, and if he is right he does not go far enough. He does not advocate the flogging of children who obey their parents, or of pupils who violate no rule. It follows then that such children are in great danger of growing up unmanly, without the courage and fortitude to bear bodily pain. If flogging is really a blessing it should not be withheld from the good and lavished on the unworthy. The Dean should have the courage of his convictions. The teacher should not make a pretext of the misconduct of the pupil to do him a great service. He should not be guilty of calling a benefit a punishment. He should not deceive the children under his care and develop their better natures under false pretences. But what is to become of the boys and girls who "behave themselves," who attend to their studies, and comply with the rules? They lose the benefits conferred on those who defy their parents and teachers, reach maturity without character and so remain withered and worthless.

The Dean not only defends his position by an appeal to the Bible, the history of nations, but to his personal experience. In order to show the good effects of brutality and the bad consequences of kindness, he gives two instances that came under his observation. The first is that of an intelligent father who treated his sons with great kindness, and yet these sons neglected their affectionate father in his old age. The second instance is that of a mother, who beat her daughter. The wretched child, it seems, was sent out to gather sticks from the hedges, and when she brought home a large stick, the mother suspected that she had obtained it wrongfully, and thereupon proceeded to beat the child. And yet the Dean tells us that this abused daughter treated the hyena mother with the greatest kindness, and loved her as no other daughter ever loved a mother. In order to make this case strong and convincing the

\* *Studies in Evolution*, p. 95.

† Lecky, *History of European Morals* (1886), vol. i., pp. 54-55.

\* *Science and Christian Tradition* (1902), pp. 256-257.

† *Three Essays on Religion* (1904), p. 82.



Dean states that this mother was a most excellent Christian.

From these two instances the Dean infers, and by these two instances proves, that kindness breeds bad sons and that flogging makes affectionate daughters. The Dean says to the Christian mother: "If you wish to be loved by your daughter, you must beat her." And to the Christian father he says: "If you want to be neglected in your old age by your sons, you will treat them with kindness." The Dean does not follow his logic to the end: Let me give him two instances that support his theory.

A good man married a handsome woman. He was old, rich, kind, and indulgent. He allowed his wife to have her own way. He never uttered a cross or cruel word. He never thought of beating her. And yet, as the Dean would say—in consequence of his kindness, she poisoned him, got his money, and married another man.

In this City, not long ago, a man, a foreigner beat his wife according to his habit. On this particular occasion the punishment was excessive. He beat her until she became unconscious, she was taken to a hospital and the physician said that she could not live. The husband was brought to the hospital and preparations were made to take her dying statement. After being told that she was dying, she was asked if the husband had beaten her. Her face was so bruised and swollen that the lids of her eyes had to be lifted in order that she might see the wretch who had killed her. She beckoned him to her side—threw her arms about his neck—drew his face to hers—kissed him, and said: "He is not the man. He did not do it"—then—died.

According to the philosophy of the Dean these instances show that kindness causes crime and that wife beating cultivates in the highest degree the affectional nature of woman.

The Dean, if consistent, is a believer in slavery because the lash judiciously applied brings out the finer feelings of the heart. Slaves have been known to die for their masters, while under similar circumstances, hired men have sought safety in flight.

We all know of many instances where the abused, the maligned, and the tortured, have returned good for evil—and many instances where the loved, the honored, and the trusted have turned against their benefactors, and yet we know that cruelty and torture are not superior to love and kindness. Yet the Dean tries to show that severity is the real mother of affection and that kindness breeds monsters. If kindness and affection on the part of parents demoralise children, will not kindness and affection on the part of children demoralise the parents?

When the children are young and weak, the parents who are strong beat the children in order that they may be affectionate. Now, when the children get strong and the parents are old and weak, ought not the children to beat them, so that they too may become kind and loving.

If you want an affectionate son, beat him. If you desire an affectionate wife, beat her.

This is really the advice of the Dean of St. Paul's. To me it is one of the most pathetic facts in nature that wives and children love husbands and fathers who are utterly unworthy. It is enough to sadden a life to think of the affection that has been lavished upon the brutal, of the countless pearls that Love has thrown to swine.

The Dean, quoting from Hooker, insists that "the voice of man is as the sentence of God himself"—in other words that the general voice, practice, and opinion of the human race are true.

And yet, cannibalism, slavery, polygamy, the worship of snakes and stones, the sacrifice of babes, have during vast periods of time been practised and upheld by an overwhelming majority of mankind. Whether the "general voice" can be depended on depends much on the time, the epoch during which the "general voice" was uttered. There was a time when the "general voice" was in accord with the appetite of man—when all nations were cannibals

and lived on each other, and yet it can hardly be said that this voice and appetite were in exact accord with divine goodness. It is hardly safe to depend on the "general voice" of savages, no matter how numerous they may have been. Like most people who defend the cruel and absurd, the Dean appeals to the Bible as the supreme authority in the moral world—and yet if the English Parliament should re-enact the Mosaic Code every member voting in the affirmative would be subjected to personal violence, and an effort to enforce that code would produce a revolution that could end only in the destruction of the government.

(To be concluded.)

## Correspondence.

### THE FRENCH AND THE POPE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With the general tenor of your articles on the Papacy and the French, I am in entire agreement, though I am not at all sure that the good advice offered to the people of France is needed by them just at present. The selected committee of Roman Catholic laymen in each parish will, I presume, appoint its own curé, or parish priest, but there is nothing that I know of to hinder them from choosing the nominee of their bishop (and nothing to prevent the bishop nominating a nominee of the Pope's) nothing, at any rate, except the possible unwillingness of the parish committee to do so. And if unwilling to except a nominee, and determined to exert their own right to a direct choice, what hardship is that to any French Roman Catholic?

Suppose a parish committee, the members of which are Frenchmen first and Roman Catholics afterwards; are they to have forced on them a man as their priest who is a Roman Catholic first and a Frenchman *longo intervallo*?

It appears to me that this power of selecting their own minister is an extension of freedom, which extension they may use or not, as circumstances dictate. Assuming that the bulk of the Roman Catholics in France are democratic in their politics, then the new law safeguards them from the broils that arise when an anti-democratic curé is forced upon them as their "spiritual director," and from the necessity of their squeezing out the objectionable curé by withdrawing the voluntary monetary support, which will, in the near future, constitute his salary.

This arrangement may be antagonistic to the centralising disciplinary methods of the Vatican, but what on earth has it of antagonism to the Roman Catholic religion? Further, the centralisation of power in the hands of the Pope is not affected whilst the French people in each parish favor that centralisation, indeed it is affected only when French Roman Catholics themselves desire to be free from it, and they are free from it automatically under the new law whenever they desire to be free.

As for our own beloved Church of England, that is first a social power; second, a political one of a wholly reactionary record; thirdly, an economic one with its six millions a year income, entirely devoted to the "moral" policing of the ignorant in the interests of plutocracy. Its spiritual vitality is, as you say, sapped; for it was never before at a lower ebb and never was it before so intellectually moribund; nor can spiritual vitality of any strength exist in any body of men when prostituted to class, political and plutocratic ends. High "spiritual" vitality, whether of a "supernatural" or a humanistic kind, is ever allied to efforts towards social fraternity and never to the perpetuation of economic slavery, inequality of opportunity, and the continued aggrandisement of privileged castes.

Finally, your suggested comparison of Ireland and our iniquitous "laws," lasting for centuries, insulting, degrading, and robbing the Irish Roman Catholics with a law which extends a fuller freedom to Roman Catholics in France, if they choose to exercise it, than they can obtain from the organisation of their own Church, seems to me to be ill founded, since they need not use the freedom the new law gives them as to the choice of their curés, but can still accept theirs, as hitherto, from the heads of their Church; whereas, before this law was passed, they were compelled so to accept them.

The French have loved liberty so truly that I cannot imagine them resenting an extension of it.

J. W. B.

[The writer of this letter is a man of brains and accomplishments, but he displays an extraordinary misunderstanding both of our articles and of the situation in France; and, as the subject is one of very great importance, we shall return to it in an early number of the *Freethinker*.—EDITOR.]



WHAT IS ATHEISM?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have often thought I would like to write to you to tell you how much I admire and appreciate your paper, the *Freethinker*. I am now compelled to write to you.

I was enjoying a discussion with a "Christian" friend (who is also a police official), who tried to prove to me the existence of God, apparently feeling confident when he commenced that he would be able to do so quite easily. It would have done you good to have heard the arguments he used, although no doubt you have had to listen to the same sort of thing many times. I laughed—well! just like a man can laugh at such nonsense when he knows no supernatural fears.

Finding himself beaten, he ended his argument with the statement that there must be a "somethingorother," and that it was useless to try to convince me, as I was an Atheist. I quickly put the question to him: "Do you know what an Atheist is?" He said, "Yes; an Atheist is one who says there is no God."

In order to convince him of his error, I produced from the bookshelf Nuttall's English Dictionary, which I was astounded to find gave the definition of "Atheist" as "One who denies the existence of God"; then, looking for the definition of "Agnostic," I find it defined as "One who denies that we can know the infinite."

Later in the day I called on my old friend, Mr. John Keith Sykes, that local "thorn in the side" of orthodoxy and veteran Freethinker, who is ever able and willing to help one over a difficulty. He kindly lent me a *Cassell's Encyclopedia*, which gave the following definitions: "Agnosticism—The doctrine that no knowledge of a spiritual world does or can exist for mankind, must be carefully distinguished from Atheism, which asserts dogmatically that there is no God," etc.; "Atheism (Gk. *a-theos*—without God)—The belief that no God exists frequently confounded with Agnosticism and Pantheism."

Now, Sir, if you deem this necessary, or a suitable subject to comment upon in your paper (and I think it is an important one), I am sure many, like myself, who are struggling for truth and light, will appreciate it; for when such authorities as the above give such contradictory meanings, what is one to do in order to obtain a perfect understanding of one's own language?

CHAS. W. M. LEACH.

Southend.

[We have dealt with this subject at considerable length in our pamphlet, *What is Agnosticism?* The price is only threepence, with an extra halfpenny for postage; and perhaps this correspondent, and others, will refer to it. Meanwhile we may say that dictionaries are not authorities, but registers, which may be accurate or inaccurate. It is Atheists who are entitled to say what Atheism means, and they have never defined it as a positive denial of the God idea. The etymology of the word *Atheism* shows that its meaning is negative. Atheists are all "without God" simply because they have no knowledge of one. And how can they deny that of which they have no knowledge?—EDITOR.]

A CHRISTIAN REVIEWER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have read your remarks in the *Freethinker* of Oct. 4, upon the Rev. H. W. Clark's review of my book, *The Churches and Modern Thought*, in the *Christian Commonwealth*, with much interest. Not only does this gentleman cast an aspersion upon the *Freethinker* to which you naturally take exception, not only does he with much show of fairness inform the readers of the *Christian Commonwealth* that I do not bespatter my opponents with mud and then proceed to bespatter me; but the arguments he adduces in order to show that my book is beneath contempt—not worth reading, in fact—are as false as they are trivial. You have dealt with two of them. Three more remain. He quotes my statement that "the number of clergymen who openly admit the truth of Evolution is as yet comparatively small" and declares this is sheer nonsense. It is not so very long ago since I was a regular attendant at "divine service," and, if this great truth is now openly admitted, all I can say is that a startling change has taken place in the last few years, and that the pew seems to have slumbered while the pulpit held forth! Again, the chapter on "The Power of Christianity for Good" is said to show no acquaintance with history, whereas every single statement in it is on the authority of historians! Finally, Mr. Clark is so nettled by the fact that my arguments are largely supported by the admissions of the Christian apologists themselves, that he accuses me of unfairness. Mr. Clark is hoist with his own petard—the superficiality of the whole thing is simply amazing.

PHILIP VIVIAN.

CHRIST AND DOGMA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You have done me the honor of referring in your last issue to my sermon in which I am reported to have stated my intention to preach Christ as a divine and human person, and yet not to be dogmatic. If I had expressed myself exactly as reported, your criticism would be perfectly just, and you are doubtless correct in asserting that "the divinity of Christ is a positive dogma." My statement was to the effect that I was not then prepared to present an articulated creed, or formulated set of beliefs.

But surely, Sir, you would find it hard to prove your contention that Christianity is itself "a cluster of unverified and unverifiable dogmas." And if it were as you state you must admit that there are many things that affect human conduct (often for the better) that are incapable of proof. How would you set about proving that 2 and 2 make 4?

I am surprised to find that you say that "Religion is all creed." I should have expected you to say that it was all sentiment!

I should esteem it a favor if you would kindly insert this rejoinder, and beg to sign myself

J. G. JAMES.

Enfield.

GOLDSMITH ON VOLTAIRE.

We have just received accounts here that Voltaire, the poet and philosopher of Europe, is dead. He is now beyond the reach of the thousand enemies who, while living, degraded his writings and branded his character. Scarce a page of his latter productions that does not betray the agonies of a heart bleeding under the scourge of unmerited reproach. Happy therefore at last in escaping from calumny, happy in leaving a world that was unworthy of him and his writings.....

Should you look for the character of Voltaire among the journalists and illiterate writers of the age, you will find him characterised as a monster, with a head turned to wisdom, and a heart inclined to vice; the powers of his mind and the baseness of his principles forming a detestable contrast. But seek for his character among writers like himself, and you find him very differently described. You perceive him in their accounts possessed of good-nature, humanity, greatness of soul, fortitude, and almost every virtue: in this description those who might be supposed best acquainted with his character are unanimous.

—*Citizen of the World*, Letter XLIII.

Husband, wife, and child are the triple expansion engines which keep humanity moving.—*W. R. Paterson* ("Benjamin Swift").

Religion in any form hates and fears science.—*Von Hartmann*.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;  
The proper study of mankind is man.

—*Pope*.

Obituary.

It is with deep regret that I report the death of Mr. E. J. Larkin, who died Oct. 16th, at Steyning, Sussex, he had just reached his 65th birthday and had been connected with our movement for forty years. He was a thoroughly honest, sterling man and devoted to our cause. Mr. Larkin was one of the founders of the Ball's Pond Secular Society and of the Mildmay Radical Club. He was interred at Highgate Cemetery on the 21st, when Mr. J. T. Lloyd read a most impressive Secular Service.—*E. M. VANCE, Secretary*.

We regret to have to record the death, on the 25th ult., of Mr. Henry Lyon, of St. James'-street, Leeds, in his sixty-fifth year. He was a very active and consistent Secularist for a great number of years, having joined the movement when about nineteen years of age, and never wavered in his allegiance to the cause of truth. He was honorably connected with friendly society work, and with local politics. His interment was numerously attended, and Secular Service was read by Mr. Greevz Fysher. Eulogistic testimonials to the public and private virtues of Mr. Lyon were delivered by Councillor John Badlay; Mr. Morley, Chairman of Leeds Sunday Lecture Society; Mr. Jowett, Past Grand Master of the Grand United Order of Oddfellows; and Mr. Watts, local superintendent of the Order. The Service read at this interment was that of Austin Holyoake, with some modifications to suit the disposal of the remains by cremation instead of earth burial, and with the omission of some passages which seem to minimise unduly the evil of death.—*Greevz Fysher*.



**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.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate): 7.30, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

**OUTDOOR.**

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Brockwell Park, 3.15, James Rowney, "The Atonement."

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

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): C. Cohen, 3, "The Fate of Religion"; 7, "The Salvation Army: a Study of Social Folly and Religious Imposture."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Joseph McCabe, 12 noon, "The Church, the Slave, and the Worker"; 6.30, "The Story of World-Development.—I. The Beginning of the World." With limelight illustrations.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Wednesday, Nov. 7, at 8, James Sim, "The Weakness of Rationalism."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): 7, Miss Margaret McMillan, "Labor and Childhood."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, W. Simpson, "Is Determinism Inconsistent with Morality and Progress?"

MANCHESTER SPIRITUALIST HALL (Ford-lane, Pendleton): Monday and Tuesday, Nov. 6 and 7, at 7.30, Debate between A. E. Killip (Secularist) and T. J. Grayson (Spiritualist), "Secularism or Spiritualism: Which is the Better System for Mankind?"

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Nov. 8, at 8, Councillor F. Drummond, "The Inevitableness of Socialism."

PLYMOUTH RATIONALIST SOCIETY (Foresters' Hall, Octagon): 7, E. Redwood, "Self or Otherwise."

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Room, Town Hall): 6.30, John Baker, "Some Incidents in the Life of the Great Charles Bradlaugh."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (8 Langley-terrace, Annfield Plain): 3.30, James McMahon, "Militarism."

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