

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXVI.—No 46

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1906

PRICE TWOPENCE

*Stars are of mighty use : the Night
Is dark and long ;
The Road foul ; and where one goes right,
Six may go wrong.
One twinkling ray,
Shot o'er some cloud,
May clear much way,
And guide a crowd.*

—HENRY VAUGHAN.

France and the Church.

In the *Freethinker* of August 26 we wrote an article on "France and the Pope," in which we ventured to warn our Freethought brethren on the other side of the Channel against violating the fundamental principle of the Separation between Church and State, and creating an opportunity for the Catholic Church to stand before the world as the champion of liberty and justice. That article was favorably commented upon in several quarters. Mr. F. Bonte, whose fine pamphlet relating his conversion from Catholicism to Atheism is circulating so widely, sent us a word of warm approval. No one can doubt his intelligence and sincerity, yet he feared, as we did, that the French Freethinkers would take a bad leaf out of their enemy's book and do their own cause a serious injury. But a different view of our article was expressed by "J. W. B." in a letter which we printed in the *Freethinker* of November 4, and to which we appended a brief editorial note stating that, as the subject was one of very great importance, we should return to it at an early date.

We said at the time that "J. W. B." was a man of brains and accomplishments, but that he displayed an extraordinary misunderstanding both of our articles and of the situation in France. Reading his letter over again, we perceive it to be another evidence of the truth that controversy is so often useless because the controversialists so frequently reply to what was never said. Our correspondent, for instance, referred to our "suggested comparison" between Ireland under the old anti-Catholic laws and France under the new Separation Law. Now we neither made nor suggested this comparison. We mentioned Ireland twice in the course of our article, and in each case it was in illustration of the important truth, which M. Combes and others overlooked, that the Catholic Church, outside France, had been able to get bread for its priests and to hold its own in every way, not only without State patronage, but even in spite of State persecution. And our correspondent is naturally acute enough to see that the more shocking the persecution of Catholicism was in Ireland the more it proves the truth of our contention.

Our principal quarrel with the Separation Law is that it does not enact separation. The divorce between Religion and the State should be absolute. There should be no subsequent relationship of any kind whatever. But the Separation Law provides for a continued relationship, and provides the machinery to carry it on. All contracts have (at least) two parties to them. In this case, however, the State, on its own initiative, without consulting the other party, undertakes to settle every condition

itself. And the penalty for non-acceptance of its conditions is not only the loss of every scrap of property, even down to the "sacred" objects in the churches, but the loss of the very churches themselves as places of worship. Now it cannot be right, on the face of it, for one party to settle all the conditions of a contract for the other. Even if we waive that objection, the fact remains that the Separation Law sets up a machinery, through the *Associations Cultuelles*, which it should be obvious that the Catholic Church cannot possibly accept; for, in every parish in France, it would virtually hand over the control of the Church to *laymen*—a principle which is totally opposed to the history, traditions, and discipline of the Catholic Church. By means of the *Associations Cultuelles* the State is really seeking to revolutionise the Catholic Church; or rather to wedge it open, break it up, and put a new Church in its place. And in the name of Separation, as well as in the name of Freethought, we deny that the State has a right to do anything of the kind.

Our correspondent makes the naive remark that "the power of selecting their own ministers is an extension of freedom" to the Catholics. But what has the State, especially under a *Separation* law, to do with the "spiritual" liberty of religionists? There is no compulsion in a Church that is not supported by the State, and every Catholic in France can get all the "spiritual" freedom he wants by walking out of the Church he belongs to and joining another, or remaining outside Churches altogether. But perhaps we can best show our correspondent's mistake by taking an English illustration. The Wesleyan Methodist Church appoints ministers over the heads of individual congregations. Suppose, therefore, that the Wesleyan Methodist Church were in the position of the Catholic Church in France to-day; suppose it were being dealt with under a new Separation law; would it be just for the Government to dictate that the ministers should be appointed locally?—and would it not be adding insult to injury to call this an extension of freedom?

The distinction between "antagonism to the Roman Catholic religion" and meddling with the internal economy of the Roman Catholic Church, seems to us a metaphysical quibble. For all practical purposes, the Roman Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic religion are one and the same thing. In any case, such distinctions should not come within the cognizance of the State.

Our correspondent makes the radical mistake of not placing himself at the Catholic's point of view. But that point of view is everything to the Catholic himself. It is no use telling him what should or should not agitate his mind. He is to judge of that himself. Freethinkers have no more claim to advise him than he has to advise them. Advice, on both sides, should at least be kept until it is asked for.

We have smiled at the idea that the Catholic Church has no reserves of energy and devotion to draw upon. We must also smile at the idea that it is going to be easily worsted in a diplomatic struggle. Some of the subtlest heads in Europe are managing its affairs. The truth is that the Pope's encyclical was an astute move in the game. It throws the next move—the all-important move—upon the French Government. All the Church has to do is to wait. It is the Republic that will have to take the responsi-

bility of action. And it seems to us that the Government perceives this with considerable anxiety. The speech of M. Briand, the Minister of Public Instruction, which the Chamber, by a majority of 376 votes against 93, ordered to be printed and publicly posted in every commune in France, must have been a great disappointment to the hastier friends of Separation. Freethinker as he is, he was obliged to tell them that the Catholics are not in revolt against the law; they simply decline to avail themselves of the law—which is a very different thing. He admitted that the Pope had a perfect right not to countenance the Associations. The Government was not anti-religious, there was not going to be any war on religion. It was not the duty of the Government to persecute Catholics or any other sect, but to furnish them with the means of practising their beliefs. Such declarations show that the problems created by the Separation Law are being approached in a more reasonable spirit.

Separatists still declare that they will have no dealings with any foreign power—meaning the Pope. In this we think they are mistaken. They would have saved themselves a world of trouble if they had dealt with the Catholic Church as the Catholic Church until the Separation Law had been carried out completely. From that moment the Church and the State could have gone their own ways in absolute independence of each other. It is always a tactical blunder to humiliate your enemy; and it is perfectly foolish to imagine that any Separation Law, especially in a country like France, could be carried into practical effect without a considerable amount of patient accommodation in matters of detail. Even now, at the eleventh hour, it ought not to be impossible to arrive at a sensible understanding, and, without sacrificing any principle, to settle this matter along the line of least resistance. After all, Catholics are Frenchmen, and have as much claim to consideration as Freethinkers have; and we may add that the bigotry of unbelief is no improvement on the bigotry of religion.

G. W. FOOTE.

How to Find God.

Two or three weeks ago I dealt with the first of Dr. Horton's lectures on modern unbelief. The second of this series has now been sent forth, and although I do not threaten the readers of this journal with a full account of each one as it is delivered, there is a certain interest in knowing what a leader in the Nonconformist world has to say on behalf of his own beliefs and against those of his opponents. The chief difficulty in the way is to take Dr. Horton seriously. I do not mean by this that Dr. Horton is not quite serious himself, or that others do not take him with equal gravity. He evidently believes in himself, and the Nonconformists as plainly take him upon his own valuation. But to one who is an outsider, and who has not prefaced the reading of Dr. Horton's addresses with the narcotising influence of a prayer, it is a matter of no little trouble to deal with his arguments as solemnly as one would wish. However, I will do my best, only begging readers to remember that even with the most religious, one's command over one's visibles has its limits.

The title of Dr. Horton's address is "The Knowledge of God." Not the belief in God, be it noted, but the *knowledge*, and as Kant said on a somewhat similar occasion, to meet a person who has that *knowledge* is to gratify the search of a lifetime. Dr. Horton's program does not, therefore, err on the side of modesty—only, one may add at the outset, the author of it scarcely fills the bill. Dr. Horton's position is that the man who is without a knowledge of God—of course, after reading his address—is "so far an imperfect man. He is only partially educated, only partially developed." This deliverance is doubtless extremely gratifying to Dr. Horton's congregation, who all have a knowledge of God, and who are, therefore, completely educated and completely developed, but it has two considerable drawbacks. In the first place, numbers of men and women whom

the world would not easily call undeveloped are without any such knowledge, and declare their belief in the impossibility of ever acquiring it. And, secondly, all of us have been where Dr. Horton now is—not perhaps in *exactly* the same mental condition, but substantially. All of us, that is, did once believe in a God. We know all the arguments, we know all the feelings connected with that belief. We have been where he is; he has not been where we are. We can, therefore, speak with much greater authority about his mental condition than he can speak about ours. And in view of the further and larger fact that the more educated the world becomes the less Theistic it is, there is very clearly far greater reason to treat the non-belief in God as a product of education and development than the reverse.

Dr. Horton's sermon is chiefly concerned with Herbert Spencer, whom we are told overlooked the knowledge man has of God through no less than five different avenues. He also thinks that towards the end of his life Spencer became conscious of his own omission, and confessed in his Autobiography his "astonishment and regret that he had overlooked so important a part of life." If Dr. Horton will read Spencer's Autobiography again, he will find that Spencer did no such thing; and, although Dr. Horton is an adept at this kind of misrepresentation, doing now for Spencer what he has previously done for Mill, there is a world of difference between a man in his old age becoming more tolerant towards antagonistic beliefs and giving any kind of support to them. Few men are as full of fight at fourscore as they are at thirty, and Dr. Horton himself may be more charitable towards Roman Catholics, if he reaches a patriarchal age, than he is at present. I do not mention Freethinkers in this connection, because I have no belief in miracles.

The first thing overlooked by Spencer is the knowledge of God man possesses through Nature. Spencer said that the universe manifested a "Power"; Dr. Horton adds that it is an intelligent power. This is demonstrated as follows:—The universe is an order, not a discord; it is a rational order, *because* it is capable of intelligent study; and, as science depends on the fact that there is an order and an intelligibility in nature itself, it tells us that the power that is responsible for the universe is intelligent.

Now it would be a cruel, but a helpful lesson, if one had the power, to force Dr. Horton to give a clear and precise definition of the meanings of the terms used by them, and then contrast them with their scientific meaning. To Dr. Horton, natural "order" is only one of two possible things selected and established by an external power for the benefit of man. But, scientifically, anything but an "order" of some kind is simply inconceivable. Given something that exists, and its effects must always be the expression of its properties. Conceivably these properties might be different to what they are, but this would not effect in the slightest degree the question of order. Or, if Dr. Horton would argue that these properties might undergo a continuous modification, so varied that the same sequence would never repeat itself, the reply is that this "discord" would be the very thing that would establish the constant rule of an outside intelligence—which is the very thing Dr. Horton is trying to establish, although he debars himself from using this argument.

This also disposes of the foolish statement that the intelligibility is in nature itself. This is a statement often made by men like Sir Oliver Lodge, but it is none the less foolish on that account. Nature is intelligible to man only because man has put his experience of sequentia into a formula. But if natural sequence had been different to what it is, the intelligibility would have been as great. If, instead of A always preceding B, it might precede anything from B to Z, the "intelligibility" of nature would remain unaffected. The order of nature is conditioned by the human intelligence, and varies, within limits, with the organism of which that intelligence is a product. If we were destitute of any particular sense—sight or hearing, for instance—the

universe would certainly not be what it is to us now. Really, to say that the universe is intelligible is only to say over again that sequence is invariable. But it *sounds* more, and that is the principle thing with Dr. Horton.

One would much like to know the science which tells us that the power "responsible for the universe is 'intelligent.'" Probably it is the same science that some time ago that each person lost precisely the same amount of energy which could only be regained by a strict observance of the Christian Sunday. It is evidently kept "on tap" at Lyndhurst-road. The absurdity of the statement is, however, apparent even to its author, for he adds that we cannot form "the faintest conception" of the nature of the "transcendent intelligence," but we know that "it is an intelligence"—which for a hopeless jumble is great, even for Dr. Horton. If we know it is an intelligence, then we do know something of its nature. If I do not know all its capacity, neither do I know that of many human beings. I cannot form any adequate conception of the intelligence of Shakespeare; but I do know that the brain that produced *Hamlet* was moved in accordance with the same principles that govern the literary staff of the *War Cry* or the *Daily Mail*. And if this "transcendent intelligence" does not resemble mine, as that of Shakespeare's resembles Marie Corelli's, then the simple truth is that it is not intelligence at all. Dr. Horton has clearly failed to grasp the fact that an increase in quantity cannot affect quality in the least. Increase intelligence a millionfold, to infinity if you will, its character as intelligence remains unaffected. If there were an Intellectual Vagrancy Act, Dr. Horton would find most of his beliefs locked up for being without visible means of support.

The lecturer is in the same confusion without regard to personality. He cites Spencer to the effect that you cannot call the Unknowable personal, because that imposes limitations. Dr. Horton retorts that "you would never think of calling it impersonal. You would say it is greater than personal." Well, greater or less makes no difference. If it is not personal, it is not personal. The quality of personality is not retained because you say it is above it. And if it is not personal, then assuredly it is impersonal. And Dr. Horton, as a Christian, must have a personal God. None other will suit the Christian program. But a personal deity is exactly the kind of God that modern thought will have least to do with, and the kind that educated Christians are most ashamed of. For with a personal God its human origin is manifest. It carries with it the brand of the manufactory from which it issues, and gods are like aristocracies—a complete knowledge of their beginnings is ill calculated to develop respect for their contemporary representatives.

(To be continued.)

C. COHEN.

Christ's Presence.

ALL Christians believe, and teach, that their Lord is always with them. They rejoice in what they call his abiding presence in the Church. Some go so far as to declare that he is present in the world also. In a sermon recently delivered, the Bishop of Liverpool boldly asserts that the words, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world," are still unrevoked, and contain an unexhausted and inexhaustible promise. Despite such an assertion, however, Dr. Chavasse speaks of gathering clouds. "The barque of Christ," he says, "is already rocking before the first fierce gusts of a great storm through which she is beginning to pass." The clouds that are riding up the horizon are "unusually dark and ominous." "On all sides is disquiet and unrest." In Russia, in Spain, and in Austria the symptoms are most alarming. France has practically renounced the Christian religion. In Germany a new order is rapidly rising. Even Great Britain is in the throes of mighty changes. "The very causes which

brought about the decline and fall of the great empires of the past are becoming increasingly evident in our midst." Our people forget God and ignore all his claims. "There are signs that a growing section of British women are becoming godless and selfish, the slaves of drink and of gambling." Dark and forbidding in the extreme is the picture of Christendom as drawn by the Bishop. He tells us that the Church itself is in a terribly dangerous position throughout our island. Now, if such is the existing state of things in Christian countries after nearly two thousand years' experience of the Church, on what ground does the Bishop affirm the abiding presence of Christ in it? Of what benefit has this abiding presence ever been, or is at present? These are questions which Dr. Chavasse does not even attempt to solve. In spite of all appearances to the contrary, Christ *is* present in the Church. He *promised* to dwell in it for all time, and that promise has never been recalled. "Above all," the Bishop exclaims, "we can rest on the unrevoked and inexhaustible promise of our risen Lord made for our days as well as for the days that have passed."

Dr. Chavasse maintains that Christ is present with his Church as priest "to light human souls, to feed them with his grace, to cleanse them from all that hinders their clear and bright shining as his light-bearers." But *are* Christians centres of light in an otherwise dark world? Are they lamps of exceptional brilliance, into which oil is being secretly poured by the unseen hand of Jesus Christ? In other words, are average believers superior in point of character to average Secularists? The Bishop must be aware that such is not the case.

And so he hurries on to his next point—namely, that Christ is present in the Church as its infallible prophet. Here is a beautiful bit of dogmatism:—

"We are told that we need a restatement of the doctrines of our faith, that a second Hooker must be looked for to reconcile the old Creed with the new learning. A greater than Hooker is here. Our Lord himself is the interpreter to his Church. He will show us in his own way, and in his own time, that all the teachings of science, and all the discoveries of research, and all the changing lights of the twentieth century, will only in the long run illuminate and verify that wonderful Book, the older part of which was his Bible and his final court of appeal. The Bible has not had its day, nor has it finished its work. He of whom the Bible speaks, and to whom the Bible points, is with us to unfold its true nature, and to interpret its eternal message."

It is utterly impossible to take such a paragraph seriously. In another part of the discourse Dr. Chavasse himself deplores the large amount of destructive work that is being done by the Higher Criticism:—

"The rash and exaggerated statements of some so-called higher critics have destroyed the faith of many in the Old Testament; and the great facts of the New, upon which the Christian Creed rests, are openly declared to be mythical, or are explained away."

The two passages demolish each other with a vengeance. In the Church, with which the Great Prophet is ever present to lead it into all the truth, there are yet to be found mutually destructive schools of theology, and views on the Bible prevail which preclude its being regarded as a revelation from heaven. "A greater than Hooker," an absolutely infallible teacher, has his abode in the Church; and yet the Church, thus Divinely led and taught, has scarcely ever been able to see eye to eye with itself on any subject whatsoever! But, the Bishop will not see this.

The third and last division of the sermon treats of Christ's presence as king. The Bishop actually believes that Christ "controls the future, that nothing happens but what he wills," that "he directs alike the course of nations, the destinies of his Church, the steps of his servants," and that "without his will nothing can happen to them or to us." Again, we must remind the Bishop of another portion of his discourse, in which he tells us that "Russia is con-

vulsed to her centre, and (that) men's hearts fail for fear at the thought of what may be coming upon that vast Empire"—is that in harmony with Christ's will? Is he the one to be held responsible for that country's wretched condition? Is it at his bidding that the Pope and France are at loggerheads? Are the slums, with their vice, and squalor, and misery, an expression of his will? Are the Archbishop of Canterbury and Dr. Clifford doing his will as they fight each other over the Education Bill? Would such a controversy be possible if Christ reigned as king? With all the deeds of all the Churches in mind, can any one honestly say that "in every crisis he (Christ) is present as our king to direct and to protect?" Or is it reasonable to declare that "no wind can hurt the tree which God has planted?" If there be a God, are not all trees of his planting? And yet what myriads of them are wantonly destroyed every year!

Nothing can be more profoundly absurd than the statement that an absolutely perfect Being has ever done, or is now doing, according to his will in the affairs of this world. Except when asserting the sovereignty of the Redeemer, Dr. Chavasse sees clearly, and admits frankly, that this globe is very badly governed. This world is not the best of all possible worlds, nor is it ruled by the best of all possible kings. It is all very well for clergymen to speak of Christ as supreme monarch, as sitting on the throne and reigning over the hearts and consciences of men, but it is only in their imagination that their language is true. A moment's sane reflection would convince them that they are simply talking nonsense. As an example of the sentimentalism resorted to, take the following extract from this sermon:—

"In the days of the Commonwealth, Bulstrode Whitelock, the English Ambassador to the Hague, was waiting one night at Harwich until a storm abated. As he lay awake, unable to sleep through the howling of the wind outside the house, and tossed from side to side on his bed as he thought of the sad condition of his country, an old and faithful servant, lying in the same room, addressed him. 'Sir, may I ask a question?' 'Certainly,' replied the ambassador. 'Sir, did God govern the world well before you came into it?' 'Undoubtedly.' 'And will he rule the world well when you have gone out of it?' 'Undoubtedly.' 'Then, sir, can you not trust him to rule it well while you are in it?' There was but one answer to such an inquiry, and the tired ambassador turned on his side and fell asleep."

What object that incident serves is beyond comprehension. That Bulstrode Whitelock and his servant believed in the Divine government of the world is of no evidential value whatsoever. It is perfectly true that they sincerely believed in it, but their belief rested, not on knowledge, but on the testimony of a book which they had been trained to look upon as the inspired and infallible Word of God. The great task which professional theologians in all ages set themselves, is the explanation of the facts of history which give the lie to their belief; and this task they have never succeeded in accomplishing. History is supernaturalism's deadliest foe.

Bishop Chavasse closes his sermon on the minor key. There are tens of thousands in this country alone, he informs us, "who do not yet know Jesus Christ," while "abroad half the world still lies in the dark shadow of heathenism." The slums of our great cities are a disgrace to our civilisation. And yet, in spite of all these depressing and disheartening facts, the Bishop persists in saying that Christ is with us as prophet, priest, and king, and that "without his will nothing can happen." He dare not look into the past, but the future, he declares, is full of bright hopefulness and cheering possibilities. We hold, on the contrary, that this belief in the acting sovereignty of Christ has materially retarded the healthy development of human society. We are still suffering from the arrest of the old Greek and Roman culture which Christianity effected at the commencement of its career and which is still more or less in force.

J. T. LLOYD.

My Twenty Years' Fight in Australia.—IX.

(Concluded from p. 709.)

DURING my residence in Melbourne I took a deep and unflagging interest in politics; and, needless to say, I was as Radical in that department of life as in religion. I am a Republican, and as much opposed to prescriptive and irresponsible authority above as below, and below as above. In fact, I am an Atheist all round, and no more tolerant of gods on earth than of one in the sky, no more submissive to a king on earth than to one in the clouds. Much of my trouble in Australia during the first two or three years arose from my plain speaking about the Queen. My political speeches and articles in the *Liberator* raised an immense wave of Republicanism in Australia, which reached high-water mark in Sydney. The reader need not be informed that the Jubilee of the Queen was held in 1887; and Melbourne and Sydney seemed to be gone mad over the matter. In Melbourne about £150,000 of borrowed money was wasted on fireworks and other absurdities connected with the Jubilee. In Sydney, however, the Republicans scored a great victory. The Government convened a meeting in the Town Hall and endeavored to pass a loyal resolution; but the Republicans opposed it, and the loyal resolution was rejected, a large majority voting the Republican ticket.

This has never been widely published here, for Sir Henry Parkes sent a glaring lie to England announcing that the loyal resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority. In revenge for the opposition of the Secularists on that occasion he gave orders to all the theatres in Sydney to refuse to permit the Secularists to lecture in those buildings in the time to come. And thus were our people punished for exercising their undoubted right and for rejecting a hollow and fulsome vote in favor of a perfectly useless individual.

Twice I became a candidate for a seat in Parliament. The first time was early in 1889. To take my meetings as a basis of a forecast, one would have said I should be at the top of the poll, for my meetings were by far the best attended and most enthusiastic of all that were held. But there was the pious element to reckon with, and that, of course, prevented my success. An old Romanist, named Kinsella, supported my candidature, took the chair for me repeatedly, and had induced a number of his own Church to promise me their support. But the priests visited the saints the day prior to the election, and, of course, they were all afraid to vote for me. I went to the poll and received a little over 500 votes, nearly half enough to be successful. The second attempt ended pretty much the same, about 500 votes being given me as in the former case. When it was over I told my committee I should not stand again. "To get into your Parliament," said I, "a man must crawl through a gutter. If I ever go in, it will be with my head right up; and that means that I shall never get in at all."

Poor old Kinsella sickened and died about the date of my second candidature; and the R.C. priests refused to go near him because he had helped me in electioneering.

In New South Wales I should have won a seat quite easily, but Melbourne is the most hide-bound place I have ever seen; and I am sorry to see from Australian reports that it is not yet growing much better. It will go with a swing some day, and then piety must look out for herself. At present the clergy rule the newspapers, especially does the R.C. archbishop do so; and the newspapers dominate respectability. Still, the power of the clerics is declining, is completely undermined; and Melbourne is destined to escape from their clutches ere many more years have fled. The evil they have done is altogether beyond calculation; but their reign cannot continue. I am not indulging in any childish conceit when I say that I did them irreparable damage while in Melbourne. They were incessantly challenged to

meet me in debate and to use my own *Liberator* to defend their position and to attack mine. For the most part they were much too cowardly to accept either my challenges or my offers. I offered them equal space in my paper, and wished them to correct their own proofs. My platform was offered them on the simple condition that they should permit questions and discussions, as I always do.

I have always held that I drove James Moorhouse, alias James Melbourne, out of Australia. When I went there he was in his glory, an eloquent, fussy, overbearing, dogmatic bishop, who had promised to stay in Melbourne to the end of his days. The first number of my paper contained a courteous and very pointed letter to the bishop, which all but himself felt that he ought to have answered. I gave him a letter weekly till he ran away and became Bishop of Manchester. He never replied, though now and then he indulged in insolent, ill-tempered and malicious rant respecting myself, without ever mentioning me by name. He once lost his head completely, sent us all to Inferno headlong, and declared that he felt "as certain of our doom as if he saw the judgment of God rolling in full blaze upon our souls." This delighted the ultra-Christians and gave deep pain to all rational adherents of the Churches. We laughed at his ill-tempered grotesquerie.

I challenged him to debate; he declined, but his chaplain took me up. In Manchester, October 28th ult., I was told that this bishop must have had Symes on the brain to abuse me as he did. By the way, his chaplain, Rev. D. M. Barry, is still in Melbourne, and is really about the ablest and most honest clergyman there. About two years ago he lectured on the first chapter of Genesis, trying to prove it both historical and accordant with science! I wrote him to know if we could not hold a debate on the subject. He excused himself on the ground that I had at some time criticised the Solar System!! That was his sole alleged objection to an encounter with me.

The Rev. Joseph Nicholson, a very prominent Wesleyan, wrote me just after I went to my farm. He evidently supposed I had cooled in my love of Freethought, and did his best to frighten me on the ground of advancing age. I replied very pleasantly and suggested a debate, and put sundry questions to him respecting the foundations of his religion; but, though several letters passed between us, he never would answer one of my questions. He (as well as others) sent me printed replies to Mr. Blatchford! My reply to him was, "It is quite useless to send me criticisms on an amateur. Mr. Blatchford at best is but one of our pupils. For twenty years I have been incessantly attacking and exposing your religion by tongue and pen, in Melbourne. If you would impress me, you must answer what I myself have taught, or else meet me in debate or written discussion, and reply to what I may then advance." This was much too reasonable and just for Mr. Nicholson, and all other Melbourne clerics; and I am wondering whether I shall meet with more justice in England.

When Torrey visited Melbourne he converted Atheists in numbers! but not so much as one that I could ever get any information about. A pious man of my acquaintance called on me one day and almost entreated me to go and hear Torrey! "I will," said I, "if he will allow me half an hour to reply to him at the close of his address." This was altogether too reasonable a demand. "Well," said I, "I will give him the use of our hall for one of his revival meetings if he will permit me to take part in it. Nor is that all I will do. Torrey pretends to have converted Atheists. I am confident he has done nothing of the kind. And I will give him the hall for an 'experience meeting,' when he can trot out his Atheistic converts. The only condition I make is that I may be permitted to relate my experience too."

My pious friend went away sorrowful, for he had much piety and but little reason. If I ever get converted, I shall be most anxious to reach my Freethinking friends as fast as possible. But I have never yet met with a pretended convert from our

ranks who did not keep as far out of our way as he could. There is only one explanation of their conduct—their conversion, when it is not a sham—is a mere change in their sentimentality.

So far did I go towards meeting the clergy that I once offered to hand my *Liberator* over to any one of them who would undertake the task for a week, leaving it to the volunteer to fill it up as he thought Christ would. It came to nothing.

There were one or two clergymen in Melbourne who were quite civil to me, but they were rare birds. One of them, referring to me in conversation with a friend, said, "Look at his splendid consistency!" I do not know what more he said. To one clergyman I lent a lot of lantern slides once, and he told his audience whence he got them—a remarkable young man. One or two I met are better than their religion, but they are entangled, ensnared and hopeless of emancipation.

Lastly. I do not feel as if my long fight in Australia had been in vain. As a South Australian Judge once said, "Mr. Symes' life and teaching has gone into the life of Australia." Yes. Thousands of people came under my influence during my stay there, and were never the same people after. My work was emancipating; and it can never be reversed. My friends—I shrink from calling them followers—are from every Church in the country. What is perhaps better is the fact that the clergy can never again preach as they formerly did; Freethought has paralysed their faith and opened their eyes to the monstrosities of their creeds, their Bible, their prayer-book, and their profession and pretences.

As to the future, I am anxious to serve Man, not God; and I am fully satisfied that the best thing I can do for my race is to employ the rest of my time as I have spent the past thirty years—in doing all I am able to destroy superstition, to expel God and Christ, Satan, heaven, hell and "judgment" from human consciousness; to dispel the fogs and smoke of religion; and to leave people free to choose the best, to speak and do their best for their own earthly welfare and the welfare of others. If anyone can suggest a better way of employing what time and ability I may have, I shall be pleased to take his advice. As at present informed, I am resolved to continue in the old route, improving my pace and improving my work also as best I may. I am by no means sorry I took to the Freethought platform and press; the only thing I regret is that I have not been able to do more in the way of emancipating men and women from the thralldom and corrupting influence of religion.

JOS. SYMES.

Acid Drops.

The late Mr. George Herring has been praised by all the papers as a philanthropist. Even the dear *Daily News* joined in the chorus of panegyric. That paper doesn't print betting news, yet it knew very well that Mr. Herring was just a magnified "bookie." His money was made, in the first place, in the betting-ring, and in the second place, on the Stock Exchange. Racing and financial gambling brought him the million and a half he left behind him. Had he spent his money on profane objects the *Daily News* would have pointed the finger of scorn at him and his "wicked wealth"; but as he piled tens of thousands at General Booth's door, and helped the sacred cause of religion in other ways, our pious contemporary thought it best to say nothing about the origin of his riches.

General Booth had something to say about his big Herring in the *War Cry*. It is an old device of Booth's to puff his social schemes by representing that they have the cordial support even of unbelievers. And he repeats it on this occasion. "Religion," he says, "seemed to have no charm for him; its adherents, its affections, its duties, no claim." Later on, however, he throws a curious light on this picture by the statement that Mr. Herring "liked our religion." Which is a great deal more than any unbeliever does.

Another poor disciple of the meek and lowly one has just handed in his checks—we almost wrote his cheques. Rev.

James Davidson, aged ninety (so long out of heaven!), of Nafferton, Driffield, Yorks, vicar of Nafferton-with-Wansford, has left £20,504. Compared with the late Mr. Herring, this reverend gentleman is only a sprat; but he piled up the cash very well for a preacher of "Blessed be ye poor."

The world has had nearly two thousand years of Christianity, and England boasts of being the most Christian country in the world—if the honor does not belong to godly Scotland, which is about the top of the list for steady drinking and illegitimate procreation. Well now, the principal virtue taught by Christ was *poverty*—"Blessed be ye poor! Woe unto you rich!" Through all those centuries that beautiful text has been preached upon; and the rich have enjoyed it—and the poor seem to have enjoyed it too. And perhaps it is cruel to find fault with what gives so much pleasure to both sides. But, after all, we have our duty to do—and we shall do it. The profession of Christianity is one thing; its practice is quite another; in fact, it is the most hypocritical system in the world. Hypocrisy, indeed, has always been the most characteristic of Christian vices. It is our duty to point this out, and we do not shrink from performing it.

Nowhere in the world are the disparities of civilisation more conspicuous than they are in England. We have the most awful destitution and the most flaunting luxury side by side. Christ blessed the poor and cursed the rich; but, as far as this world goes, it is the rich who are blessed and the poor who are cursed. Dives laughs and grows fat, and Lazarus pines away to a skeleton; and nobody any longer believes in the story of Abraham's bosom and the fire of Hades. Such is Christian civilisation after the lapse of nearly two thousand years; and the Churches are all fighting over the nation's schools, simply in order to give the children further doses of their own special forms of the religion which is the cause of the mischief.

"Blessed be ye poor! Woe unto you rich!" It is enough to make all the devils in hell (if there are any) dance a can-can on the sides of the bottomless pit. Just look at the following list of millionaires who have died in this country during the present financial year, which is only about half-way through—and the sizes of their estates as shown by the probate returns:—

Sir Charles Tennant	£3,151,974
Mr. Alfred Beit	3,000,000
Lord Grimthorpe	2,111,775
Mr. Edward Steinkopf... ..	1,247,022
Mr. William Sturdy	1,023,893
Mr. T. V. Smith	1,932,139
Lord Leven	1,300,013
Mr. G. C. Raphael	1,103,247
Lord Mansfield	1,021,520
Mrs. Lewis-Hill (about)... ..	1,000,000
Mr. George Herring (about)	1,500,000
M. Louis Spitzel	2,000,000

These millionaires were all Christians, we believe; at any rate, it has never been whispered that any one of them was a Freethinker. And they all died in this most Christian country, and were buried in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection. And their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said, "Blessed be ye poor! Woe unto you rich!" It is enough to make a cat laugh.

But Christians have no sense of humor. Certainly it is lacking at the *Daily News* office. Our pious contemporary printed the other morning a letter from "R. M.," which, let us hope, was not written on the premises. This correspondent piled up that paper's praises mountain high, and ended by saying that reading it daily was "in the widest sense of the word a liberal education." To this discriminating eulogy the *Daily News* added a few lines of its own. "What a pleasure," it exclaimed, "it is to welcome a breath of plain common-sense now and again." Nobody could beat the dull simplicity of that exclamation.

A little lower down our pious contemporary "opened its eyes with expectancy." Did it not lift its ears?

The new Bishop of Truro says: "Always distinguish between the Christianity of the Church and the Christianity of Christ." So-called liberal divines are constantly giving that advice; but a more utterly foolish advice could never be imagined. Which form of Christianity and which Christ are meant? Put that question to twenty different divines, conservative or liberal, and no two of them will answer it alike. The different forms of Christianity, moreover, have undergone numerous modifications throughout the ages, and are even now being adapted, as the saying is, to the advanced knowledge of to-day; and the same thing is true of the various conceptions of Christ: these two are always

changing. To which Christ, then, will Dr. Stubbs go for his Christianity; the Christ of Canon Henson, of Mr. J. R. Campbell, of Dr. Campbell-Morgan, or of Dr. Stopford Brookes? Dr. Stubbs may answer, To the Christ of the four Gospels; but, then, all the theologians claim the Gospels as the supreme authority for their respective Christs. Thus we see how hypocritical and farcical and ludicrous the appeal to Christ always is, and must be.

Here is another equally brilliant gem from Dr. Stubbs: "Certainly I believe as unhesitatingly as any Secularist can do in the sinlessness of intelligent sincerity." *Sinlessness*, being a strictly theological term, we will set aside. We maintain, then, that if Dr. Stubbs *really* believed in *intelligent* sincerity he would avow himself an out-and-out Secularist. It is under Secularism alone that *intelligent* sincerity is possible. Many Christians are admittedly sincere; but they are *unintelligently* sincere; that is, they are sincere in their attachment and loyalty to things about which they *know* absolutely nothing. If that is not the height of *unintelligent* sincerity, pray, what is it? At the same time, we wish Dr. Stubbs well, because, in spite of his outworn creed, he is every inch a man.

Will blind superstition *never* die? Will educated people *never* open their eyes to the glorious light of reason? As an instance of credulity run mad, take the following from the *Church Times*:—

"The point to be established is that the whole Church is so guided by the Holy Spirit as to be infallible in faith and morals, and finally authoritative in discipline, and that the Holy Spirit, in so guiding the whole Church, speaks by the mouth of the whole Episcopate."

"Laicus," the writer of that passage, seeks to prove his claim, not from the history of the Church, but from the teaching of St. Ignatius, St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, Bishops Beveridge and Pearson, and also from various ecclesiastical Canons. One chapter from the book of history would smash the silly pretension into black smithereens.

Mr. R. J. Campbell frankly admits, in the *Young Man*, that "where Professor Haeckel is a real authority he is unanswerable, and there is no reason why we should attempt to overthrow his conclusions." That is most sensible; and, in reality, all that Mr. Campbell can say against the great scientist is, that "he has not solved the Riddle of the Universe"; but is not the minister of the City Temple aware that Professor Haeckel himself says precisely the same thing again and again? However, let us be thankful for the tiniest morsels of truth from the tables of the sanctuary.

We have had occasion more than once to refer to the abominable things that are done under the Alien law both in Great Britain and in the United States. With regard to the case of Heinrich Wilke, who has been tossed about from one country to another under this law, the *Tribune* justly observed that "Bedouins would have taken him in because he was sick and a stranger," and that even in our own past "such a case would have been regarded with shame." But a more significant observation was the following. "It is only in the three countries" the *Tribune* said, "which boast the loudest of their developed civilisation and their Protestant Christianity that the persecution of the weak foreigner has been raised by law into a system." There is a vast significance in this observation—probably more than our contemporary intended.

This is another instance of the way in which the dear good Christians of this country fly in the face of Jesus Christ. Whenever he says a good thing they flout it; whenever he says another sort of thing they embrace it. "Swear not at all," he said, and they go into parliaments and courts of justice and swear like troopers. "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in," he said he would say to them at the day of judgment if they did not show compassion to the suffering strangers they met in this world. And in the face of that they see a poor stranger making for their shores and shove him off with a boat-hook.

God has lost his Sovereignty. The Bible is mistaken in saying that "he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Daniel iv. 35). The inhabitants of the earth are no longer "reputed as nothing." Indeed, they seriously limit the Divine Supremacy. They can even defy the Deity to his face, and prevail against him. So teaches the Rev. T. H. Darlow in the *British Weekly* lately. If we distrust God's power, he says, God will refrain from exercising it. This is what he calls "the limitation of God." And God discreetly keeps silence, whatever is being said about him.

He neither approves nor disapproves, neither smiles nor frowns.

The Rev. Dr. Hastings, editor of the *Dictionary of the Bible*, is bringing out another dictionary which is to be known as the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*. Its articles will be from experts; but they must be *Christian* experts, and everybody knows what that means. They must be in sympathy with preachers and their work. It is needless to observe that many first-class scholars will be rigidly excluded from the list of contributors. The work will not, therefore, prove of highest scientific importance or of any real value to scholarship as such, as the editor promises.

A well-known minister exclaims, "Holiness is much more than morality." That is to say, religion and morality are two distinct things, and we may have the one without the other. This is also the teaching of Secularism. But the preacher is essentially unjust to morality when he says that "the moral man is lenient with himself and severe with others." Such a man would be in no true sense moral. He is not in right relations with his neighbors; and the lack of those relations is the quintessence of immorality. "Morality is something between man and man," continues the preacher. But he is utterly wrong. Morality means, not *some* thing, but the *right* thing, between man and man. It is that which aims at the welfare, not of the individual, but of all with whom the individual is in relation.

Mr. John Lobb has read our long criticism of his *Talks With the Dead*, for he has sent us the following letter, which he forgot to sign, so great a hurry is he in to propagate the gospel of Spiritualism:—

"Permit me to express my obligations for the notice of my book, 'Talks with the Dead.'

Strange as it may seem, Charles Bradlaugh is often seen by clairvoyants with me on the platform during my public services. Three weeks ago, Col. R. G. Ingersoll came through the husband of Mrs. Eva Harrison, and addressed me thus: 'I want to claim relationship, my claim is based upon our mutual love of truth.'

Mrs. Harrison took down his words, and they are here for your inspection.

Let me say that I often meet hard-headed thinkers who have come over to Spiritualism.

I am glad to know that you are keeping well."

Such is Mr. Lobb's letter, and if he really thinks it any sort of answer to our criticism his case is clearly hopeless.

The offer to show us a specimen of Mrs. Harrison's writing as a proof of Colonel Ingersoll's visit reminds us of the American gentleman who brought away a stone from Mount Ararat to silence objectors to the story of Noah's Flood. "I brought that stone," he said, "from the very place where it happened."

Ingersoll's dropping in for a talk with Mr. John Lobb, who was a perfect stranger to him, is also a very odd circumstance. There is a family living in New York that would certainly receive a first call from the Colonel, unless the "spirit world" has completely changed his character. His widow and his daughters, his grand-children, and other near relatives, with all of whom he lived in one happy community while in the "earth life," would naturally expect to hear from him if he is able to communicate. Why the most loving and devoted of husbands should pass by his widow and stop to talk with a stranger like Mr. John Lobb, is like the peace of God in this—it passes all understanding.

People who believe this are "hard headed" in Mr. Lobb's judgment. We should have thought them thick-headed. The callosity must be in another organ.

Rev. Dr. Guinness Rogers, the aged Nonconformist divine, has recently been asking the question: "Is our modern Christianity in such a condition as to create anxiety?" "There is much in the religious outlook to make us anxious," he replied, "but the outlook is not so dark as to shake our faith in God or weaken our belief in the ultimate triumph of Christianity." From what followed it appears that Dr. Rogers believes there will be an act of divine intervention. To him the age of miracles is *not* past. He holds that God raised up John Wesley and George Whitefield to rescue the cause of Christ from ruin, and the God who trumped Satan's trick on that occasion may be trusted to do it again. Dr. Guinness does not state it exactly in that way, but we are putting his argument in a nutshell. Now we have to point out that the twentieth century is not the eighteenth century, nor anything like it; and that what was possible then is not so possible to-day. Moreover, as a matter of fact, Wesley and Whitefield did not devote themselves to opposing the

sceptics; no doubt they felt that such a task was hopeless—and they were not fitted for it, if it had been otherwise. What they did was this. They appealed to the inherited religious instincts in the common people, and more particularly in the lower middle classes. And their appeal was almost entirely emotional. They preached hell and damnation, and frightened people into what is called "godliness," which usually took the form of a sour avoidance of every natural pleasure. But hell is played out now. People cannot be frightened with it any longer. A modern Wesley or Whitefield is therefore impossible. And if that is the kind of miracle Dr. Rogers expects to save Christianity we believe he is doomed to disappointment.

"Hell on Earth" was the title of a London *Evening News* article on the Congo Horrors. Our contemporary seemed surprised at a "most Christian monarch" like King Leopold presiding over such unspeakable atrocities. That shows how little it knows of Christian history.

Last week's *Christian World* contained a big puff (a whole leading article) of the Bible Society. It was all very interesting in its way, but our contemporary might have stated what wages the Society pays its female employees who bind up "the Word of God." We suppose that wouldn't have looked well in an editorial advertisement.

"The Effect of Real Study of the Bible" was the title of a recent sermon by the Rev. Dr. Duff, of Bradford. Of course he didn't say that the effect of real study of the Bible was frequently Atheism. Naturally a hawker doesn't cry stinking fish.

Mr. Hubert Bland, the cynical and not very profound Fabian, has written a volume called *Letters to a Daughter*. We have not read it; indeed, we don't think we *could* read a collection of Mr. Bland's journalism. Running through a column of it in the *Sunday Chronicle* is one thing; wading through a bookful of it is quite another. Weekly trivialities look more trivial than ever when they are bound together for deliberate reading; and the smile of the first few minutes' amusement easily passes into a melancholy yawn.

Certain extracts from Mr. Bland's book show us that he is the same old hanger-on that he always was to "polite society." In spite of his Socialism—which is not, by the way, of a strenuous character—his ideal of life lies amongst the people who have nothing to do in the world, and do it "gracefully." That is to say, with the perfect smoothness that suppresses all conviction and all individuality of character. He tells his daughter—or some other man's daughter: we don't know which—to be as like other people as possible. Whether she should go to church, for instance, is not to be decided on grounds of belief or non-belief. Discussing the truth or falsity of religion is only "a foolish squabble." The "best people" go to church, and a young lady should go also on that very account, even if she marvels at the service and still more at the preacher's sermon. The "best people" may not be the *best* in the highest sense of the word, but they are the best socially. "The nicest, gayest, all-round people," Mr. Bland says, "are the people with some sort of religious belief." "Some sort" is good—and it is Mr. Bland all over.

Mr. Bland asks his real or imaginary daughter whether she has ever met a really delightful Atheist—man or woman. "You have," he says, "met many worthy Atheists, I know; persons whose moral code was as conspicuous as a red nose, whose admirable qualities stuck out of them like hatpins; persons you are almost bound in common decency to respect. But have they been delightful?" Well, they were probably *not* delightful, according to Mr. Bland's criterion. We can easily imagine Atheists being far from delightful to the "smart set"—people whose purpose in life is to dine well, to sleep well, to dress well, to play little games well, to parade sea-fronts well, to chatter nothings well, and to go through all the inanities of an artificial existence well. And that atheists are *not* delightful in such company is perhaps more to their credit than Mr. Bland fancies.

The easy insolence of Mr. Bland's sentence about Atheists is the kind of thing which too frequently passes for wit. That is the mistake of small people with a turn for "smartness." The really great wits of the world have been men of conviction, the lightning of whose intellect played over abysses of seriousness. This is true of Aristophanes, of Lucian, of Rabelais, of Molière, of Swift, of Voltaire, and of Heine. Not without reason did the last of these say that what he really cared for was not the laurel-wreath of poetry, though he was a great poet, but something very different. "I trouble myself very little," he said, "whether people

praise my verses or blame them. But lay on my coffin a sword; for I was a brave soldier in the Liberation War of humanity." The man in Heine spoke then. Whenever has the man spoken in Mr. Bland?—if we may be pardoned for mentioning his name in the same breath.

What nonsense some people do talk about Atheism! At a special Conference of the Liberation Society last week Mr. P. W. Wilson, M.P., a good Dissenter, objected to one Christian Church dominating the rest, although he apparently approves of all the Christian Churches together dominating the rest of the community. Then he went on to make the silly observation that the Archbishop of Canterbury, by his opposition to the Nonconformist Education Bill in the House of Lords, had "produced more Atheists this week than any Rationalist society in existence." What must be the mental condition of a man who fancies that Atheists are made in this way? No wonder the writer who called the House of Commons our "Collective Wisdom" was a satirist.

Two more poor apostles of poor Jesus Christ! We catch sight of them at the last minute. Rev. F. L. Moysey, of Wiveliscombe, Somerset, has left £12,770. Rev. Dr. Daniel Fox Sandford, of St. John's Episcopal Church, Edinburgh, has left £6,834. "For their works do follow them"—but not their cash.

"H. F. F.," editor of the *Daily Mirror*, made the death of Mr. George Herring the occasion for an article on "The Rich Man's Riddle." In the course of it he tried to explain away the text, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." That is how the text was printed in the *Mirror*, but there is no such text in the Bible. The passage occurs in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and in each case the words used are not "Kingdom of Heaven," but "Kingdom of God"—this being the phrase in the Revised as well as in the Authorised Version. All our contemporary has to say, therefore, with regard to a misinterpretation of the word "Heaven" is a waste of time. Nor is more respect due to its talk about "oriental imagery" and Christ's not really meaning that rich men cannot possibly go to heaven. That is clearly what he did mean. Witness his "Woe unto you rich" and the parable of Dives and Lazarus, in which the rich man goes to hell simply because of his riches—for no other crime is alleged against him.

A lady friend of a writer in the *Glasgow News* says that when she went to hear Father Vaughan preach in London she was puzzled by the fact that the text was "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," and she had to pay a shilling for her seat.

Mr. Mark Melford, the well-known entertainer, says he has had ten doctors in ten months, and if the Christian Scientists can cure him he will plank down £500. They won't.

The Nonconformists command a majority in the House of Commons. Hence the Education Bill—which pleases them, and pleases no one else. The Church of England commands a majority in the House of Lords. Hence the Education Bill is being wrecked in that Chamber. Dr. Macnamara, M.P., expresses surprise and indignation at this. Silly!

People who interfere with the orderly course of public assemblies are guilty of one of the worst crimes against civilisation. All progress depends upon free enquiry and free discussion. For this reason we view with horror the avowal of Miss Hodgson at a Caxton Hall suffragette meeting on Sunday evening that she and nine other women had gone to Mr. W. R. Cremer's lecture to the South London Ethical Society at the Surrey Masonic Hall, earlier in the day, and "prevented him from speaking" by sheer rowdyism. Her "reason" for this action was that Mr. Cremer spoke against Woman Suffrage in the House of Commons. According to the *Daily News* report, Mr. W. T. Stead "congratulated Miss Hodgson on what she had done." Mr. Stead is old enough and wise enough to know better. He would not have congratulated us if we had resorted to rowdyism against Dr. Torrey for having grossly libelled two great dead Freethinkers, and openly insulted all the living ones. But we wore trousers. Rowdyism in petticoats seems to be more seductive.

Mr. Cremer's speech in the House of Commons was called "disgusting." But this is a word without a definite meaning. Is it seriously meant that whenever ladies think a man's articulate and constitutional opposition to Woman Suffrage (or anything else they happen to be interested in) disgusting, they have a right to follow him about wherever he goes, whatever audience he is addressing, and whatever subject he is speaking upon, and shout

him down—without the slightest regard for the people who have assembled to hear him? We cannot believe that Mr. Stead really means this; yet this is involved in his congratulations to Miss Hodgson.

As for the ladies themselves, we beg to remind them that their sex has everything to lose by appealing to disorder and violence. All the rights of woman outside her home depend entirely upon the peace and order of human society. The reason of this is obvious to anyone who takes the trouble to think. Even the ballot-box, in the last extremity, has to be guarded by constables and soldiers; and constables and soldiers will never be women. And if it comes to breaking up meetings, the men will always win at that game—when they mean business.

Mr. John Hodges, one of the Labor M.P.'s, is a cool hand. Speaking at Browning Hall, Walworth-road, lately, on "Religion and Politics," he said that the object of the Labor Party was to put into Acts of Parliament the teachings of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. Fancy the Labor Party promoting a Bill founded on the text, "Take no thought for the morrow"! But we will not dwell on such foolishness. We want to draw attention to Mr. Hodges' remark that there "might be one or two Atheists in the Labor Party"—but "why should it be tarred as a whole with that brush?" One or two Atheists in the Labor Party! Only one or two! Mr. Hodges takes the cake for cool—veracity.

How many Christian travellers, as well as missionaries, have poured contempt on the Hindus for their reverence of the sacred river Ganges. Hindus worn out with age, or enfeebled by hopeless disease, are proud to die in its holy waters. Naturally the Christians laugh at anybody who dies in the name of his religion; they prefer to live on the name of theirs. Still, they have their superstitions, just like the Hindus, only they don't let it cost them too much, or hurry them too soon out of time into eternity. They even have their sacred river, which bears the prosaic name of the Jordan. It carries down all the dead dogs and cats of the Holy Land and pickles them in the Red Sea. Long, long ago it miraculously stopped running, after opening itself for a certain distance, to let the Jews cross over into the land of promise. Nobody knows how the trick was done, but that it was done is as true as the Bible. Later on it received Jesus into its bosom when he was baptised by John the Baptist, and when the Holy Ghost came and perched upon his shoulder, and God the Father shouted from heaven "This is my well-beloved son." We also know—for the Bible says so, and that settles it—that washing in the Jordan, not once but seven times, was a sovereign cure for leprosy—a loathsome disease which was very prevalent in those parts, and especially amongst the devotees of Jehovah. No wonder, then, that Christians think a lot of the Jordan. Bottles of its water have been used in the christening of royal babies all over Europe. It is now being supplied to other foolish families. There is, indeed, a growing demand for it—even in America. Swagger people like to wet their babies' noses with it when they are introduced by baptism into the household of faith. Whether the "kids" appreciate it is probably unknown.

When certain people want a thing certain other people are sure to turn a more or less honest penny by supplying it. We are not surprised to learn that there is already a corner in Jordan water. The Holy Land is unfortunately in the hands of the Turks, who take a percentage of the profit of trading upon Christian superstition, instead of leaving it all to the Christians. Colonel Clifford Nadaud, of Covington, Kentucky, has obtained (in the usual way) the exclusive concession to export Jordan water to his countrymen. The water will be pumped into large barrels, each of which will bear the seal of the Ottoman authorities and of the American Consul. The genuineness of the Jordan water in barrels will be certified—that is to say, by the "infidel" Turks, who are wicked enough to regard it as no better than any other samples of the same fluid from any other river in the world. But the Christian dignitaries in the locality are not going without their share of pecuniary advantage. They must make a bit somehow, and, in acknowledgment of their claim, we read that "the exportation will be supervised by the Patriarch of Jerusalem." Good old Patriarch! Good old business! For the fool-crop, as Heine said, is perennial.

Rev. J. T. Dove, vicar of Cowbit, dropped dead in the street at Spalding. There is no moral. There would have been one a mile long if he had been a Freethought lecturer.

A recent typhoon off the Japanese coast sank 128 fishing-boats and drowned about one thousand men. "He doth all things well."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 18, Town Hall, Birmingham, at 11.15, "The Lords and the Education Bill"; at 7, "Do the Dead Live?"

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 25, Manchester. December 2, Liverpool.

MR. SYMES'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 2, Birmingham; 9, Leicester; 16, Newcastle.

THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—J. Brough, 2s., F. Camley 3s., Frank Smith £1 1s.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Glad the new Post Office regulation meets your case.

R. DOWNES.—Pleased to hear you "prize" this journal "very much." Of course there is a Buddhism of the mob as well as the Buddhism of the better educated—and the former has long been dying out in Japan. But even when Buddhism degenerates it is still atheistic in its ultimate essence, for all its deities are subordinate to the universal existence, and are not immortal. The subject, however, is too large to be dealt with in a few lines.

J. M. M.—Thanks for doing all you can, in a quiet way, to promote our circulation. The bill you enclose of the Rev. W. T. Lee's lectures is rather crude, and we suggest that it would be an act of defensive self-respect on his part to insist on its being revised. It is certainly true that Mr. Lee did (many years ago) meet "Mr. G. W. Foote and other leaders of what is known as Freethought" in public debate; but the statement that he "has in several instances scored conspicuous victories" is utterly lacking in good taste. One would imagine that a public debate was a bruising match, and that one disputant left the other gasping on the sawdust. This may be the Christian temper, but it is not the temper in which debates can be usefully conducted. For our part, we have held many public debates, but we should never allow an advertisement of our lectures to state that we had thrashed an opponent. Such a thing strikes us as not only ill-conditioned, but, from the very nature of the case, foolish; and you must excuse us from contradicting a vulgar absurdity.

"TOTEM" (Plymouth).—You have probably noticed the introductory paragraphs of our last week's leading article. We may add a few words now, with special reference to your letter. It is not for us to say whether it would be wise for Socialists to carry on a formal attack on Christianity; that is a domestic question which they will decide for themselves; although, of course, the more Christianity is attacked the better we are pleased. But we are very decidedly of opinion that the Freethought movement should not ally itself to any political or social body. An organisation always exists for a definite object; not to serve that object is to die of inanition—to serve other objects is to die of convulsions. Now and then in the *Freethinker* we have corrected a casual censure of Socialism by a contributor who was opposed to it; we have also corrected a casual praise of Socialism by a contributor who was in favor of it. Our policy in this journal is one of neutrality to all movements which are not clearly hostile to Freethought. Mr. Symes, it is true, referred in his last week's article to his Republicanism and Radicalism in Australia; but the passage was a record, not an argument, or we should have stopped it; and, after all, if we may say so without offending our gallant old friend and colleague, his Republicanism and Radicalism do not appear to have been useful public allies of his Freethought in the long run.

W. TENCHARD.—We attach no importance to Lombroso's reported conversion to Spiritualism. He is now an old man, turned seventy, and the necromancy of the dark *seance*, operated by one of the most cunning adventuresses in Europe, is probably too much for his present powers of resistance. When he was younger and stronger he laughed at such absurdities.

W. H. B.—Rev. L. Dalby is quite at liberty to say that Joan of Arc would live in history when Voltaire's name is forgotten; for this is a free country—especially for clergymen. We have not yet heard, however, that this reverend gentleman has taken out a licence as a prophet; besides, prophets are nearly always fools. For our part, we are more catholic than this man of God. We honor Joan of Arc and Voltaire too. There is room in our valhalla for all kinds of greatness.

G. CHRISTIAN.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

C. S. G.—Not without merit, but the subject requires more elaborate treatment.

W. HALL.—We have not seen the *Methodist Recorder* you say you sent us.

A. HALLWARD.—Glad you have read *From Fiction to Fact* and consider it "Good—absolutely good!" You say it is strange that such a keen intellect as Mr. Bonte's believed the tomfoolery of the Romish Church so long; but you should remember the force of early education and surroundings, and the mental isolation in which he passed so many years. We will try to notice Father Tyrell's book.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your ever-welcome cuttings.

J. BROUGH.—A woman who can read our *Flowers of Freethought* with so much pleasure must be rather exceptional. We tender your wife our congratulations—and you too, lucky man! Thanks for cuttings. See acknowledgment elsewhere.

H. MARTIN returns "sincere thanks for the specimen copies of the *Freethinker*" sent him, and thinks it is "a paper that should be read by everyone." He has ordered it of his newsagent.

E. MOORCROFT writes: "I sold sixteen copies of *John Bull* last week owing to your article." This correspondent is thanked for cuttings.

W. HOLT writes: "I have read with great interest the *Freethinker*, which must have been sent to me by an acquaintance. Reading it for the first time, it seems to me one of the most brilliant and interesting papers of the day." This should encourage our friends to go on sending us the names and addresses of persons who might become regular readers of the *Freethinker* after we have sent them a free specimen copy for six consecutive weeks.

A. CLARKE.—How can Dictionaries be *authorities*, when on your own showing they give different definitions?

G. ROLEFFS.—Glad to learn Mr. Symes had such good meetings at Liverpool on Sunday, and gave you all so much satisfaction. Your suggestion is one you must deal with yourselves.

RIDGWAY FUND.—J. Partridge acknowledges: A Friend 5s.

H. B. ABBERLEY.—Glad to hear that you got to know of the *Freethinker* a month ago and are able to express your "entire satisfaction" with it. We do not know how Evan Roberts lives in his frequent "retirements." Not on what the ravens bring him, anyhow.

T. D.—Thanks. A good idea.

J. F. TURNBULL.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

ANONYMOUS letters cannot be answered in this column. Correspondents must give name and address as a guarantee of good faith.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (Nov. 18) in the grand Birmingham Town Hall. The first lecture will not be in the afternoon, as on former occasions, but in the morning. The local "saints" are requested to make a note of the alteration, and thus avoid a possible disappointment.

Friends coming to Mr. Foote's lectures from a distance can obtain information as to procuring dinner and tea by applying in the Town Hall Committee Room, Door A.

Some time ago we referred to the bigoted action of the Tyneside Geographical Society in refusing to let the local Secularists the use of the Lovaine Hall any longer for lecturing purposes. Fortunately the N. S. S. Branch has been able to secure the use of the Co-operative Society's Hall, in Darn Crook—a building both commodious and centrally situated. Mr. Cohen lectures there to-day (Nov. 18) afternoon and evening, and we hope he will have good meetings. Mr. Foote will deliver two lectures on the first Sunday in December. Subsequent visits by other lecturers are being negotiated, and the Freethought movement ought to make rapid strides in Newcastle under the new and more favorable conditions.

The press conspiracy of silence against uncompromising Freethought has been well maintained in the case of Mr. Bonte's pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*. Many review copies were sent out to various journals outside the definitely Freethought circle, but only one of those journals has given the pamphlet a word of recognition or acknowledgment. This one exception is *Reynolds' Newspaper*. According to

that journal, Mr. Bonte's is "one of the most remarkable pamphlets which have been published of recent years" and "a highly-instructive piece of self-revelation."

The *Journal de Charleroi* is one of our foreign exchanges. As its name indicates, it is published in Belgium; and, like most of the Freethought journals published on the continent, it is political as well as irreligious. It is in the sixty-first year of its existence, so it is anything but a mushroom publication. We rather like the Motto which is printed under its title: "Towards Truth through Science. Towards Liberty through Law. Towards Equality through Justice. Towards Social Harmony through Fraternity." This is a high and noble policy, and our Belgian contemporary keeps it steadily in view.

Under the heading of "International Freethought" the *Journal de Charleroi* gives extracts from Freethought journals in other lands, and the *Freethinker* is often laid under contribution. A recent number translates a portion of our Editor's article on "Secularisation." We are surprised to learn, from an editorial exclamation between brackets, that cremation is illegal in the land of King Congo-Leopold. Freethought has a lot of struggle before it yet, even in Belgium, in spite of its close vicinity to France. That is why our Belgian contemporary adds the following note of its own to the extract from our Editor's article: "It is evident, as the English journalist shows, that everything is gradually being secularised, and that no Church will be able to stem the tide; but how necessary it still is to fight, not only against the Church, but still more against the cowardice of unbelievers, before we can arrive at complete laicisation." Yes, that cowardice of unbelievers is responsible for much.

Another of our exchanges is *La Pensée*, the weekly organ of the Federation of Belgian Freethought Societies, edited by Eugène Hins. This also frequently prints extracts from the *Freethinker*. A recent number contains a translation—and a very excellent one, too—of Mr. Foote's article on "Blessing the Nets." It is one of Mr. Foote's peculiarities, which we daresay is shared by some other writers, that he is never able to take any interest worth speaking of in anything that he has once written, until after a long lapse of time, when he is sufficiently detached from it to be able to read it as though it were written by somebody else. Now the translation into another language produces very much the same effect as the long lapse of time; and Mr. Foote has read his own article in *La Pensée*—and enjoyed it! But no doubt this is partly owing to the sparkling French into which M. Hins has rendered it.

Mr. George Meredith is reported to have spoken as follows in a conversation with Mr. Henry W. Nevinson, the well-known journalist:—"Fearlessness of death is essential for manliness. Doctors and parsons do a lot of harm by increasing the fear of death. I was a very timid and sensitive boy, but at eighteen I determined not to be afraid again. Every night when I go to bed I know I may never wake up. That is nothing to me. I hope I shall die with a good laugh, like the old French woman. The curé came wailing to her about her salvation, and she told him her best improper story and died."

A Freethinker at Queensland sends us the following extract from the *Brisbane Courier* of September 25:—

"AN EXTRAORDINARY SEARCH.

William Jones, an old man well known in and around Adelaide, formerly the proprietor of a very picturesque little hotel called the Eagle, on the hill situated near Mount Lofty, a few miles outside Adelaide, died on October 15, 1905, leaving estate to the value of about £12,000. He left a will, the whole of which was in his own handwriting, by which, after giving the income of his estate to be divided equally between his two children, he left the whole of his property to the Incorporated Body of Freethinkers of South Australia. He appointed the Public Trustee of South Australia his sole executor and trustee. The only society which the Public Trustee was able to find on the registry of incorporated bodies was the South Australian Freethought Society Incorporated. When inquiries were made it appeared that this society was no longer in existence, so the Public Trustee referred the matter to the Supreme Court of South Australia for advice and direction. The Supreme Court directed a trial of the facts, and on the trial of the facts the presiding Judge (Mr. Justice Gordon) directed that an advertisement should be circulated through the various newspapers in the Commonwealth for information as to the whereabouts of persons who claim to be either life members or honorary members of this society. It appears that by the rules of the society there are now no ordinary members, as no subscriptions have been paid by any member for many years, and the rules provide that any member whose subscription shall be six months in arrear shall cease to be a member. The rules also provide

that five members, including the president, shall form a quorum. Up to the present the efforts of the Public Trustee and his solicitor to find five life members or honorary members have been unsuccessful."

We have not time to say all that might be said—and perhaps should be said—on this matter. One thing, however, must not be passed over in silence at present. If the testator in this case had apprised a responsible Freethinker of the nature of his will the machinery for giving it effect might have been kept in existence. We have not had time to ask Mr. Symes what he knows of the South Australian Freethought Society.

The Glasgow papers report the rescue of a child from drowning in the Clyde, his rescuer throwing off his coat and plunging into a swift current. Curiously they both bore the same name—William Henderson. The rescuer is the son of a vice-president of the Glasgow Branch of the National Secular Society. Had he been a Christian, the papers would have mentioned the Church he belonged to.

The Manchester *Evening Chronicle* reproves the local right reverend father in God for rejoicing because the Lords have driven a nail into the coffin of the Education Bill. Our contemporary says that the nail is a trifle too long, and has gone into the coffin of the House of Lords and of religious teaching. The answer of the Liberal Government should be a Secular Education Bill. Good!

We hope the Earl of Portsmouth, Under-Secretary for War, was speaking the mind of the Government when he addressed that Liberal meeting at Aldershot. If the present Education Bill was lost through the action of the House of Lords, he said, it was not the cause of progressive education that would suffer. "The great national necessities would demand a national Bill," he continued, "and would demand a Bill on Secular lines."

Mark Twain's *Autobiography*, parts of which are appearing in the *North American Review*, contains a story of his daughter Susie, who died a few years ago. She was eight years old at the time of the following incident:—

"For a week, her mother had not been able to go to the nursery, evenings, at the child's prayer hour. She spoke of it—was sorry for it, and said she would come to-night, and hoped she could continue to come every night and hear Susy pray, as before. Noticing that the child wished to respond, but was evidently troubled how to word her answer, she asked what the difficulty was. Susy explained that Miss Foote (the governess) had been teaching her about the Indians and their religious beliefs, whereby it appeared that they had not only a God, but several. This had set Susy to thinking. As a result of this thinking, she had stopped praying. She qualified this statement—that is, she modified it—saying she did not now pray 'in the same way' as she had formerly done. Her mother said:

'Tell me about it, dear.'

'Well, mama, the the Indians believed they knew, but now we know they were wrong. By and by, it can turn out that we are wrong. So now I only pray that there may be a God and a Heaven—or something better.'

I wrote down this pathetic prayer in its precise wording, at the time, in a record which we kept of the children's sayings, and my reverence for it has grown with the years that have passed over my head since then. Its untaught grace and simplicity are a child's, but the wisdom and the pathos of it are of all the ages that have come and gone since the race of man has lived, and longed, and hoped, and feared, and doubted."

It is good to have these flashes of child-reflection preserved

On the back page of this week's *Freethinker* our readers will find an advertisement of Mr. Cohon's tract on "The Salvation Army and Its Work," which has been published by request. Ten thousand copies have been printed for a start, and we hope several myriads will be called for, as the circulation of this tract is sure to do great good in opening people's eyes to the real character of General Booth's enterprise. Towards the expenses of producing it we have received and acknowledged £3 13s. 6d. Much more will be needed—especially if the tract is to be circulated in proportion to its value. Subscriptions should be forwarded to us direct, and will all be duly acknowledged.

The clergyman was nailing a refractory creeper to a piece of trellis work near his front gate, when he noticed that a small boy had stopped and was watching him with great attention. "Well, my young friend," he said, pleased to see the interest he excited, "are you looking out for a hint or two of gardening?" "No," said the youth, "I'm waiting to hear what a parson says when he hammers his thumb."

"Ballard's" Christianity.

WHEN the agitation for the emancipation of the negro slave had gained the popular ear, the Christian Church, which had upheld the moral right of property in human flesh and blood for eighteen hundred years, suddenly unearthed from the Divine Word the doctrine of "the brotherhood of man"; and to-day she boldly and unblushingly claims that the abolition of slavery was a reform due to Christianity. And, similarly, the temperance movement only received official religious recognition when, as the result of arduous propaganda, a change was effected in the public sentiment. The writer well remembers when the question of the introduction of non-alcoholic sacramental wines led to a bitter and acrimonious controversy, and made a veritable bear-garden of almost every church in the land. It is a truth which needs no proof that every new movement having for its object either the intellectual emancipation or the material well-being of man, has, at first, been bitterly opposed by the Church; and when the change of public opinion toward the higher ideal was such that, owing to her conservatism, she was likely to "fall behind discredited and disowned," without any compunction of conscience or even a pretence of repentance for her previous moral depravity, she has coolly changed front and claimed the improvement as her own. Of course, this change in her attitude towards a given reform is not immediate and complete—it is a process of pain and travail.

Once more the Church finds herself in the awkward predicament of being far behind the social ideal of the age. Since the days of Robert Owen she has branded the social movement as a species of social robbery, and endeavored to discredit it by associating its aspirations with the worst features of the French Revolution. But the more clear-sighted—or shall we say the least dense?—of the Christian community are beginning to perceive, or think they perceive, a social change ahead—the coming of democracy. The democracy, therefore, must be propitiated, and any beneficial change in the social order claimed for Christianity. As the writer of the article under review says: "Everything that Socialism insists upon as being necessary for healthy bodily conditions, and for full mental equipment, is already included, and has always been included, in the program of Christianity." Just so! And this new movement—or "move" perhaps would be the better word—of conciliation—or shall we say confiscation?—is already assuming proportions.

One of the foremost figures of this movement is the Rev. Frank Ballard; and one of his latest efforts to prove that black is white is an article on "Christianity and Socialism" in the recently-published *Citizen of To-Morrow*, to which we referred in a previous issue of the *Freethinker*. Mr. Ballard will be known to many readers as the Avenger of Blood, who persistently dogs the steps of the great Apostle of Determinism. He is the author of *Miracles of Unbelief*, *Clarion Fallacies*, and *Haeckel's Monism False*. He has quite an imposing array of scholastic and scientific Degrees attached to his name; but, as it is often a mistaken policy to judge a man by the coat he wears, so it appears it is not always wise to judge of a person's intellectual expansion, or the width of his social outlook, by the number of his Degrees. The minute textual criticism of his *Clarion Fallacies* undoubtedly indicates considerable mental cuteness and dogged perseverance, but one looks in vain for that "larger vista" born of trust and hope in humanity which is characteristic of the genuine reformer.

Mr. Ballard's definition of Christianity is not remarkable either for its lucidity or conciseness. If a definition be a statement of those essential qualities of an object without which that object could not exist, and if its purpose be to enable us to identify the object, then Mr. Ballard's definition fails in both these requirements. He enumerates five items which he regards as a sufficient definition

of Christianity: (1) The realisation in practice of the mind of Christ. (2) Canon Moore Ede's idea of a New Testament Church. (3) The two great laws enunciated by Christ. (4) The ethical outline of the Sermon on the Mount; and (5) Certain apostolic charges in the letters of Paul to the Church at Rome and Corinth. This is really not a definition in any strict sense of the word, but a *description* of some minor accessories which the Christian Church has never regarded as being of importance. Such representative Christian institutions as the Roman Catholic Church or the British and Foreign Bible Society, which is supported by all sections of Protestantism, would certainly not accept Mr. Ballard's definition as *their* Christianity. The utmost that can be claimed for it is, that it is "Mr. Ballard's" Christianity—although we question whether even he, under other circumstances, would insist upon its sufficiency. Indeed, in the course of his article it is apparent that he has not always this definition in view. When the Church of the period wished to defend slavery, it appealed to the commands and practices of the Old Testament; but such a definition leaves out of account the whole of the Old Testament writings. The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount, too, have only been resurrected during recent years to gloss over the social shortcomings of the Church; and even now there is no serious attempt on her part to put them into practice—if, indeed, it can be said she believes them to be practicable. Again, if the New Testament idea of a church had been adhered to, it is very certain there would have been no "Rev." Frank Ballard, seeing that it is admitted that the Christian clerical order does not receive its sanction from the New Testament, but is based on the older Jewish economy. In thus defining Christianity, Mr. Ballard says he is not concerned with the "speculative," but with the practical. But the "speculative" is the very *essence* of Christianity. The existence of God, of heaven, of hell, of a future life, are purely *speculative* questions; and, if you take these away, what is there left that Mr. Ballard would care to defend? Is the Fall of Man, and his redemption by the blood of Christ, not the principal feature of the Christian system? And is salvation by faith not its cardinal doctrine? Why, then, should Mr. Ballard attempt to palm off, as a definition of Christianity, a few mere details of the kind he mentions? "It may seem late," he says, "to be asking in the twentieth century 'What is Christianity?'" and we agree with him—it does seem "a bit late." Moreover, it is altogether unnecessary. The *real* Christianity needs no labored definition; its nature and its policy, as expressed in its institutions and its literature, can be studied by all. When the churches make a definite effort to put the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount into practice, then it will be time enough to admit them into a definition of actual Christianity.

Mr. Ballard's argument is very far from being consistent with his own definition. For instance, he says: "Christianity and Socialism represent two of the greatest—if not the two greatest—forces of our modern life." Here it is apparent that he loses sight of his definition, and has in view quite another Christianity. Such a comparison, to have any meaning at all, can only refer to Christianity *as it is*; but, in any sense, it is not justifiable. The phenomenal strides which the Socialist movement has made in this country during the last twelve years is apparent to all who care to acquaint themselves with the facts; but where is the evidence to justify the assertion that Christianity has made a like progress? Mr. Ballard, in one of his books, joins in the general wail about the alienation of the masses from its influence and its ordinances. The Christianity of his definition is certainly not a *force*, in the sense that Socialism is a force, in our modern life; while the Christianity that he compares with Socialism is an *opposing* force, and not the progressive influence he insinuates. As one of our leading Socialists said: "I am working for Socialism when I attack a religion that is *hindering* Socialism."

"These two vast potencies—the one religious the other economic"—says Mr. Ballard, "cannot possibly exist, and grow, side by side, without mutual influence." And he asks: "What is that influence to be? Are they to fight or to fuse, to help or to hinder each other?" Well, the Wellington's and the Nelson's of the Socialist movement have already answered Mr. Ballard's question; a fact of which he ought to be aware, seeing that he has spent several years in propagandist work endeavoring to repel the attacks of the enemy. Such a question, moreover, shows the mental confusion under which Mr. Ballard labors. Because if, as he quotes from the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the ethics of Christianity and Socialism are identical, then any antagonism between them would be a case of a house being divided against itself. But Mr. Ballard knows that Church Christianity has no real sympathy with the Socialist ideal. Indeed, he himself lets the cat out of the bag by saying that, "as an ideal, it is utterly impracticable" apart from Christianity. And if any Socialist wants any other evidence of the "game" these Christian apologists are playing in attempting to minimise the antagonism between these two organisations, then all we can say is, that they must be very dense indeed.

Mr. Blatchford complained that Mr. Ballard did not understand the subject of Determinism; and, in asserting that Socialism "assumes the moral perfection of human nature," our friends have good reason to believe that he does not understand Socialism either. His view of human nature, too, does not betoken very extensive observation, for it is certainly obvious that he loses sight of many of the most important facts of human life when he alleges that "the strongest incentive to human action is *personal reward* attained through competition." Many of the noblest acts of life are performed without reference to "personal reward." It is easy to see that Mr. Ballard's whole view of human nature and conduct is colored by the theological dogmas of Christianity.

The keynote of the whole article is, that "there is a *potency* in Christianity which alone would enable the Socialist ideal to be realised"; and, when we are informed that "the Christian faith involves the never-failing presence and power of a personal dynamic, too tender and too mighty as a source of obligation for a non-disciple ever to appreciate, or a true disciple ever to forget," one can hardly withhold the sneer at the introduction of such cheap and childish sentiment into the region of controversy. If the surmise of Mr. Ballard be correct, it is evident that the first duty of Blatchford and Hyndman and Shaw is to proceed reverently to the "penitential form" and be instructed in the mysteries of Christianity by some Hallelujah lass, and then—all will be well! It is somewhat difficult to determine from Mr. Ballard's article whether he is advocating the old gospel of "one thing needful" or the new gospel of "two things needful." When he speaks of "Christianity working from within outwards, and Socialism working from without inwards," one is led to think he is in favor of the latter; but when he professes to see the solution of social problems in "Christian Socialism," it is more probable that he is still inclined to the former. In any case, from the standpoint of clear thinking and accurate expression, Mr. Ballard is a *disappointment*—as, for instance, when he admits a meaningless phrase like "the mind of Christ" into his definition.

If the masses on the Continent have come to believe that "the Church is only a police institution for upholding capital, and that it deceives the common people with 'a cheque payable in heaven,'" that belief is only too well founded. And when the indifference of the masses of this country to religion is replaced by a more intelligent realisation of its dangers to their well-being, they will come to see the necessity of sweeping away "the whole tottering structure of conventional religion and worship."

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Holy Observatories.

IT would appear superfluous in this Twentieth Century to discuss astrology, faith in omens, belief in the reality of apparitions, or other pernicious notions, were it not known that such crass absurdities still obtain among persons who pass as educated, and that many minds are bewildered by them.

To expose these dupers and to release the duped is the bounden duty of all progressive persons mindful of the welfare of humanity.

Happily, Freethinkers do not suffer from the influences of such gloomy mental horrors which haunt those who prostitute themselves to spiritists and astrologers in general, or to the wiles of an unscrupulous churchcraft in particular.

All ancient and modern records of every nation have numerous accounts of religious rites and practices proceeding from absurd beliefs due to ignorance. And there is no exception to this reproach.

Among these invented modes of divination is astrology. It was contemporary with rudimentary civilisation. In the Bible we read that Isaiah was among the astrologers. The same "Holy Book" also gives an account of a *séance* with its ludicrous counterpart in raising the spirit of deceased Samuel for the express purpose of obliging Saul with certain information, which an Almighty God would not or could not give.

Similar performances in the name of religion have dragged through the ages to this year of grace, when a *Christian Herald* soothsayer and a *Christian Age* necromancer still have a numerous *clientèle*, to say nothing of that "bishop's eye" who says he sees spirits. But these are immaterial.

England's state-supported religion, though fashionable, is quite as absurd as its ancestors' and equally primitive. Each of the sects differ, and to the rejection of all others is supposed to exclusively possess supernatural faculties appertaining to destiny; a business worthy of an Italian woman's fortune-telling birds, or the exorcisims of a Hottentot medicine-man.

If we revert to the Chaldean records, we find a religious system designated "Zabism"; an ancient worship of heavenly bodies. The outcome of this was astrology.

Here, indeed, are excusable errors due to the untutored imagination of an early race which could but look upon the sun, moon, and stars, in amazement and considered them rulers of the world.

The Babylonians and the Egyptians were two of the first political communities. Their ideas were in keeping with the elementary knowledge of human infancy from which the present-day churches have progressed but little, if at all.

The clergy of these latter deserve upbraiding, but we need not be astonished at the extravagances of the theology of the Babylonian priests who fancied the celestial orbs were habitations of intelligent beings, each of whom had his particular department in the government of this world, as well as a share in the disposal of human affairs.

These priests, therefore, established themselves as divine astronomers. This placed them in an unique position, which not only gave them power but an inexhaustible source of wealth. Consequently, such a system that gave its professors so many advantages was gradually introduced into other countries where this mysterious juggle controlled the counsel of the state, and even directed military operations.

It may surprise the modern reader to know that this pretended science was much used in the sixteenth century, when astrological predictions were as seriously believed as they had been during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. But greater is the astonishment to-day, for, in the face of philosophy and advancing science, the Church canons still boom the authenticity of their so-called infallible holy scriptures, out of which fallacious astrology is read and taught as truth, and upon which the inconsistent doctrines of Christianity are based. And the result is, that thousands

of persons, both clerical and lay, in every part of the kingdom, hold decided beliefs in heaven-worship.

They believe a star guided men to Bethlehem and aided them to find "Christ their Savior."

They believe the stars fought against Sisera.

They believe Joshua was helped in warfare by the sun and moon.

Christians have not yet ceased petitioning the sun, moon and stars to bless their Lord, to praise him and magnify him for ever.

Preachers and worshipers who profess such beliefs are not a whit less superstitious than their religious ancestors. The "Lord's Spiritual" are not fit legislators. They hinder reform and should be removed. All religions are obstacles to progress. Against a multiplicity of irrefutable arguments, the state not only sanctions but continues payment for the propagation of inanities which are repugnant to thoughtful citizens. Worse still is the fact that, the law is actually against pioneers of progress, whose ardent and sole desire is to save their fellows from moral injury and to rid the land of an intellectual blight.

ICHABOD.

Correspondence.

A QUESTION OF ETHICS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—With all respect to Mr. Cohen, I am still inclined to think that he does not give sufficient importance to the personal element. He says: "Separated from society, man ceases to be an individual and becomes a mere object." That may be true; but, at present, I am not prepared to accept that doctrine. "Separate man from his fellows and we have a mere animal object and not a civilised being," Mr. Cohen further says. He contends that morality is essentially a matter of relation. "Abolish all relations and the condition of morality disappears, or we are thrown back upon a more or less modified supernaturalism."

I need hardly say that I reject the supernatural idea concerning morality. Morality is a developed faculty, liable to reversions and perversions; but I cannot see why, if man be separated from his fellows, he necessarily becomes a mere animal. Mr. Cohen remarks: "I consciously act when I fold a newspaper for reading; but no one would say that how I fold it has any ethical significance." Well, I think it might. The paper may be folded in a clumsy, inartistic fashion. It might be folded in such a way that subsequent reading proves irksome. Thus we derive the artistic faculty. The way people eat their dinners may have an effect upon the consciousness, and an effect upon morals.

If a man be cast upon a desert island, sounds, sights, and scenes would still impress him, varying according to individual temperament. He would remain a thinking being, associating ideas. If the man shortens his life by his conduct, Mr. Cohen fails to see why he should be called immoral. Personally, I think the word "immoral" is rightly used in that connection, though some forms of sensuality may be the result of defective heredity. But Mr. Cohen's point of view may be the more correct one. I shall assume that he retains his view on this point as expressed in last week's issue.

J. A. REID.

Let others, my friend, bestrew the hearses of the great with panegyrics; but such a loss as the world has now suffered [the death of Voltaire] affects me with stronger emotions. When a philosopher dies, I consider myself as losing a patron, an instructor, and a friend. I consider the world as losing one who might serve to console her amidst the desolations of war and ambition. Nature every day produces in abundance men capable of filling all the requisite duties of authority; but she is niggard in the birth of an exalted mind, scarcely producing in a century a single genius to bless and enlighten a degenerate age. Prodigious in the production of kings, governors, mandarins, chams, and courtiers, she seems to have forgotten for more than three thousand years the manner in which she once formed the brain of a Confucius; and well it is she has forgotten, when a bad world gave him so very bad a reception.—*Goldsmith*

The bliss of man (could pride that blessing find)
Is not to think or act beyond mankind.
—Pope.

Secular Education;
OR, CHRISTIANS VERSUS "THE GOLDEN RULE."

As Christians praise and preach the "Golden Rule,"
They ought to drive the Bible from the school,
Because their secular opponents teach
Another rule, and other precepts preach.

The Christians who respect the "Golden Rule"
Will help their Freethought foe to free the school.

The Christians *must* the "Golden Rule" obey,
And so to *all* opponents *must* give way;
As Christians *wish* their foe to strike his flag,
To *strike their own* to him they ne'er must lag.

They *must*, as teachers of the "Golden Rule,"
To Secular Reformers yield the school.

To treat as we'd be treated makes us strike
To foes, because from them we'd like the like;
But Christians all would like their foe to yield
And make the school a Bible-training field;
So, therefore, as professors of the "Rule,"
The Christians *must* "to others" yield the school.

The "Golden Rule" is "gilt" on worse than brass;
'Tis merely dross, and only cheats the crass.
'Tis praised by ev'ry pious knave or fool
Who "guides" the godly gowks that "gather wool."
To "keep" it is to "break" it—teach the school:
The "Golden Rule" *annuls* the "Golden Rule."

If Christians *and* their foes "believed" the "Rule,"
Then each to each would wish to yield the school;
But Christians are the *only* ones who preach
The "Rule," and thus its implications teach;
So Christians, to obey the "Golden Rule,"
Must drive the "Golden Rule" from ev'ry school.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

It is not an extravagant calculation that, in England alone twenty millions a year are spent on religion. The figures fall glibly from the tongue, but just try to realise them! Think first of a thousand, then of a thousand thousand, then of twenty times that. Take a single million, and think what its expenditure might do in the shaping of public opinion. A practical friend of ours, a good Radical and Freethinker, said that he would undertake to create a majority for Home Rule in England with a million of money; and, if he spent it judiciously, we think he might succeed. Well, then, just imagine, not one million, but twenty millions, spent *every year* in maintaining and propagating a certain religion. Is it not enough, and more than enough, to perpetuate a system which is firmly founded, to begin with, on the education of little children?

Here lies the strength of Christianity. It is not true, it is not useful. Its teachings and pretensions are both seen through by tens of thousands, but the wealth supports it. "Without money and without price," is the fraudulent language of the pious prospectus. It would never last on those terms. The money keeps it up. Withdraw the money, and the Black Army would disband, leaving the people free to work out their secular salvation, without the fear and trembling of a foolish faith.—*G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."*

HIS MANIA.

A journalist visited an insane asylum to get material for an article, and was shown over the establishment by one of the inmates, who was so intelligent that it was almost impossible to believe he could be out of his head.

"And what are you in here for, my man?" asked the journalist at length.

Immediately a cunning look came into the man's eyes, and he looked about him warily.

"I'll tell you if you keep it dark," he said, lowering his voice. "I have a mania for swearing. I write 'cuss words' all around. It's great sport. Why, they have to hire a man just to follow me round and rub 'em out. But," coming a little closer, "I'll tell you a secret. I'm four 'damns' ahead of him, and I've got 'hell' written all over your back."—*Lippincott's Magazine.*

THE NERVE OF HIM.

"Adam—Adam," repeated Saint Peter, meditatively, "the name seems familiar, but —"

"I," exclaimed the applicant, "I come from Eden. I am the progenitor of the whole human race."

"And you!" thundered Saint Peter, "you have the nerve to apply for admission here? Front! Show the gentleman below."—*Puck.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road) : 7.30, Joseph Symes, "The Christ, Not Historical but a Theatrical Character."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate) : 7.30, J. Wishart, a Lecture.

OUTDOOR.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Brockwell Park, 2.30, J. Collins and Guy Aldred, Debate, "Christianity v. Secularism."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall) : G. W. Foote, 11.15, "The Lords and the Education Bill"; 7, "Do the Dead Live?"

FAIRSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane) : 6.30, F. B. Grundy's Concert Party.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street) : 12 noon and 6.30, Right Hon. the Earl Russell.

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street) : Wednesday, Nov. 21, at 8, John Kinniburgh, "Police-made Morality."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street) : 7, Sam Reeves, "Social Reconstruction in England."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road) : 6.30, Mrs. Bayfield, "The Ten Commandments."

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Darn Crook) : C. Cohen, 3, "Wanted, a Christian"; 7, "The Salvation Army: a Study in Social Folly, Religious Failure, and Financial Imposture."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café) : Thursday, Nov. 22, at 8, A. Howson, "Robert Owen."

PLYMOUTH RATIONALIST SOCIETY (Foresters' Hall, Octagon) : 7, W. H. Wise, "Christian Charities."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (4 Kip Hill) : 3.30, R. Robinson, a Lecture.

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