

THE Freethinker

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Can man be free if woman be a slave?
—SHELLEY.

Women and Freethought.

WE have a special work to do in this journal, and we have always kept to it. Between a wooden platform and a mental platform there is an essential difference. The wider the wooden one is the more people can stand upon it; the wider the mental one is the less people can stand upon it. One principle may have a million adherents; add another to it, and the adherents of both together may be reduced to half a million; add another, and the adherents of all three together may be only a hundred thousand; and if you go on adding you will come to a handful in time, and finally to a single person.

Attempts were made, many years ago, to drive the Freethought party into the adoption of Socialism. This was met by attempts to drive it into the adoption of Individualism. Both efforts were mistaken, and the success of either would have been disastrous. The Freethought party would have been divided at once; some other effort would have been made to commit it to something else, which would have caused another division, and the last two members would eventually have wished each other good-bye.

Freethought, in relation to politics and sociology, is not a dogma; it can never be more than an attitude. Huxley and Spencer were opposed to each other, but they were both Freethinkers, and they carried on their controversy with good taste, good temper, and mutual respect. Nor was that all. They both appealed to reason, and to nothing else, in the dispute between them. Freethinkers cannot be expected to see eye to eye with each other in relation to the vast variety of questions that have to be settled in civilised communities. Differences of capacity, temperament, training and knowledge will naturally assert themselves. All we have a right to expect is that Freethinkers will be more reasonable, and consequently more humane, than their superstitious fellow citizens. Whether they are Conservatives, Liberals, Radicals, or Socialists, they will be so with a certain difference. They will not be fanatical; they will not be the mere slaves of a shibboleth; they will not assume that all who differ from them are necessarily rogues or fools; they will keep their minds open to argument and information; they will not try to cut the gordian knots of public affairs with the mere sword of party passion. Hobbes was an Absolutist, Hume was a Tory, Mill was a Liberal, Bradlaugh was a Radical; yet they had something in common which differentiated them from other men of the same parties—a faith in human reason and an enthusiasm for human welfare.

Those who have read this article so far will understand why we do not discuss politics in the *Freethinker*. They will not expect us to deal with the question of woman suffrage which is now agitating the public mind, or at least the public emotions. Whether women, or men either, should possess votes, how they should possess them, and when they should possess them—are political questions, with which we have no special concern. The present writer may have his private opinions, but they have nothing

to do with the public policy of this journal. We are not going to be drawn, therefore, into the present heated discussion. We may observe, however, for this is outside the sphere of party politics, that too much importance may easily be attached to voting in itself—while security exists for the freedom of the platform and the press. While that freedom obtains all questions are settled—as far as they are settled—through the growth of public opinion and sentiment, of which voting is only a mechanical and temporary expression; and the greatest rulers of any civilised country are, after all, its men of genius who lie in their graves.

What we desire to do in this brief article is to point out the relation which the Freethought party has always borne to the female sex. In one sense it has borne no such relation at all. It has never made any distinction between the sexes—having wisely left that business to Mother Nature. We must know whether members are men or women in order to address them properly. Beyond that we never trouble. Women have always had seats on our committees when they seemed entitled to them. They have not been voted in because they were women, neither have they been kept out for that reason. Women have always been welcome upon our platforms. Long ago women like Frances Wright and Emma Martin expounded our principles with eloquence and acceptance. Later we had Mrs. Harriet Law and Mrs. Annie Besant. And if we have no lady advocate on the platform just now it is not because of any barrier to her approach, but because we are not fortunate enough to possess one. The National Secular Society has a lady secretary at headquarters, and its Branches in such important centres as Manchester and Liverpool have lady secretaries likewise. Evidently, then, we do not warn women off the course. We welcome their co-operation. There is complete equality of opportunity between the sexes in work for Freethought.

We do not say that this has any definite relation to the political question of woman suffrage; but we do say that it is calculated to lead to a discussion of that question—if it must be discussed—without brutality on one side or hysteria on the other.

It appears to us that Shelley's great cry which forms the motto of this week's *Freethinker* goes far higher and deeper than any political proposal. The poet of poets and purest of men, as James Thomson beautifully called him, meant something vital, not something mechanical. Whether woman should or should not drop her voting paper in the parliamentary ballot-box—which, either for woman or man, is perhaps not the sublimest task in the world—it is of great and constant importance that she should exercise her intellect as well as her emotions, even if the balance of these be somewhat different in the two sexes that jointly, not severally, make up the unit of human life. Whatever nature, time, and experience declare her social function to be, it must be better performed, and of higher value to the race, in proportion as it is illuminated by an active intelligence. The flatterers and the insulters of either sex are the enemies of both. There is no real friendship without truth and courtesy; and the love which is without friendship is only an animal passion.

G. W. FOOTE.

What is the Use of God?

NINETEEN out of every twenty Christians will say that the title of this article is the rankest blasphemy. And the twentieth will probably call it indecent. Yet I am certain there is nothing *indecent* about it, although it may be called blasphemous with some show of reason, for blasphemy is very much a question of which side of the hedge one happens to be. I have heard Scotch Christians discussing religion with a freedom of expression that would make many English people open their eyes; and even in England, some Christians wince at the way in which other believers address the Deity. Blasphemy is a question, not only of geography, but of custom and education.

Besides, one might argue as a defence, if defence were necessary, that the question is one that Christians themselves are always putting and answering in a more or less accurate manner. The countless sermons delivered to prove the utility of religion, involves the question and supplies an answer. The difference is, that the Christian does not ask "What is the use of God?" but "What do we lose by giving up the belief in God?" He thus asks inferentially what the Freethinker asks fearlessly. It is, indeed, a question that few can avoid putting either to themselves or to others, and in view of the issues at stake, it deserves to be plainly asked and honestly answered.

One assumption commonly made may be dealt with at the outset. It is asserted by believers, and often agreed to by non-believers, that the belief in God is a question of vital importance to both the individual and the community. From one point of view this is correct, from another it is incorrect. From the point of view of the energy spent on this question it is important that people should understand it aright. But under similar conditions *any* belief would be important. If the story of Old Mother Hubbard had enlisted in its service some 50,000 men who might otherwise be employed; if thousands of buildings were erected in which to recite that affecting legend, and millions of money spent on its propagation; if it were inserted in our schools and our legislation, and inflicted disabilities upon such as preferred Jack and the Beanstalk to the Old Lady and her Dog, then it would be of equal importance to settle the truth of *that* belief. Thus the belief in God is important from this point of view, but is it important from any other? Those who are without a belief in the Deity are not conscious of anything lacking in their lives, nor can others point to any deficiency. Family and social life, political and business affairs, are not appreciably affected for the worse by its absence. And when this is the case, it is an abuse of language to speak of such a belief as possessing any intrinsic importance. Properly speaking, a belief can only be so described when, in its absence, the normal functions of life are affected. But when all the essentials of life remain unaffected, it can only be treated as something additional, as a piece of luxury or dissipation, which may not injure those who cultivate it, but which all may decline without serious loss.

How stands the case with regard to science? I shall be told that numbers of prominent scientific men have been, and are, religious. The fact is obvious; all that need be said in qualification is that their religion did not spring from, nor had it any connection with, their scientific knowledge. The religion was there before the science, and the most that can be said is that it did not prevent their scientific development. Even this, I think, is open to dispute, although it is enough to point out that, except in such cases as that of Faraday, who deliberately refrained from applying scientific methods to his religious beliefs, their religious opinions have been seriously modified by their scientific knowledge. Indeed, if one were to put on one side mere words and pay sole attention to actual beliefs, it would be found that the beliefs of such men as Sir Oliver Lodge or Lord Kelvin cannot be made to square with any authoritative definition

of Christianity, or with any generally accepted conception of God or a future life. Were Christianity stronger than it is, these men would be lumped in with the general body of unbelievers, and treated accordingly. As it is, Christianity is so pitifully weak, and so contemptibly opportunist, that it is ready to snatch at the support of any great man who uses a customary formula, without any inquiry as to the sense in which the formula is used.

But what use have religions been to scientific men in their work? What was the relation between Newton's belief in God and his discovery of universal gravitation? Would he have been less of a mathematician had he been less of a believer? What connection is there between Lord Kelvin's attenuated religious belief and his researches in physics? So far as one can see, none at all. Copernicus revived the Pythagorean astronomy, and believed in God. Darwin propounded Natural Selection, and was a professed Agnostic. Priestly, Lodge, and Kelvin combine religious belief with great scientific attainments. Laplace, Huxley, Tyndall, Haeckel, Darwin are also great in science, without religious beliefs. The honors are equal—and one may add, with a balance on the side of Freethought. How could religious beliefs help? A chemist, tracing the observed effects of an unknown element, would never dream of calling in God as a cause, unless he used the colloquialism, "God only knows"—the universal formula for ignorance. Nor can we imagine him devoting himself to religious exercise as a method of discovery, although one may easily conceive him putting off prayers or attending church so as to give more time to his experiments. Scientific work stands absolutely independent of religious belief, and experience shows that its results are more often than not in conflict with it.

Now that so much is being made of the social utility of Christianity, one may ask what help religious beliefs give here? A cleric like Dean Milman, dealing with the relation between Christianity and civilisation, confessed that, given a low state of social life, Christianity would assume a low form, and would change its character with a corresponding change in the environment. This is true enough, and it helps to bring out the truth that at best current Christianity is but an index of the prevailing social state. But more than this is needed to establish the social utility of religious beliefs. To make good this claim one would have to show that in the absence of religious beliefs social life retains a low form, and cannot reach a high one. And how is this to be done with the long story of religious opposition to progressive movements, with the example of Japan fresh before the world, and with the fact that the offence of heresy has been the almost invariable charge against reformers. It is true that in the case of a man like Mr. Keir Hardie we have a lavish, not to say unctuous, use of the name of Jesus; but it is noticeable that Mr. Hardie reserves this for addresses in chapels and other places where the majority of the audience are Christians. When Mr. Hardie takes his courage in both hands and talks in the same vein before a Labor Congress we shall see—what we shall see. In his calmer moments even Mr. Hardie must be aware that for some advice on any pressing social question one might search the whole of really Christian literature from the New Testament down to the last number of the *War Cry* without discovering anything of first-rate social importance. And as with Christianity, so with religion in general. Supernaturalism does not aid, it retards, social development. The very essence of social reform is that people shall realise that human nature is governed by knowable and controllable forces, and that the problem of human development is one that is strictly dependent upon human intelligence and co-operation. And, on the other hand, the essence of supernaturalism is that human life is governed by an arbitrary power, and all that man can do is to so act as to gain its favor. There is no compromise between these two views. One of them

must give way; and the lesson of history is that the social state has been lowest where the supernaturalistic view has been uppermost.

A religionist would probably urge that the value of religion lies in its supplying man with an ideal and an incentive. One may agree that it does both of these things; but there are qualifications to be made. In the first place, the ideal is one that is never higher than such as are to be found apart from religion, and is often, as a matter of fact, much lower. The world has never yet seen a god that was better than the best of men, and it has often worshiped gods that the best men are ashamed to acknowledge. All that we are asked to believe God possesses—love, wisdom, goodness, power—can be seen in actual existence among human beings, and their operation is the more useful as they are divorced from supernaturalism. Moreover, not a little of the energies of good men and women has been wasted in trying to humanise the gods, and to bring them up—or down—to a human standard of decency. Willy-nilly, the "divine" has to submit to the human; and what is gained by first ostentatiously giving this a non-human covering, and then surreptitiously stripping it, it is difficult to see. It would certainly save time to be straightforward from the onset; and to be honest to one's self is the indispensable first step towards being honest to others.

And while it is true that the belief in God acts as an incentive—as does every belief—it is also true that in operation the result is more often good than bad. It has led men and women to minister to the needs of their wounded fellow creatures. True enough—although others have done the same without this particular incentive—and what are the wounds religion has bound up compared to those it has inflicted. It has preached the brotherhood of man, and has been the most effective force the world has ever seen for sowing hatred and discord. It has made more orphans than it has fed, more widows than it has protected. The good this incentive has led to in the one direction has been more than balanced by the evil it has inflicted in another. And an incentive that operates without regard to human welfare, but only with a view to the supposed desires of an imagined Deity is surely one that humanity can dispense with, and yet suffer no loss. Human ideals and incentives to be really useful must be based upon the enduring facts of human nature, and not upon its accidental or temporary acquisitions. And the ideal must be one that can always be tested by the degree to which it ministers to the well-being of that from which it derives its being, and which forms the only permanent justification of its existence.

C. COHEN.

A Pleasant Diversion.

FATHER IGNATIUS is an exceedingly well-known personage in British religious circles. He calls himself a monk, and is the Head of a kind of monastery in South Wales. This monastery is neither Anglican nor Roman, but an unattached establishment of the Father's own creation. Though nominally a monk, Father Ignatius occasionally comes boldly out into the world, and lectures and preaches wherever he is likely to obtain material support. He is a comical-looking figure, with his tonsured head and female attire. Though now an old man, he looks well and strong. He was once immensely popular, in consequence, mainly, of the cruel persecution he had to endure. It is reported that at one time he used to be pelted with the rotten eggs, and to be subjected to other and more poignant forms of sectarian inhumanity. Now, however, the fire of persecution no longer pursues him, and his popularity is a dream of the past. He has just conducted a series of meetings in the Kensington Town Hall, the last of which, the present writer, being in search of a pleasant diversion, was heroic enough to attend. The congregation was freezingly sparse, a fact for which the preacher apologised to the Lord. "Though but few in

number," he said, "thou canst give us thy richest blessing." The Father did everything himself. His was the loudest voice in the singing, and it was he who performed the original accompaniments on the piano. At last he announced his text, which was found to be Luke vii. 14, 15. The sermon turned out to be the oddest commodity ever offered to the public. It included references to all conceivable theological subjects both beneath and above the sun, but dwelt on none. The pace was breathless. But nothing gripped, nothing overpowered and convulsed the hearers. It was all insufferably commonplace. The preacher actually refrained from demolishing either the Bishop of Hereford or the Dean of Ripon, which for him must have been a miracle. He left all his enemies quite undisturbed in their mortal heresies.

But, turning serious, we must characterise the whole discourse as a jumble of misleading and pernicious errors. It smelt of the cloister and was lacking in wholesome sanity. The widow's only son was being conveyed to his last resting-place. He was dead, and our hearts bled with sympathy for the bereaved mother. Death in the home was a great, solemnising mystery. Indeed, death ought not to be a stranger to any of us. We should be thinking and praying about it all the time. Then the preacher said: "Children, you ought to practice dying every day. You are in the world to learn how to get out of it." That was the first lesson pressed home upon the hearers. But it is a wholly false and damnable lesson. We are here alone to learn how to live a useful life in the midst of our fellows; and to teach the contrary is to utter the rankest and most fatal heresy. Our only business is to live, and so to live as to ward off death as long as possible. Father Ignatius impresses us as a man who does not take his own advice. He looks like one who has had full experience of the joy of life, and who even now is not in any hurry to ford the black river. But the effect of his teaching on those simple ones who accept it as "gospel" is bound to be injurious.

The legend, as it stands, is highly dramatic. Jesus met the funeral procession, told the mother not to weep, touched the bier, and said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother." But the preacher turned the poetry into prose; and it fell flat upon the audience. There was a prosaic description of the young man's attack of fever which terminated fatally, probably in a few hours, and of the darkness that ensued in the mother's broken heart. Then followed a picture of the two crowds—the crowd that accompanied the weeping mother towards the tomb, and the crowd that attended Jesus up the hill. It had been designed from all eternity that these two crowds should meet at a given moment of time; and meet they did, with the result already indicated. The moment Jesus addressed the dead lad, his spirit, which had gone to heaven or to hell, came rushing back, and in the twinkling of an eye reanimated the body; and the mother returned home leaning on the arm of her only son thus restored to life. Father Ignatius treated that legend as literal history, and in doing so was led on to observe that what we find in the Bible is absolute truth. "Every word in this Book," he exclaimed, "is from God. This is the only book in the world that contains nothing but absolute truth." There was here, of course, an implied censure and condemnation of the Higher Critics, whom this peripatetic monk so heartily despises.

Such rambling talk occupied about forty minutes, and several people seemed thoroughly bored. Just then, the preacher suddenly switched off to a purely spiritual line. "Jesus has been doing the same ever since," he exclaimed. "Raising the dead is the work he loves most; and to him it is a perfectly natural and easy work." He related how a Scottish lad in London was once raised from the dead, and how, immediately thereafter, his soul aglow with rapture, he returned to the Highlands to gladden his mother's heart. "There was none but Jesus in the whole

world who could have done it," cried the preacher. Does Father Ignatius really believe that? In the Kensington Town Hall, listening to this gospel, there were fifty or sixty people, while in the street outside there ever surged vast throngs of men and women who cared for none of these things. According to Father Ignatius, those surging multitudes were dead in trespasses and sins, and, being dead, could not be held responsible for their condition. As the young man of Nain was completely helpless until Jesus spoke to him, so is the immense army of the spiritually dead throughout the world to-day. The dead can do nothing until the life enters into them. If Jesus is able and willing and eager to instil this new life into them, why are they still dead? This is a poser for the Reverend Father, and for all others similarly situated. This is a dilemma from which they cannot extricate themselves. They may twist and squirm and wriggle as much as they like, but they are powerless to make their escape.

And yet preachers persist in proclaiming that—

"Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity joined with power."

But what is the use of making such a proclamation in the face of existing facts? According to the orthodox faith, Jesus is alive now, filling and transcending the universe with his gracious presence—why are the nations of the world still unsaved? Why are there such countless myriads of spiritually dead still unraised? The proclamation is pronounced false by innumerable facts of history; and the few cases of so-called conversion, regeneration, or salvation can be fully accounted for without any reference whatever to the alleged resurrection-power of the living Christ. An eloquent minister will never lack hearers, and a zealous church will always be gratified by numerous conversions; but where are the people whom the omnipotent and omnipresent Christ, without assistance from minister or church, has raised to the fulness of spiritual life? Is it not undeniable that preacher, church, and Bible are indispensable to the Christianisation of mankind, while, apart from these, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost are totally impotent? Jesus is reported to have said to his disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing"; but with equal accuracy they might have retorted, "And without us thou canst do nothing."

Orthodox theology may be faultlessly logical, but it is also faultlessly false. Someone has said that "a theologian knows more square miles of foolish knowledge than any inmate of a lunatic asylum." Be that as it may, nothing is more certain than that theologians build their systems upon pure assumptions, not one of which has ever been verified. More than that, nothing is less open to contradiction than the assertion that history has always completely falsified those assumptions. This old world has always gone blundering on from bad to better, and sometimes back again, in such a haphazard, unintelligent fashion, that it sounds like blasphemy to talk about a God of love and an all-powerful Savior as being actively present in it. Rather than involve ourselves in such a ridiculously and mischievously silly statement, we are prepared to assert that the theologians and the preachers have ventured forth far beyond their depths, and are hopelessly floundering from absurdity to absurdity. In saying that God has done, or is ready to do, for man what man cannot do for himself, they simply make a display of their dense ignorance of human history and experience. There has never been anything miraculous or supernatural in connection with the evolution of humanity. It has ever been a slow process, almost so slow as to be imperceptible, except when very long periods are contemplated. There have been no great and sudden leaps. Even mighty revolutions never happen quickly and unexpectedly. This is true of individuals as well as of nations. Victory in the warfare of life comes as the reward of long-continued fighting. Self-control never comes of its own accord, or as a gift from above; it has to be acquired, earned by patient, never flagging effort. A taint cannot be conjured out of the constitution by a magician: it must be

made to disappear gradually by the constant application of skilfully prepared remedies.

The truth is that Father Ignatius's gospel is played out. Its day is over. It never was true and effective, and now at last the world is beginning to realise its utter hollowness and inutility. It is vain to rely for salvation on the finished work of Another; it is vain to lift up our eyes unto the hills whence no genuine help has ever been derived; it is vain to expect deliverance from a superhuman realm: deliverance must come, if it comes at all, from within our own nature. It is the realisation of this truth that accounts for the signal falling off in church attendance everywhere. People are discovering that the parsons, being largely self-deceived, are deceiving their flocks and leading them morally astray. It is high time to put all possible emphasis upon the fact that the man who cannot help himself, and whom his fellows leave to his fate, is irrecoverably lost. And here comes Secularism's golden opportunity to proclaim more enthusiastically and convincingly than ever before the scientific and all-important truth that humanity's only hope of advancement and betterment lies in the magnificent powers latent within itself, or in giving full encouragement, in response to the pressure of social requirements, to its own native impulse to gain perfect correspondence with its environment. This is the only glad gospel that is true.

J. T. LLOYD.

My Twenty Years' Fight in Australia.—VIII.

(Continued from p. 694.)

I HAVE related much of my Australian experience; enough to show the reader that my twenty-two years in that land were not spent lying upon a bed of roses, or in a paradise of sensuous pleasures, with my cheeks incessantly fanned by odors from "Araby the Blest." Nay, nor did I desire such an experience; for that rough and rugged life suited me better than to have dreamed my time away in luxurious ease, and amidst the empty applause of the fashionable world. For ten years after Ripper made off with all we possessed we really had no home, beyond a fairly comfortable bed and a few absolutely necessary articles of furniture. Nor were our troubles yet over when the Ripper incident terminated—nor do I expect them to be while life lasts.

Until very recently, since the death of the *Liberator*, two and a half years ago, in fact, Victoria had never begun to recover from the disastrous land-boom, a bubble which suddenly burst in 1893; and, there being no money, even the most earnest Secularists could not attend my lectures. Most of my people had fled to escape starvation, and most of those who remained were poor—and so powerless. Scores of times we had to wait till late before we could buy paper for printing the current week's issue of the *Liberator*; several times it did not appear till the following week, and once or twice it failed to come forth at all. Yet, during that long-continued period of adversity we often experienced what pious people would have devoutly deemed divine interpositions. Just when the end of our struggle seemed to be upon us, when the hard granite wall of cash-less fate seemed to present neither opening nor crack in any direction, there would come through the post a pound bank-note, a postal-note for twenty shillings, or it may be a startling five or ten-pounder from a source whence we expected nothing. And on we moved again. The reader must go through similar experiences to understand how we felt in those days.

Somewhere about 1895—I have not the printed record—we were compelled to leave the business portions of Melbourne and take refuge in a weather-board cottage in Gore-street, Fitzroy, a Melbourne suburb. The cottage was small, old, and rapidly decaying; but it occupied a spot not far from the middle of a big yard, much of which was overgrown with weeds. In front of the cottage was a stone building flush with the street, which served not

badly for the *Liberator* plant; and our little girl found enjoyment, health, and development running about that yard from morning to night.

At that time, and for many months, I had no place to lecture in; my health was anything but good; for two or three months it seemed as if my Christian foes would soon have the chance of performing a war-dance over my grave. But no! That blessed time for them had not yet come; and they "groaned in spirit," and cried in their agony, "How long, O Lord, how long dost thou permit the enemy to afflict thy servants and to laugh thee and thine to scorn?" It was a sore time to the saints to see me brought so low and not to the "deep damnation" they hoped was about now to overwhelm me.

In a few months we secured a shop and a place for the *Liberator* plant in Bourke-street, not far from the Parliament Buildings, by far the best site we had yet obtained. Here we stayed for over two years battling with piety and poverty both during the whole of that time, for general business was almost at a standstill. In September, 1897, I commenced reading papers and conducting discussions in these new premises, in an upstairs room that would hold from forty to fifty persons. This new venture promised some little success; we began to re-start our broken and battered society, and a good number of new members were enrolled. Steps were also being taken to secure a hall in which to conduct our meetings, when an event happened which rather startled us.

The thieves who had stolen our new hall had become quite tired of their white elephant, and asked the Supreme Court permission to sell it. They would have done this earlier, but feared that it might fall into my hands. Now they told themselves that I was beaten and done for, that I had not a single friend left, and, whoever got hold of the hall, Symes could reap no benefit from it. So the building was brought under the hammer in November, 1897; and a few days before the sale a gentleman offered to buy it for me if I could pay him £2 10s. per week as rent. But the real friend in need had yet to appear. Dr. Peacock came and told me he had got someone to bid for the hall—a man who was but little known in the city, and one who could not be suspected of any friendship for me. We had to move cautiously, for the trustees would have backed out at the very last moment if they had suspected the truth.

The day of sale came, and the place was knocked down to my friend the Doctor, ostensibly to his agent aforesaid, and a month later the purchase and transfer were completed—to the absolute bewilderment and chagrin of the set which had stolen it nearly seven years before.

We re-opened the hall on the 6th or 7th of December, a pretty fair audience turning out on the occasion, one old friend travelling over a hundred miles to be present. I continued to lecture there until June, 1904, when I turned farmer. My landlord was, I think, the best that ever lived. He not only did not get any rent for the hall during most of the time, but was ever ready to help me with money when I was run out of that most necessary article.

But the case was hopeless. We found that now we had to contend with many rivals. The churches had learnt from us to make their "services" "ungodly" popular; religion was dismissed, and Secularism placed in its room. Socialists, a swarming multitude, started Sunday meetings to air their gospel; a number of secular concerts were started by other parties, and, worse than all, trade refused to revive. We had to give up our shop in the city, and to take refuge in the hall itself. The *Liberator* plant was shifted again, and set up at the back of the hall in two rooms built originally for its accommodation. But where were we ourselves to go?

When we built the hall we constructed four rooms in front, each about seven feet square, and above those we erected a loft intended for a gallery, should that ever be wanted. It projected over the said little rooms, and measured about nine feet wide, by about fifty-seven feet long. Well, with the landlord's per-

mission I purchased £5 worth of boards and timber, turned carpenter, and erected a partition right along the front of that intended gallery, and put up a staircase in one corner to go up and down. The partition was eight feet high; above it was the open roof of the hall; in front there were three large windows. This long room we divided into three portions—two bed-rooms and a general room; there we took up our abode for considerably over four years. The small rooms below were used for a shop, two of them for my office and library. And altogether we felt about as happy there as we ever had been anywhere. Elegance was out of the question, though the essentials of life were pretty fully realised.

To show how desperate our case really was, I may remind the reader that in September, 1897, we began to resuscitate our Association. By Christmas we had fifty or sixty new members, and considered we had good reason to expect quite a hundred in a few weeks. We arranged for the annual meeting to be held in the early part of February; but by that date there were not a dozen of those new members left in Melbourne; they and others had been driven out to seek elsewhere a living which Melbourne finances could no longer secure to them.

Perhaps by this time it is no longer a mystery that I should have desired a change. I was getting old; there was nothing for my wife and daughter to fall back upon if I should "go the way of all the earth." Melbourne was so madly gone over sports, Socialism, politics, and other amusements that the people had no ear for anything rational. I had for two years given many lantern lectures on science, theology, history, etc., etc. But, as I say, rational themes were a drug in the market. Worse than all, we could not get in moneys due for the *Liberator*. People who had taken it for nearly twenty years, and swore by it, now found it impossible to pay for it. Two good friends enabled me to get a farm. Thither we removed in April, 1904. For many months I worked like a nigger. I went to the farm weighing 16½ stone; in a little over two months I was more than 40lbs. lighter. And let me here say that I had always held during the years of high-pressure mental work in Melbourne that I needed more food than a navy to keep the brain up to its working condition. At the farm I found the truth of this, for I needed less food there than I did in Melbourne.

But for certain things to be named, I could have spent the rest of my days on the farm. I had plenty of books, a microscope, and plenty of work. But I felt like a fish out of water. My brain was ever busy with the old problems and with new ones of a kindred nature; and do what I would, I could not focus my thoughts upon the farm. Besides, I felt mean —. Here was I doing work which a man with half my brains could do so much better! Here was I skulking, away out of the Freethought battle, while my comrades were in the thick of the fight! So I resolved, in spite of age, to come to England, whether to stay or not I couldn't tell.

Needless to say, I have not exhausted my theme. I think it would require years to do that, for my life in Australia was crowded with incidents. By the way, I was mobbed twice, once in Australia and once in Tasmania; and three separate times I was personally attacked, the last time half-killed and rendered deaf for life. I may one day relate the last incident in some detail. Just now I may state that on the farm, a little over a year ago, I was kicked by a mare I had intended to purchase. I could never learn what church the animal was a member of, but I can think of nothing but excess of piety that could have led to her onslaught on me, for I had been uncommonly kind to the creature during the few hours she had been on the premises. The marvel is that she did not break my leg. As it was, I was laid up for nearly a month.

I have a few more things to say in what, I think, will be the last instalment of my story—unless something specially interesting should occur to me during the next few days.

(To be concluded.)

JOS. SYMES.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Gladstone's action with regard to the "suffragettes" in Holloway Prison seems to show that all is possible to those who will make themselves a nuisance. We are heartily glad, of course, from one point of view, that the lot of the ladies was made easier during their incarceration. But the result is what may be called pantomime imprisonment. When you can wear your own clothes, buy your own food (including wine), receive and write letters, read the newspapers, occupy a large cell containing your own furniture, employ an ordinary prisoner as a servant, exercise your own trade or profession as long as it does not interfere with the discipline of the prison, and even see your friends in your cell, it is clear that you are merely suffering detention; and a month or two of that might often do a great deal of good to people who have been living in a whirl of excitement.

The ladies have been claimed to be "political prisoners." Well, the man who shot President McKinley was a political prisoner, but he was duly executed. Is it meant that political men and women have a right to do what they like in the pursuit of their objects? If so, we may as well have the principle plainly stated in unmistakable language.

Is this principle to be extended to other people as well as to political men and women, and if not, why not? Suppose the President of the National Secular Society, in view of the fact that Christian laws place Freethinkers in a position of serious disadvantage, were to call upon Freethinkers to meet outside (say) the Rev. Dr. Clifford's house, and ring his front-door bell, and demand that he should come out and see them, and even hustle his wife on the pavement. Suppose the President of the National Secular Society were to go with some of his supporters to a meeting of the Convocation of Canterbury, or of the National Free Church Council, and demand to know when they were going to agree to the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and insist on orating in the passage if he and they were unable to get access to the assembly. Suppose the President of the National Secular Society and his supporters were run in by the police, charged with disorderly conduct, and ordered to find sureties for their good behavior. Suppose they refused to do so, and were driven off to prison in a Black Maria. Does anybody think that the newspapers would be excited about their being put upon plank beds to sleep and fed upon skilly? Would questions be asked in parliament about them? Would Mr. Keir Hardie threaten to move the adjournment of the House if the Home Secretary did not order the prisoners to be treated as first-class misdemeanants? Would it be considered as anything but a joke, and perhaps an impudent one too, if the prisoners' friends urged that they ought not to be treated as criminals, but as propagandists who had accidentally got into trouble?

Mr. W. T. Stead drew attention to the fact that, when he was imprisoned, Lord Salisbury, who was a Tory premier, but who had "the instincts of a gentleman," ordered his removal from the criminal to the civil side of the gaol, where he spent a sort of a holiday. Yes, but Mr. Gladstone, who was a Liberal premier, did not have enough of "the instincts of a gentleman" to do anything of the kind for Mr. Foote when he was imprisoned for "bringing the Holy Scripture and the Christian Religion into disbelief and contempt." Nor, if we may be allowed to say so at this time of day, do we recollect that Mr. Stead himself made any row about Mr. Foote's imprisonment like a common felon. Certainly the motives of Mr. Foote were as public and honorable as the motives of Mr. Stead. He had endured poverty for Free-thought before he endured imprisonment for it. When he left Newgate for twelve months' banishment from the light of day in Holloway Gaol, the few shillings in his pocket were all he had in the world. He had not been a soldier of Free-thought for the profit of it. What but principle, then, could have been his spring of action? Yet he had to wear prison clothes, eat prison food, breathe the prison air in a brick vault twelve feet by six, exercise by walking round for one hour in a ring with other prisoners, sleep upon a plank bed, write and receive one letter in three months, and see a visitor once in three months in a big cage, without so much as a shake of the hand, and with a warder present to hear all that was said. He had no writing materials of any kind except a slate and pencil. Such was his death-in-life for a whole year. And the politicians smiled all the time—simply because they did not see how Mr. Foote's sufferings endangered their seats.

Were a fighting Freethinker of the N. S. S. school sent to prison again to-morrow, we do not believe there would be any resolute objection raised by "advanced" bodies, by

Liberal or Radical societies, by Labor Churches, or even by Socialist organisations. Probably the Socialist journals would say just enough to satisfy theoretical requirements, and not a word more. We do not believe that the *Clarion* itself would be much of an exception. And if our reason for saying so is asked, we are ready to give it.

The moral is that the fighting Freethought party—the party which has inherited its traditions from Paine and Voltaire, Carlile and Hetherington, Ingersoll and Brad-laugh, must always be prepared to stand alone in the battle when it is attacked by the armed forces of religious bigotry. It has always been so, with rare exceptions, in the past, and it will be so for many a day to come.

Mr. Joseph Collinson, honorary secretary of the Humanitarian League, takes Mr. Will Crooks to task for stating that "cases of flogging are very exceptional" in the Industrial and Reformatory Schools. Mr. Collinson shows that this statement displays quite a lamentable ignorance. The annual reports of the institutions disclose the fact that thousands of floggings have been administered to young people in the Schools during the past twelve years; and that the managers have more power to order such punishments than is possessed by the magistrates. "It seems strange," Mr. Collinson adds, "that Mr. Crooks has not heard of Canon Vine's notorious record as a flagellator. This reverend manager at the Farm School, Redhill, told the Reformatory and Industrial School Committee (December 12th, 1895) that he would not hesitate to inflict three dozen strokes of the birch, and went on to boast of a tremendous flogging which he gave a big boy 'simply to take the rise out of him.'"

In opposing and denouncing Catholic doctrines, Protestant divines fling consistency to the winds. For example, the Rev. T. Vincent Tymms, D.D., objects to the adoration of the Virgin Mary as the "mother of God." But the objection is perfectly absurd when raised by believers in the Divinity of Christ. If Mary was the mother of Jesus, and if Jesus was God, does it not necessarily follow that the mother of Jesus must have been the mother of God? Dr. Tymms admits that "she is first among the mothers of men"; but even Dr. Tymms places her in that proud position because he believes that she was the mother of one who was more than man—the mother of one conceived within her by the Holy Ghost. In the name of all the wonders, how can Dr. Tymms, holding such a belief, find fault with the term "the mother of God"? To say the least, the Catholic faith is self-consistent.

Many divines are eager to harmonise Bible teaching with the facts of Science; but the task is impossible of accomplishment. Everybody knows how Paul treats of the human body. To him it was vile, evil, antagonistic to the spirit, the seat of sin, and he looked forward to the time when he should shuffle it off as worthless, and put on a spiritual body made in heaven. But the Rev. R. A. Lendrum, M.A., in a clever little book, entitled *An Outline of Christian Truth*, makes an ingenious but futile endeavor to prove that Paul did not really mean what the Christian Church has invariably understood by his language concerning the body. His contention is that Paul did not share the unfavorable estimate of the flesh which was characteristic of the East. How sadly true it is that the Bible can be made to prove anything, that its terms can be so distorted as to lend support to whatever views the reader may happen to hold. What next?

"At the Cross," according to a Christian Endeavor teacher, we find many things, and among others, "promise. There alone can I be assured of God through life and through eternity." This means that all who have not come to the Cross are the miserable slaves of sin and death, in front of whom there lies in ambush the fierce wrath of the Lamb, which is a million times worse than the most dreadful death. Common sense tells us that this is unmixed nonsense. The Cross, in its theological signification, is the ugliest monstrosity ever invented, the biggest lie ever conceived, the worst insult to justice ever presented, and the most serious violation of the moral law ever perpetrated. The more enlightened of the divines themselves are beginning to find this out, and, in consequence, are already materially modifying their conception of Christ's death.

These more intelligent theologians unhesitatingly repudiate the view of the Atonement taught by the orthodox Church. The Rev. R. J. Campbell, reviewing Professor Stevens' great work, *The Christian Doctrine of Salvation*, has the audacity to affirm that the whole orthodox Church has completely misunderstood, and woefully misrepresented, Paul's doctrine of the Cross. In all probability, Professor

Stevens and Mr. Campbell are quite wrong; but, at any rate, they give unmistakable expression to a conviction rapidly gaining ground among educated people—namely, that the orthodox doctrine of the Cross is rooted in immorality, and, consequently, must be renounced and condemned as an act of homage to justice and humanity.

Of course, as long as theology is allowed to exist, it is bound to indulge in foolish and more or less hurtful vagaries, because it is the Science of the Unknowable, which, in reality, is no science. This is why we have so many conflicting and mutually destructive systems of theology. Divines come to definite conclusions in the entire absence of data. They make their bricks without straw, and found their theories on dreams. They tell us what God is and does and must do, and what his relations and dealings with mankind are, while in total ignorance even of his very existence; and the people who confess their ignorance, and decline to dogmatise, they call fools. Such is theology, and such are the theologians.

The Bedfordshire Union of Christians met the other day at Potton, and the Rev. W. Springthorpe, of Bedford, read a paper on "The Churches and the decline in Sunday observance." A frightful picture was drawn of the people amusing themselves on the Lord's Day instead of going to the House of God. Even the sweet-shop was declared to be one of the worst enemies of the Sunday school, and it was affirmed that "a fresh Act of Parliament was needed to deal with this question." Rev. H. Morton also said "He would welcome an Act of Parliament to enforce Sunday observance." This zeal was rebuked by one or two other speakers, but it shows what many Christian ministers would do if they had the chance. They would close everything but the gospel-shops on Sunday—probably hoping that sheer weariness would drive thousands into the churches and chapels, for light, warmth, and an escape from the rain.

Dr. Clifford has just published a volume, *The Ultimate Problems of Christianity*, in which he frankly declares that "more than half our current 'faith' rests, I fear, upon unhistorical foundations." Of course, such a declaration is extremely heretical as coming from a minister, but it has the merit of being true. One-half of the current faith does rest on unhistorical foundations—and so does the other half as well.

Once more the hackneyed, and more or less legendary, story about Voltaire ordering the servants out of the room when his friends began to argue against the existence of God and a future life is trotted out to show why ethics should not become Atheistic. When Voltaire was asked why he dismissed the servants, his reply was, "Gentlemen, I don't want to have my throat cut"; and the comment made upon it is, "He had taken a true measure of the situation." As a matter of fact, he had taken a false measure of it. There are many thousands of avowed, and perhaps twice as many unavowed, Atheists in Great Britain at the present time, but there are no cut-throats among them. They are well-behaved and virtuous citizens, whose one ambition is to be of service to their day and generation. To repeat that foolish Voltaire-story at this time of day, and to claim that it furnishes "a true measure of the situation," is an act of the grossest hypocrisy.

Even in Scotland, the Church of Christ, pure and simple, is proving a miserable failure. The problem as to the future of Christianity is said to be of the gravest description. At many populous centres, such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, and Dundee, the situation is evidently being lost, and the solemn question is how to save it. From the Christian point of view, this is a terribly sad confession. The unadulterated Gospel is a failure, and its failure is becoming more and more patent every day. So Scotland is now looking to the Institutional Church as her only possible salvation. The Gospel must be supplemented and propped up by all manner of other things, and then it may succeed. This explains the frequent visits of the Rev. Silvester Horne, the great apostle of Institutionalism, to the land beyond the Tweed. The fact to be noted is that Christianity is now a total cripple, and can only walk on crutches, and that all the crutches provided for it are purely secular in their composition.

Rev. David Smith, who conducts a Correspondence column in the *British Weekly*, asks one who writes to him as "Wistful" to remember old Thomas Fuller's story of the simple, ignorant man who knew not how to pray, but went on his knees every morning and evening and repeated the alphabet, saying: "O good God, put these letters together to spell syllables, to spell words, to make such sense as may be most to thy glory and my good." This is about the bed-rock of inanity. Mr. Smith fairly takes the biscuit.

Thomas Fuller was a writer with a vein of genius in him. When foolish things in the name of religion are found in his writings we must recollect that he lived in the seventeenth century. Mr. Smith is not exactly a man of genius, and he lives in the twentieth century. What is his excuse for playing the fool?

Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, the founder and leader of the Christian Science movement, is eighty-five, and is said to be dying of cancer. According to her own doctrines, she never ought to die. But you must not expect religious leaders to live up to their teachings. Neither the Pope nor the Archbishop of Canterbury does that. So we needn't be too hard on Mrs. Eddy. Besides, the religious swindling has pretty well all been done by the men hitherto, and why shouldn't the ladies have a look in? Some of them, at least, are well adapted to the business.

The Rev. Dr. James, of Enfield, in a courteous note respecting a criticism of a recent sermon by him, that appeared in the *Freethinker* for October 21, demurs to two expressions therein made. He says: "But surely, Sir, you would find it hard to prove your contention that Christianity is itself 'a cluster of unverified and unverifiable dogmas.' Well, will Dr. James tell us which of the Christian dogmas have been verified? The existence of the supernatural is a dogma—has it ever been verified? The Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, the Deity of Christ, the Resurrection, the Future State, are all dogmas—has one of them been verified? Does not Dr. James himself admit that they are objects of belief and not of knowledge? Was not Tennyson right when he said—

"We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see"

Have Christians ceased to repeat the Apostles' Creed?

The second expression in our criticism objected to is that "Religion is all creed." But is not religion all creed? Dr. James seems to think it would have been more reasonable on our part to have said that "religion is all sentiment." But here he is quite wrong. Religious sentiment is the offspring of religious belief. You must believe that God is before you can feel him. You must believe that Christ was a Divine Being before you can worship him. You must believe that he is still alive before you can realise his continued existence. You must believe in a life after death before you can comfort yourself with the thought that your deceased friends still live. Furthermore, the intensity of religious emotions is in exact proportion to the strength of religious beliefs. Atheists have no religious emotions. Unbelievers are never stirred by superhuman sentiments. Does not Dr. James grant all this? Is it not eminently reasonable? We do not deny the genuineness of much religious experience: all we claim is that it is the outcome of unverified and as yet unverifiable beliefs, and not of actual knowledge.

It is a perfect miracle that the Rev. Dr. Horton still lives. His heart breaks once a day. It has been thus breaking for many years. The reverend gentleman is perpetually melting into tears. The other Sunday again he said: "My heart is simply breaking over those English people who are forgetting Christ," and who "simply seek their own pleasure on the Lord's Day." He believes Christ is worthy of at least one day in the week, and because there are so many English people who refuse to give it him, his heart "is simply breaking over them." Fortunately, neither the reverend gentleman's flowing tears nor his constantly breaking but not quite broken heart can ever stem the tide of natural knowledge and intellectual progress which is at last rushing in.

We have been favored with a copy of a Protestant call to arms against the Catholic Church, signed by the ex-butcher and revivalist, Henry Varley. This person talks in the name of "civil and religious liberty." Is this not the man who kept calling on the House of Commons to keep out Charles Bradlaugh the Atheist? Is this not the man who issued circulars calling for the prosecution of the *Freethinker*? What does he know of civil and religious liberty?

The Sydney "Zoo" was proceeded against under the old Act of George III. for charging for admission on Sundays. Mr. Justice Pring, however, non-suited the plaintiff. Why he did so is not disclosed in the brief report before us. Everything, of course, depends upon the circumstances in such cases. There can be no doubt, however, as to the law—whether we like it or dislike it. Any entertainment on Sunday, to which a charge for admission is made, is illegal, and all persons engaged in them are liable to heavy penalties. It may be that the plaintiff at Sydney proceeded against the wrong persons, and was non-suited in consequence.

Dr. Whiteside, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Liverpool, addressing a mass meeting of his own flock in St. George's Hall, was quite right in saying that if Nonconformists ought not to be taxed for the teaching of Catholic religion, neither ought Catholics to be taxed for the teaching of Nonconformist religion. This point was made by the President of the National Secular Society, when he addressed a big meeting in the Picton Hall, Liverpool, early in May. Dr. Whiteside was quite wrong, however, in representing the Nonconformists as "relying on the aid of the Secularists." Such a statement shows that he has not taken the trouble to inform himself on the subject. As a matter of fact, the Secularists have never ceased to attack the Nonconformists as traitors to the principles of civil and religious liberty. Our own articles in the *Freethinker* are a better criticism of the Nonconformist policy than is to be found in Dr. Whiteside's address.

The Catholic demonstration at Liverpool was a gigantic affair. Inside and outside St. George's Hall some fifty thousand people assembled. The greatest enthusiasm prevailed, and all the fighting speeches against the Nonconformist Education Bill were wildly applauded. The Catholics said they would go to prison in thousands rather than submit to Mr. Birrell and Dr. Clifford in the education of their children. We believe they mean it, and we are glad that they do; for a bitter war between the Churches will inevitably hasten the advent of Secular Education.

"J. B." of the *Christian World*, writes with exceptional sanity on well-nigh every subject except religion. On this theme his soundness is definitely challenged both by traditional divines and Secularist philosophers. Writing on "False Independence" recently, he specifies the "laborious efforts that are just now being put forth to construct what is called 'an independent morality'—an ethic, that is, which is to be quite free from the religious influence and the religious sanction," as an example of false independence. But "J. B." cannot be ignorant of the fact that primitive religions were quite independent of morality and morality of them. It is agreed among scholars, that originally religion and morality grew and developed apart from each other; and now that the bulk of the people are turning away from religion, we maintain that it is the duty of all serious-minded people to find for morality a rational basis and natural sanctions. Furthermore, it is not true that every decay of faith has been the decay of morality, as Mill's famous essay on the "Utility of Religion," and many later works, abundantly show.

The Rev. J. M. Gibbon, of Stamford Hill, says that he looks upon the Congregational denomination, to which, of course, he himself belongs, "as the pioneer of enlightened views." But he laments the fact that it now lacks the thinking people it once owned and gloried in. Outside are many good people who want saving, and righteous people who want bringing to repentance. The following is heroically frank, and ought to prove inspiring to Secularists:—

"Ultimately the country's character is determined by its thinking men. We once had them in our great provincial towns; they were the backbone and sinew of our Churches. I fear we have lost them, to a great extent. And I am afraid that we are somewhat losing stamina, losing the steel and iron out of our blood; that Congregationalism is becoming imitative, sensational, sentimental."

There are moments when ministers are honest and tell the truth and bemoan their impotence.

Mr. Birrell has been joking—for he can hardly be regarded as serious—at Pentonville. He was addressing a Nonconformist audience, and he laid the butter on them with a trowel. Amongst other flatteries he said that in the realm of poetry Nonconformists were well-nigh supreme. This *must* have been a Birrellism. What are the names of the great Nonconformist poets? Are we to include Isaac Watts and Eliza Cook? Mr. Birrell might claim Milton, but what Nonconformist sect did Milton belong to? Dryden, Pope, Gray, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Landor, Tennyson, and Arnold were *not* Nonconformists. Where are the Nonconformist poets?

Nonconformist preachers were second to none, Mr. Birrell said. Indeed! What Nonconformist preaching has passed into English literature? Hooker, Barrow, South, Taylor, Butler, Newman, and Robertson all belonged to the Church of England. Where are the Nonconformist classics? What price Spurgeon? somebody asks. We reply, "twopence-halfpenny."

Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P.—we mustn't forget the M.P.—celebrated his fiftieth birthday on Sunday by addressing a big meeting in the Synod Hall, Edinburgh. That was the first

time, it is stated, that this hall was let for any but a religious purpose on Sunday. But is this a real distinction? Mr. Hardie's lecture, or address, or sermon, or whatever he calls it, was religious enough for anybody. He said that Socialism fulfilled the tenets of the Sermon on the Mount; that a Christian state of society was only possible under Socialism, and to condemn Socialism was to condemn Christianity. These remarks were loudly applauded. And although the Labor party ran the meeting there was nothing in it to trouble the heart of any man of God. The Synod Hall has *not* been used for any but a religious purpose *yet*.

Now that the Labor movement is making headway the Bishop of Liverpool finds that it "comes from God." Anything "comes from God" that wins. Until then it comes from elsewhere.

Conservatives have gained in the Liverpool municipal elections at the expense of the Protestant party as well as the Liberals. Pastor George Wise and his Orangemen have had a set back. We suppose they are out of favor just now with Providence. Another fact to be noted is that the Catholics mostly voted with the Tories, against the advice of the Irish Nationalist leaders.

The newspapers report that twelve thousand native Christians of the province of Baudin, Tonkin, have informed the French President that they renounce the Roman Catholic religion because the exactions of the missions are more than they can pay. These "savages" are not such fools as the Christians fancy.

The Bishop of London is making a further appeal for the poor clergy. Why not give them four-fifths of his own £10,000 a year? When he does that he may beg of the laity with a better grace. He might also try to get something in the way of "death duties" from the wealthier clergy. We often have to refer to Church parsons who go to—somewhere, and leave a big pile behind them. Only within the last few days we have marked several cases in the newspapers, amongst them being that of the Rev. Walter Howard Stables, of St. Chad's, Leeds, whose estate is valued at £108,571. People are fairly sick of hearing about the poor clergy.

The *Church Times* affirms that God did not send his only begotten Son into the world "to establish a moral code, but to purchase man's redemption," and, in an editorial article, severely censures the Bishop of Llandaff for assisting Dissenters "to promote the moral welfare of young men." His lordship's business, as "a Bishop of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ," is to assist the Holy Ghost to redeem mankind from sin and so insure them against the flames of hell. He ought to be ashamed of himself for co-operating with non-episcopal people, even with Unitarians, in an attempt to improve the morals of the people.

William Armit, of Wishaw, was in the habit of paying religious visits to a worthy old couple, and praying and reading the Bible with them. He went away one day after this pious exercise, and a watch and chain went away too. William admitted the theft in the Burgh Court, and was fined thirty shillings or twenty-one days' imprisonment. Perhaps he misread the "watch and pray" text.

Is adversity bringing the Nonconformists to their senses? It looks like it. At the special Free Church Council meeting on Monday, some thousand delegates being present, the one statement that was greeted with "loud and repeated cheers" was the Rev. J. H. Jowett's—that people were getting tired of both denominationalism and undenominationalism, and that the opinion was growing that it would be "better for the matter of controversy to be removed clean out of the schools."

Christian progress savors of the turtle. Here is the Methodist Church agitated by the Rev. Dr. Downes, who declares that a man who dies on the wrong side of the fence isn't damned for ever, but has another chance in the here-after. In the course of time—say five hundred years hence—these slow Christians will be agitated by some preacher who asks why any man should be damned at all.

Dr. Downes declared that the sceptics had a great handle against Christianity through its orthodox doctrine of a vengeful God. How could a God of love damn the overwhelming majority of the human race? He himself had heard this view expressed by Charles Bradlaugh twenty-five years ago at Rochdale, and such irrefutable logic could not be escaped from. So it appears that Bradlaugh's lecture is bearing fruit after many days. Courage, then, O pioneers!

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

November 18, Birmingham.
December 2, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 9 and 16, Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 18, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 25, Liverpool. 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 11, Liverpool. December 2, Birmingham; 9, Leicester; 16, Newcastle.
- G. FISH (Brisbane).—Very pleased to hear from you. We have no recollection of receiving the previous items to which you refer. Thanks for all your good wishes. See "Sugar Plums" with regard to the cutting.
- G. ROLEFFS.—Your cuttings are welcome. We must repeat that we cannot answer anonymous communications.
- J. J. STUART.—We would rather discuss the whole question someday, out of relation to any one article upon it. Thanks for your inquiry. Mr. Foote is keeping well.
- F. TREMLETT.—Thanks for your trouble, but the solemn imbecilities of a paper like *The Present Truth* are beneath rational attention.
- E. MOORCROFT.—Cuttings welcome. Glad you read our *John Bull* article with so much pleasure.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—Yes, Thomas Paine was a fine writer. His defence of the French Revolution merits all your praises—and more.
- J. CLAYTON.—Glad you sent copies of last week's *Freethinker* and *John Bull* to the different newspapers in your district, and that you and your friends were "quite delighted" with both our articles.
- A. A.—Nuttall's Standard Dictionary, edited by a clergyman, defines an "Atheist," you say, as a "disbeliever in the existence of God." This is a bit nearer the mark than a "denier." We note your view of our Japan article in *John Bull* as "magnificent." We took trouble with it, and it would have been better than it was if we had not been obliged to cut it down at the last moment to fit into the two pages. Of course there is a gain in the Freethought view being presented to a fresh body of readers.
- A. R. WAUGH.—We agree as to the need of such literature, and we hope soon to provide it.
- J. BROUGH.—It is rectified. We are not acquainted with Mr. Guy Bowman, the English Socialist who has just been expelled from Spain. Probably you are right in surmising that Senor Ferrer is dubbed an "Anarchist" by the authorities as a step towards his destruction. It seems a cold-blooded, calculated villainy.
- E. A. CHARLTON.—We gladly announce that F. Hoidin, 17 Caledonian-road, King's-cross, newsagent, sells and stocks the *Freethinker*, and gives its placard the place of honor outside his shop. "Suints" in the neighborhood should deal with him.
- E. R. WOODWARD.—Those who will work for Freethought always have our heartiest good wishes, and when necessary and possible our best assistance.
- JAMES POLLITT says that the total receipts of the Failsforth Secular Sunday School bazaar were £300, and desires to thank all who assisted through the notices in our columns.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- R. JONES.—Glad to hear of the formation of the Merthyr Branch, and welcome you as the first secretary. Mr. Foote will do his best to visit you early in the new year. Please note that lecture notices should be written on separate slips of paper.
- F. J. GOULD.—Thanks for copies of the reports of Mr. Foote's lecture which appeared in the Leicester press. We hope to notice both your beautiful new books next week.
- T. H. ELSTON.—Thanks for copy of Wyman & Sons' letter stating: "If the *Freethinker* is ordered from any of our Stalls we will obtain it for you, but we do not stock it." This is a step in the right direction, and they may go the whole way if pressure upon them is continued.
- G. OTLEY.—You must have misunderstood us. The reference must have been to Freethought Societies, not to Christian Churches. It has always been legal to leave them money.
- C. W. STYRING.—Mr. Foote is keeping well.
- P. W. M.—There is doubtless a good deal of truth in what you say about Spiritualism. But you see it is natural that religion, which began in ghostology, should die out in the same thing. Thanks for sending our *John Bull* articles to twenty "leading lights" of the religious world.
- TOTEM (Plymouth) writes: "Some few months ago a friend of mine sent you my name for the free copies of the *Freethinker* which you distribute, and since that time I have not missed an issue. My friend did me a good turn then, and I only regret that my introduction to your paper did not take place many years ago." Other points of this correspondent's letter we will try to deal with next week.
- F. HOBY.—Sorry we cannot refer you to any definite treatment of the question within a small compass. Many aspects of it have been treated from time to time in our columns.

J. A. REID.—In our next.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote does not reside in London now, and whenever he lectures there on Sunday he has to stay with some hospitable friends in North London. From their house he had to make his way on Sunday evening, in all that weather, to Woolwich, where he was billed to lecture in the Town Hall. It took him, his wife, and his friends, more than an hour and a half to get there, and nearly two hours to get back again. They were all in a half-sodden condition when they reached shelter, warmth, and supper at half-past eleven. Still, it was an enjoyable evening. In spite of the wind and rain, which swept the dull streets of Woolwich almost as clean of people as could have been done by artillery, the handsome, bright, and well-lit Town Hall held a very gratifying audience. From the first it was evident that a fair contingent of "the enemy" was present, and before the meeting ended some of them became very unruly. Once or twice the chairman threatened to have a special sinner removed, but the lecturer begged for patience and good-temper, and things went on without a positive rumpus to the end. Mr. Foote was fortunately in first-rate condition, and was able to hold the audience well in hand for nearly two hours. He was listened to attentively for the most part, and there was plenty of laughter and cheering, the applause at the finish being really enthusiastic. When the chairman invited questions they came on fast and furious. One orthodox man, with a loud voice and a particularly insolent manner, after asking several questions, intimated that he had a dozen or so more—which the chairman told him to keep for another occasion. Mr. Foote replied to all the questions when they were over amidst a scene of great merriment. Then a Christian representative had ten minutes in opposition. He spoke fairly well, but he wound up with the remarkable declaration that if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead it was a waste of time to teach children virtue and honor. Mr. Foote's reply to this gentleman was freely interrupted by the unruly element, but he declined to be upset, and they got tired before he did; and his final sentences evoked a perfect storm of cheering.

That was the first Freethought lecture delivered indoors at Woolwich for many years. We hope it will be followed up. The new N. S. S. Branch includes a number of active and intelligent young men who mean business, and may be trusted to carry on a vigorous propaganda as far as it is possible in the face of unscrupulous local bigotry. Mr. Foote will try to give them another lecture before the close of the winter season, and visits by other lecturers may be arranged in the interim.

We must not omit to acknowledge the help rendered by Miss Vance, Miss Stanley, and Mr. Samuels, who went down from a great distance in the rain, in order to assist in the business arrangements of the meeting.

The Woolwich friends all laugh at the Rev. Stanley Parker's "converted infidels," of which he has, apparently, some dozens on hand. The one whose name was given as Amy never belonged to the Branch, was never known at all to its members, and does not appear to have been an unbeliever at all. And the cream of the joke is that he denies that he was converted by the Rev. Stanley Parker. The whole affair is a Torreyism. It is not worth another moment's attention.

London Freethinkers will have an opportunity (the first this season) of hearing Mr. Foote in December. The Queen's (Minor) Hall has been engaged for two lectures by him on the second and third Sunday evenings. A more extensive propaganda of Freethought will be carried on in London in the new year.

Applications can now be received at our publishing office for copies of Mr. Cohen's eight-page tract on "The Salvation Army and Its Work." It is well printed in good type on good paper; it looks nice and reads better, and should have a very wide circulation. Towards the expenses of its production we have received the following further subscriptions:—R. Taylor, 2s. 6d.; Collected at Mr. Cohen's lecture (Birmingham), 5s.; R. Gibbon, 5s. 6d.; W. Cranack, 2s. 6d.

Persons who apply for any considerable number of this Salvation Army tract, if they are unknown at our office, must please give some evidence of their good faith, as we cannot run the risk of having copies destroyed by Christian fanatics.

Mr. Symes visits Liverpool to-day (Nov. 11) and delivers two lectures, afternoon and evening, for the N. S. S. Branch in the Milton Hall, Daulby-street. We hope the local "saints" will give him overflowing audiences and an enthusiastic welcome.

We attach great importance to the circulation of Mr. F. Bonte's remarkable pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*. It is a well-written and deeply interesting story of a long and gradual conversion from Catholicism to Secularism. The price of one penny put upon it is only nominal, the object being to prevent waste and secure judicious distribution. By placing this pamphlet in the hands of friends and acquaintances Freethinkers will do a real service to the Freethought cause. At a trifling cost they may do a very effective piece of missionary work. We trust they will do it.

A new attraction will be introduced at the Camberwell Secular Hall this Sunday evening (Nov. 11), in the shape of an orchestra of professional musicians. A good selection of up-to-date secular music is promised before and after Mr. Lloyd's lecture, and it is hoped to make this a regular feature at future meetings organised by the Camberwell Branch.

In the midst of the Progressive rout in London we are glad to note the return of our friend, Mr. J. M. Neate, on the Bethnal Green Borough Council. He was fourth on the list of nine successful candidates in the South Ward. Mr. Neate is one of the quiet, effective workers. He is a vice-president of the N. S. S., a director of the Secular Society, Ltd., and a director of the Freethought Publishing Company, Ltd. Long may the cause have the benefit of his services.

Mr. Harold Begbie interviewed M. Gustave Hervé, the well-known French Socialist, and published the result in the London *Daily Chronicle*. We have nothing to do in these columns with M. Hervé's social and economic views—and prophecies; but we may note one of his statements with respect to religion in France. "In all Paris," he said, "I can think only of three notable men, men notable at the Sorbonne, who believe in the existence of a soul." The apologists of Christianity in this country, who are always talking about those distinguished scientific friends of theirs, Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge, should make a note of this—and remember it.

M. Hervé spoke with the utmost plainness with regard to the Catholic Church:—

"What does the Church think of that? Believe me, France never was a religious nation. Priest-ridden?—yes; but a religious nation, never. And now the Church is to pay her long debt. Ah, you will see! From the first she has been the Church of the Rich, the Church of Fashion, the Church of Inequality, and the Church of Darkness. Science has been shackled by her, politics have worn her fetters, and the poor have suffered under her lash—always it has been so. I speak of the Catholics. The Protestants?—no; but they are so small here, a little drop of rain. In France religion means only one thing, the Catholics. It is the Catholics that we shall destroy."

This is all right, up to a certain point. Opponents of the Catholic Church have a right to destroy it if they can; but they have no right to use means that violate their own principles. Freedom is as sacred when Freethinkers are triumphant as it is when they are oppressed. We may add that we hope M. Hervé is not too optimistic. He does not believe that the Catholic Church has any real power of resistance left in it. We trust he is right; but—we shall see.

A very remarkable article on "God and General Minn" appeared in a recent issue of the *Northern Echo*. Our contemporary had spoken of the foolishness of such brutal and tyrannical men as General Minn hoping to escape "the dark justice of God." Whereupon, it was asked by a Newcastle Freethinker, Mr. J. G. Bartram, how General Minn could be anything but a mere instrument in the hands of God Almighty. A discussion then ensued in the *Echo*, and Mr. Bartram found an able seconder in Dr. Stuart. The great difficulty, of course, was to keep the orthodox correspondents to the real point at issue. Now the editor of the *Echo* devotes a leading article to the controversy. He does justice to the Freethought disputants, and honestly admits that an Atheist is one whose thoughts of life and duty are "without God"—not one who dogmatically denies the existence of God. He also admits that the doctrines of the Fall and the Redemption, as our forefathers believed them, have been destroyed by the great doctrine of Evolution. But he argues that "The proof of the goodness of God lies in the fact that He has placed in good the seeds of life and in evil the seeds of death, so that good is always multiplying itself and evil is always self-destructive." This is, in our opinion, a perfectly fallacious answer. But it is not our purpose to examine it at present. Our object is rather to draw attention to the welcome tone of the article, its courtesy to Freethinkers, its admission of the difficulty of the problem raised by them, and its frank facing of it in a spirit of intellectual and moral candor. These qualities are more important than the accuracy of a particular argument.

A Branch of the N. S. S. is being formed at Merthyr Tydvil, and may be regarded as one result of the Welsh revival. Ten members were enrolled on Sunday, eight others have given in their names, and propaganda will be started forthwith. The president is described to us as "a man of ability and a splendid leader." For fourteen years, until five years ago, he was a local preacher. The first lecture will be delivered to-day (Nov. 11) by Mr. Hugh Menai at Ruskin Rooms at 2.30; subject, "Haeckel's Monistic Theory." Admission free.

Mr. Whitelaw-Reid, the American Ambassador, has been telling a Dundee audience something about "religious education" in America. Broadly speaking, he said, religious education was not compulsory in any public school, and not permitted in most. Religious exercises at the daily opening of a school seemed to be growing less frequent, especially in the great cities. This explains why America is ahead of Great Britain in the matter of national education. There is less fiction and more fact in the schools.

Mr. Bertram Dobell, the devoted editor and publisher of the works of the late James Thomson ("B. V."), and no mean author on his own account, is by trade a bookseller, and issues a monthly catalogue of second-hand books from 77 Charing Cross-road, London, W.C. The November catalogue contains a number of items that have made our mouth water. We mark them with blue pencil, and fancy we have bought them, but of course we haven't and are not likely to, for our friendly millionaire has not come along yet. Mr. Dobell offers a copy of the Second Folio Shakespeare for £125. He has also some original Ben Jonson folios, and some original William Blakes, one of them running up to £90. But the Shelley items are more in the way of Freethinker readers as such. There is a copy of the first edition of "Alastor" priced at £20, and a copy of the extremely rare privately printed first edition of "Queen Mab" at £31; a copy of the excessively rare first edition of "The Cenci" at £64. What a chance for Andrew Carnegie if he only had a taste for such things! But the moral of these prices is the important point. Shelley had next to no readers while he was alive—except for those who devoured the pirated editions of "Queen Mab"; and now a first edition of anything of his fetches ever so many times its weight in gold. Most of the copies that were printed were probably sold for a penny or twopence a pound as waste-paper. Nobody thought of what they would be worth in the next century.

Common sense is primitive logic. It does not depend on books, and it is superior to culture. It is the perception of analogy—the instinct of causation. It guides the savage through trackless forests, and the astronomer through infinite space. It makes the burnt child dread the fire, and a Darwin see in a few obvious facts the solution of a mystery. It built the first hut and the last palace; the first canoe and the last ocean steamer. It constructed docks, and laid down railways, applied steam to machinery and locomotion, prompted every mechanical discovery, instigated all material progress, and transformed an ape-like beast into a civilised man.—G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."

Evolution and Design.

WE have been reading of late a work dealing with *Evolution and Design*,* published towards the close of last year, and written by the deceased John Young, M.D., some time Regius Professor of Natural History in the University of Glasgow. The book referred to contains a collection of essays which, as the preface informs us, were intended to form part of an elaborate work on Design in Nature, the preparation of material for which occupied much of the leisure of Professor Young for some years previous to his last illness. The author did not live to revise and finally arrange these essays for publication, and they are given to the world as he left them, by his son-in-law, who not unjustly supposes that they deserve attention from the reading public, or from that section of it which is interested in the subject dealt with.

Dr. Young's reflections, which, indeed, are only mildly critical of the position of atheistic science, certainly merited publication. One feels however, in reading, that had they received the author's revision, and had the several points been more fully elaborated, they might have been made to hang much better together, with consequent added cogency to the argument. Of the tone of Dr. Young's criticism one can make no complaint. Though he dissents in his essays (we may be permitted to use the present tense although Dr. Young is no more) from the conclusions of leading authorities in the realm of science, his own high measure of education and culture could not but compel him to recognise such qualities in others even when such others differed from him. And his moderation of tone throughout is in pleasing contrast to that which pervades many clerical utterances on the same subject. But your true man of science, even when temperamentally biased towards religion, is never dogmatic. His object is the ascertainment of truth, and his opinions are in general expressed under an abiding sense of the limitations of his knowledge. So it is with Professor Young; and the result is that one can scan the pages of his work without experiencing that feeling of contemptuous scorn which one finds so difficult of suppression when reading the pitiful twaddle that constitutes the bulk of Christian apologetic literature.

But, as anyone who peruses *Evolution and Design* will speedily discover, Dr. Young is no champion of orthodoxy in any sense that would satisfy the overwhelming majority of the adherents of the various religious sects. It is true that these latter are nowadays thankful for small mercies, and snatch with avidity at anything in the shape of encouragement extended to them by students of the exact sciences. But to all save the most optimistic of religious people the comfort extended by Dr. Young may well seem cold enough. In effect, all that he endeavors to show is, that evolution does not adequately account for many things found in nature, which might be granted by the scientist without yielding much of satisfaction to the religionist. Because, after all, science does explain *some* things, while religion explains *nothing*. And it should seem the more sensible course to accept as guide that which asks us to believe nothing without evidence, rather than religion which submits for our approval mere unsupported assertion.

It would be impossible here to examine in detail the numerous considerations put forward by Dr. Young, or even to enumerate the instances he cites where existing facts are to all appearance at variance with the theories of the champions of evolution. His chapters on Animal Mind, Instinct, and Animal Conduct are highly interesting and stimulative. In dealing with insects, parasites, and the lower forms of animal life generally, he shows very effectively the great variety and range of phenomena calling for explanation. And he very ably presses home the

difficulty of admitting what he styles a "mechanical" solution. The earlier sections of the book—where the author deals with the cosmic beginning and the origin of organic matter—make rather difficult reading for the man in the street, but will well repay the thoughtful for perusal. At one place he takes exception to Spencer's references to the Unknowable, which he considers are mutually contradictory, inasmuch as Spencer, while ascribing phenomena to the operation of an unknowable power, assigns to this unknown somewhat at least two attributes—namely, energy and permanence. Dr. Young argues that as we can only know a thing through its attributes, and are here put into possession of two, we are obliged to deny the "unknowability" of the power alluded to by Spencer. But this seems merely verbal cleverness on Dr. Young's part. Surely what Spencer postulated with regard to the cosmos is verifiable by analogy in human experience, and one may still speak of energy and permanence as appertaining to matter while holding that the ultimate source of such attributes can only be classed as unknowable.

Professor Young characterises as "remarkable" the argument that failures, or what we reckon as such, should be put forward in disproof of design. If he meant that failures are not always to be taken as evidence of lack of purpose he would be right. For instance, if we discovered in the studio of an artist friend several abortive and discarded attempts at a pictorial masterpiece we would not regard these "failures" as indicating lack of purpose or the absence of design. Amongst errant human beings blunders and successes stand related to each other. Triumphs are built up from initial failures. Hence in the sphere of human operations failures are every whit as good evidence of design as successes are, if—and when—we have some conception of the end the artificer had in view. With regard to the works of man, we have, in general, a knowledge of their object, and in so far as we have that knowledge of their object we are competent to adjudge them successes or failures according as they approximate to or diverge from the end in view. Moreover, from finite and fallible man we have no right to expect perfection. From an omniscient and omnipotent Deity we have no right to look for anything else.

But what Professor Young is attempting to do in the passage now under consideration is to turn the tables on those who oppose the teleological argument. These latter, he says, object that the notion of design involves an importation of human thought into nature. But, he adds triumphantly, so does the argument from failures. "Is it possible," he asks, "to identify a failure without having first determined purpose? Is there even a criterion of failure in any sense whatever?" Again: "The standard of imperfection is an arbitrary one, which imputes to man the power of judgment which is refused to him in the matter of design." In effect he maintains that those who object to the argument from design in nature are not justified in using the argument from failure. It will be perceived that this contention is rather ingenious than ingenuous. Because it may fairly be asked with regard to this success and failure argument—Who began it? Scientists have merely retorted the apparent blundering, waste, and cruelty in nature upon the theologians who brought forward the marvellous adaptations in nature as affording proof of the existence of a designer. In either case we have the establishment of a purely human criterion. And if the intellect of man is competent to judge and appraise the seemingly *beneficent* dispensations of nature, it must be equally competent to pass verdict on what appear to be her *maleficent* manifestations. To put the matter in another way, either the teleologist is appealing to our reason or he is not. If our reason is not to be judge, why waste time in elaborating the evidence for design in nature? And if our reason is to be judge, we must claim to exercise it in all directions. From time immemorial the theologian has been graciously pleased to allow man the use of his reason so long as it led him towards God, but if it led him on any other course its guidance

* *Evolution and Design*, by Professor Young, M.D. (James Maclehose & Sons, Glasgow).

was not to be trusted for a moment. We are not inclined to tolerate such limitation in the twentieth century. Either our reason is the supreme court of appeal, or it is not. If it be the supreme court of appeal, then there can be nothing outwith its jurisdiction. We can admit of no reserved cases.

One consideration Professor Young seems to think most weighty, for he mentions it more than once. He lays stress on the enormous period of time required if we are to accept evolution and natural selection as accounting for things as we know them to-day. He contends to the effect that geology refuses, as it were, to date the birth certificate of the earth far enough back to allow for the almost infinite number of permutations and variations essential to the process of terrestrial development as conceived by evolutionists. This is truly a very slender reed to rest upon with any degree of confidence. Of course, it is absolutely impossible for anyone with a strict regard for accuracy to speak definitely, far less finally, respecting the age of the world or the time that has elapsed since first it became the home of organic life. But if reliance on our present dubiety in this matter be the main (if not only) stay of the more intelligent supporters of the Christian idea as applied to the origin of species, then indeed is their cause in a bad way. It is true that those who hold by evolution may be inclined to exaggerate the antiquity of the earth as a necessary correlative of their theory. But it is not less true that those who believe in a special creation are disposed to strain things in the other direction. Between the two extremes (the estimates vary from seventeen million to 150 million years or more for the geologic period) there is surely a happy mean that quite adequately meets the requirements of the evolutionist.

Besides, as (strangely enough) even Dr. Young himself points out on another page, biological evolution may not have required such an immense expanse of time as many people imagine. And it may also be suggested that there is no decisive reason for supposing that the pace of evolution must necessarily have been uniform throughout the entire period of the world's history. At various stages the development of new types and the extinction of old ones may have been facilitated and enormously expedited by strictly natural causes. It must be remembered that the farther we cast back in the history of our planet the conditions revealed are more and more unstable. Which means that changes abrupt in their nature and rapid in their sequence were quite in the order of things. In the light of this knowledge, even if we confine ourselves to the limited geologic period favored by Dr. Young, the possibilities seem sufficiently ample.

We have adverted to the poor consolation our author's essays are likely to afford the orthodox believer who is intelligent enough to understand them. They are open to the identical criticism that applies to all the quasi-scientific defences of the God idea we have come across. The God we have left as a result of their labor and argument is not worth troubling about from a religious point of view. The surprising circumstance is, that this fact is not perceived by those religious people who welcome such scientific deliverances with an enthusiasm bordering on the ridiculous. The marvels of adaptation that the study of insects and parasites furnishes us with are in many cases more readily reconciled with the existence of a malevolent deity than with the conception of a benevolent providence. We have reached too advanced a stage of civilisation in these countries for religious people to worship a malevolent God. Such an idea would be intolerable; therefore the Christian God nowadays is Infinite Goodness and Infinite Love. The universe reveals no such being to the man of science or to anyone else who studies it. Professor Young may urge we see not the end in view, and are consequently unqualified to judge of the method. But neither does the religious individual see the end in view, yet he pronounces the method good. This is because he begins his reasoning from the wrong end. He argues *a priori* instead of

a posteriori. God is good, exclaims the Christian, therefore all his works must be good, whatever evidence there may be to the contrary. This may be good enough reasoning for a Christian, but it is scarcely scientific. Few things are more certain than that it is impossible to find the Christian Deity in nature. One may, indeed, conceivably reason from nature up to nature's God; but nature's God is not a suitable object for religious love and worship.

G. SCOTT.

Is Corporal Punishment Degrading?—III.

By R. G. INGERSOLL

(Concluded from p. 700.)

THE morality of the Old Testament is not always of the purest, when Jehovah tried to induce Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go, he never took the ground that slavery was wrong. He did not seek to convince by argument, to soften by pity—or to persuade by kindness. He depended on miracles and plagues. He killed helpless babes and the innocent beasts of the fields. No wonder the Dean appeals to the Bible to justify the beating of children. So, too, we are told that "all sensible persons, Christian and otherwise, will admit that there are in every child born into the world tendencies to evil that need rooting out."

The Dean undoubtedly believes in the creed of the established church and yet he does not hesitate to say "that a god of infinite goodness and intelligence never created a child—never allowed one to be born into the world without planting in its little heart tendencies to evil that need rooting out."

So, Solomon is quoted to the effect "that he that spareth his rod hateth his son." To me it has always been a matter of amazement why civilised people, living in the century of Darwin and Humboldt should quote as authority the words of Solomon, a murderer, an ingrate, an idolater, and a polygamist. A man so steeped and sodden in ignorance that he really believed he could be happy with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. The Dean seems to regret that flogging is no longer practised in the British Navy, and quotes with great cheerfulness a passage from Deuteronomy to prove that forty lashes on the naked back will meet with the approval of God. He insists that St. Paul endured corporal punishment without the feeling of degradation not only, but that he remembered his sufferings with a sense of satisfaction. Does the Dean think that the satisfaction of St. Paul justified the wretches who beat and stoned him. Leaving the Hebrews, the Dean calls the Greeks as witnesses to establish the beneficence of flogging. They resorted to corporal punishment in their schools, says the Dean, and then naively remarks "that Plutarch was opposed to this."

The Dean admits that in Rome it was found necessary to limit by law the punishment that a father might inflict upon his children, and yet he seems to regret that the legislature interfered. The Dean observes that "Quintillian severely censured corporal punishment," and then accounts for the weakness and folly of the censure, by saying that "Quintillian wrote in the days when the glories of Rome were departed." And then adds these curiously savage words: "It is worthy of remark that no children treated their parents with greater tenderness and reverence than did those of Rome in the days when the father possessed the unlimited power of punishment."

Not quite satisfied with the strength of his case, although sustained by Moses and Solomon, St. Paul, and several schoolmasters, he proceeds to show that God is thoroughly on his side, not only in theory, but in practice "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

The Dean asks this question: "which custom, kindness or severity, does experience show to be the less dangerous. 'And he answers from a new heart.'

I fear that I must unhesitatingly give the palm to severity.....

I have found that there have been more reverence and affection, more willingness to make sacrifices for parents, more pleasure in contributing to their pleasure or happiness in that life where the tendency has been to a severe method of treatment."

Is it possible that any good man exists who is willing to gain the affection of his children in that way? How could such a man beat and bruise the flesh of his babes, knowing that they would give him in return obedience and love. That they would fill the evening of his days—the leafless winter of his life with perfect peace?

Think of being fed and clothed by children you had whipped—whose flesh you had scarred. Think of feeling in the hour of death upon your withered lips—your withered cheeks,—the kisses and the tears of one whom you had beaten—upon whose flesh were still the marks of your lash!

The whip degrades, a severe father teaches his children to dissemble, their love is pretence and their obedience a species of self defence. Fear is the father of lies. The good father, the companion, the [Here the manuscript ends.]

Correspondence.

A NEWSPAPER INCIDENT; AND A MORAL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Just in the same way as it may, with truth, be said of the Christian pulpit that it has, in turn, blessed and anathematised every form of economic or bodily slavery, so it may be said of the press that there exists no prejudice, however inane or absurd, that it has not maintained in opposition to intellectual development. In other words, the specious day-laborism of the press has conspired with the intellectual reaction and cowardliness of the pulpit to keep humanity subject unto the petrified creeds handed down from reason's nonage. Nor is this conspiracy a thing of yesterday; but, on the contrary, a potent factor of modern-day existence, that must inevitably receive the consideration of present-day anti-superstitionists. For if, in the past, the press held up Thomas Paine to ridicule and public censure as a moral typhus, a species of ethical small-pox, only to praise the modern Higher Critic; if no good word could be found within its pages for Richard Carlile or Charles Bradlaugh when such would have been of real assistance; if, to-day, humor at the cleric's expense figures in the columns of the papers whose former staff poured torrents of abuse upon the head of the initiators of the practice; it is no less certain that, to-day, a large section of the press deliberately misrepresents the evolution hypothesis, and spells the now familiar word with a big "E," and seeks to elevate a description of a natural process into a sort of metaphysical ultimate reality as absurd as the theologian's God. It is equally true that the press does not desire to do justice to the Secular solution of the education difficulty. Of this fact, the incident that I am about to relate will serve as an all-sufficient proof, although such incidents are more often the rule than the exception. It is in connection with the article on "The Church, the Chapel, and the Child," contributed to the columns of *John Bull* by Mr. G. W. Foote. One may not always agree with Mr. Foote; but, so far as Secularism is concerned, no one can deny that he speaks as one having authority—one who, whoever else has failed, has remained true to his colors. The loyalty of his adherence, the fidelity he has displayed in foul weather as well as in fair, entitles the President of the N. S. S. to speak in a capacity that it is not given to anyone else to do; for there is no other avowed Secularist that has so consistent or so brilliant a record. It would, therefore, be naturally thought that some notice would have been taken of this contribution. Not so.

In an office—that of a well-known Birreligious London daily paper—not a thousand miles from the *Freethinker* office, there is to be found a certain "Library and Editorial Intelligence Department." This useful adjunct to sensational day-laborism and morbid news-setting, is an American creation, and contains collections of press cuttings and opinions on most subjects of current importance. Amongst other things, it contains a great deal of matter upon Mr. Birrell's Education Bill—the Bill's passage through the Commons, its consideration by the Lords, the opinions of Catholics, of Anglicans, and the inevitable Nonconformists. Here, safely filed away in special folders, are the views of

Catholic laymen and unimportant priests; of unknown provincial clerics, whose views have only seen the light of publicity in a small local paper; or of quack "D.D." Nonconforming ministers of varying degrees of unimportance. In all, there must be collected about 200 columns of comments and opinions, all repetitions of the three positions enunciated, all regarded as vastly important, and mostly emanating from nonentities. Amongst the whole collection there is but one pamphlet urging Secular education, and that "for religious reasons." There was, therefore, room for the filing "for future reference" of Mr. Foote's article.

The day of publication of *John Bull* came round, and the copy duly found its way to the department mentioned of the newspaper in question. It was duly looked through by a responsible chief, cut up, and filed. Relegated to the waste-paper basket, as *being of no importance*, was the portion, containing *intact*, the article of the President of the N. S. S. Its relegation had been the work of a competent journalist! That Catholics had ever been opposed to the free circulation of the Scriptures, that the laws of the Index forbade the acquainting of the laity with its teachings first-hand, would have been news to him. That Protestants had been equally as strenuous in their opposition to the free use of man's reason upon its contents, never entered his thoughts. All that he knew was, that "capable journalism" required a systematisation of current prejudices, an interpretation of public opinion, not a philosophic moulding thereof. To attempt to so mould or cultivate the public mind would be rank sedition or blatant blasphemy! That would never do! And hence the incident mentioned. Cannot my readers draw the deduction? The twentieth century is held to be an age of enlightenment and culture; and "superior people" are already deprecating the thoroughgoing iconoclasm of the sincere and thinking Secularist propagandist. But "superior persons" are rarely thinkers, and invariably insincere. To the thoughtful, however, I would suggest that, although but a straw, the incident I have recorded emphasises the necessity of consecrating ourselves more than ever to the cause of mental freedom and moral elevation. Persecution begets the iconoclast, but it is a hypocritical indifference and a scarcely perceivable, but deep-rooted ostracism, that tests the mettle of the pioneer. An insincere flattery is also abroad, and the snare is not prepared in vain for some. If, therefore, we would be loyal to the principles that animated the dead pioneers of Freethought, we will not be deceived by the temporary concessions of the orthodox; but, instead, we shall continue the battle for mental freedom, until humanity has passed by, on its flank, the creed that has for centuries polluted the natural kindliness of the human heart and hindered the progress of learning. For not until it shall have been rid of the palsy of superstition will the human race be able to take note of and appreciate those things that are true and honest, that are just and pure, are socially helpful and individually virtuous.

GUY A. ALDRED.

GOLDSMITH ON RIDICULE.

Ridicule has ever been the most powerful enemy of enthusiasm, and properly the only antagonist that can be opposed to it with success. Persecution only serves to propagate new religions; they acquire fresh vigor beneath the executioner and the axe, and, like some vivacious insects, multiply by dissection. It is also impossible to combat enthusiasm with reason, for, though it makes a show of resistance, it soon eludes the pressure, refers you to distinctions not to be understood and feelings which it cannot explain. A man who would endeavor to fix an enthusiast by argument might as well attempt to spread quicksilver with his fingers. The only way to conquer a visionary is to despise him; the stake, the faggot, and the disputing Doctor, in some measure ennoble the opinions they are brought to oppose; they are harmless against innovating pride; contempt alone is truly dreadful. Hunters generally know the most vulnerable part of the beasts they pursue, by the care which every animal takes to defend the side which is weakest; on what side the enthusiast is most vulnerable may be known by the care which he takes in the beginning to work his disciples into gravity, and guard them against the power of ridicule, —*Citizen of the World*, Letter CXI.

It is curious to remark that nearly all men of sterling worth are simple in their manners; and yet nearly always simple manners are taken as a sign of little worth.—*Leopardi*.

'Tis with our judgments as our watches; none
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.

—*Pope*.

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, J. T. Lloyd, "Is Secularism Reasonable?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "What Do We Owe to Christianity?"

OUTDOOR.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Brockwell Park, 3.15, Guy Aldred, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, H. Percy Ward, "Can a Socialist be a Christian?"

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): J. M. Robertson, M.P., 12 noon, "Robert Owen"; 6.30, "Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Wednesday, Nov. 14, at 8, Miss Agnes Pettigrew, "Influence of Christianity on Social Conditions."

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S. (No. 9 Lodge Room, Trade and Friendly Hall): Tuesday, at 8, Important Meeting to arrange for visit of Messrs. Foote and Symes.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): Joseph Symes, 3, "Some Interesting Facts in My Australian Life, 1884-1906"; 7, "The Absolute Absurdity of Believing in a Christian Heaven."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, John R. Ferrey, Miscellaneous Dramatic Recital.

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Nov. 15, at 8, Councillor A. W. Hildreth, "Ancient Greece and Modern Britain."

PLYMOUTH RATIONALIST SOCIETY (Foresters' Hall, Octagon): 7, R. Smith, "Magic and Mystery." With illustrative experiments.

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Room, Town Hall): 6.30, S. Holman, "Does Atheism Satisfy?"

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Business Meeting.

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