

# THE Freethinker

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*Of all Nonsense, Religious Nonsense is the most nonsensical.*—ROBERT BURNS.

## The Ethics of Public Meetings: And Some Other Matters.

DROPPING the editorial "we" for once, I wish to start this article with an explanation and an apology. In the *Freethinker* of November 11 I had occasion to remark, quite incidentally, in the course of an "Acid Drop," that not even Mr. Stead made any row about my imprisonment in 1883 under the infamous Blasphemy Laws. This was in no sense an attack upon Mr. Stead, as anyone may see by referring to the paragraph. Still, I regret having written it, because I unwittingly did an injustice to one who deserves far other treatment—at least, at my hands. As a matter of fact—and I ought to have remembered it—Mr. Stead was not then the powerful publicist that he is now. He was a leading member of the old *Pall Mall Gazette* staff, but he did not control its policy. Mr. John Morley was the editor at that time, and the entire responsibility for the paper's going wrong on my case rested upon him.

Again, in last week's "Acid Drops," I referred to Mr. Stead rather unfortunately. I accepted the *Daily News* report that he had "congratulated" Miss Hodgson and the other lady suffragists who went down to an Ethical meeting in Camberwell with the express object of preventing Mr. Cremer from delivering his lecture on peace and arbitration; their "reason" for this extraordinary action being that Mr. Cremer had made a jesting and "disgusting" speech against Woman Suffrage in the House of Commons. Now the *Daily News* report was wrong. Mr. Stead was present at that disorderly meeting, but he only intervened to allay the disturbance, and it was at his special request that the ten female executioners—five on each side—finally departed without carrying off Mr. Cremer's head upon a charger, or upside down in his own hat. I said that Mr. Stead was old enough and wise enough to know better than to congratulate the ladies upon such a performance, and the facts of the case show that I was right. I was wrong in trusting to the *Daily News*—and for that offence I feel that I have really no right to ask forgiveness.

On the main question at issue I adhere to all I wrote, and I think the matter is of sufficient importance to justify me in dealing with it in a separate article.

I must challenge, to begin with, the notion that Mr. Cremer's speech on any subject in the House of Commons is a "reason" for breaking up public meetings he is addressing. What he says in the House of Commons can be answered in the House of Commons, and the Speaker sits in the chair to guard

the amenities of civilised discussion. One can understand a lady suddenly losing her temper on catching sight of a determined opponent of Woman Suffrage, and creating a scene on the impulse of the moment. It is not wise, but it is what they call "natural," and it calls for a certain allowance. But a deliberate, concerted attempt to create disorder, so that the offensive man may be prevented from speaking on a perfectly innocent topic, is in my judgment sheer rowdyism. And that is what the ladies did. They kept the "scene" going for three-quarters of an hour. Had they been men the rowdyism would have been obvious—and dealt with accordingly. And how does it cease to be rowdyism because the offenders are women?

I take the ground, then, that Mr. Cremer's speech against Woman Suffrage cannot possibly be any "reason" for breaking up a meeting he wishes to address on Peace and Arbitration. The "offensiveness" of his speech may be very much a matter of opinion. Mr. Cremer cannot himself think it very offensive, for he says he is going to print it. With the actual text before me, I daresay I could decide the point for myself. In the meantime I gather that he made certain physiological references, which are held to have been in bad taste. Well, it is easily possible, of course, to be guilty of bad taste in making such references; but it seems to me perfectly ridiculous to say that such references are necessarily offensive. They are part of the natural facts of the problem—whether we like them or not; and the wisdom of ignoring natural facts is, to say the least of it, not conspicuous.

It should be understood that I am not debating the question of Woman Suffrage itself. That is quite beyond my province in this journal. I am simply dealing with the elementary ethics of public discussion. Whichever side is right, and whichever side is wrong, we must all obey the rules. Sometimes the rules may seem a little hard, but it would be a great deal harder if there were no rules at all. And this ought to be specially borne in mind by those who are least able to take care of themselves when the disorder really becomes serious. "If it comes to breaking up meetings," I said before, "the men will always win at that game—when they mean business." For that reason, and for similar reasons springing from the same root, I reminded the ladies that "their sex has everything to lose by appealing to disorder and violence." The more vehement of them may consider me an enemy of their sex for saying so. Well, I am not; and I appeal to all I have ever written to prove the contrary.

Like begets like. That is the universal law. Violence begets violence. Already the male students have broken up a Woman Suffrage meeting at Liverpool. I deplore their action; I wish they had more sense and better taste. Comic songs, catcalls, and flying cigarettes are not things for young men



to be proud of at a lady's lecture. No wonder the lady graduate in the chair exclaimed, "You are a lot of cowards. I am glad I do not know you—even your faces. You are a disgrace to the university." But that sort of thing may be expected when women appeal to the worst instead of the best in men. The old *brute* is always there; he is even there in women themselves. Beware of arousing him! But if you *will* arouse him, what sense is there in screaming when you see his claws and fangs, and the evil glare in his eyes? Are you childish enough to suppose that violence can be dealt with like a water-tap in your bathroom—that you can turn it on and off just as you please? Don't believe it. You will find it a terrible mistake.

Mr. Stead tells me that if he and I had stood up in the Albert Hall and solemnly protested against a slanderer of the brethren like Dr. Torrey being allowed to conduct a religious meeting, we might have done more good than by all we wrote. I beg leave to doubt it. The newspapers would only have noticed the purely sensational side of our cause. We might have been the centre of a little fleeting excitement. We should have done wrong—and we should have paid the penalty. Our cause would have suffered. No mere stroke for the eye of wonder could have had the effect of our careful and calculated exposure of Dr. Torrey's tactics. The conspiracy of silence was against us, I know—and it is always against *me*; but work tells for all that, and what nobody talks about, sometimes, everybody knows. Dr. Torrey is settled. Mr. Stead may be sure of that.

Doing evil that good may come of it is a very ancient policy, but I do not know that it ever succeeded. Good causes can only be served by good means. In that respect I believe that Shelley was profoundly as well as beautifully right. What he said of another was true of himself:—

"Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep  
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth."

Never was there a more sensitive soul. Yet he had the brains to see that the appeal must always be to reason and humanity. If that appeal is slow, what is the use of our impatience? We do injury instead of benefit. And there is incalculable injury in deliberate disorder at public meetings. If progress depends on free enquiry and free discussion, how can that help us which strikes at the final causes of all we seek? Even in fighting for our "rights" we must respect our *duties*. And it may be, in spite of our personal estimate, that these are of most importance to the world.

G. W. FOOTE.

## How to Find God.—II.

(Concluded from p. 723.)

DR. HORTON not only knows that the world is governed by intelligence, he also knows that this intelligence possesses a love of beauty. And this because the universe is beautiful. This beauty is universal—in the sky, in the earth, in the sea, in the decay of vegetation. And as there is—to the non-theological scientist—nothing that so clearly demonstrates the truth of the doctrine of relativity as the sense of beauty, so clearly is it dependent on the nature of the organism, he adds, that if you call in the aid of the microscope "you discover that this element of beauty is not relative to our sight; it exists there beyond our sight, for the minute particle under the microscope.....is as beautiful as the starry heavens, as perfect as the flower that we see and smell." It is almost a pity to spoil such a gem as this by comment, for one might search for a year to find its equal for philosophical fatuity. Johnson stamping on the earth to disprove Berkeley's philosophy is profound thinking at the side of it. The beauty of nature is not relative to our sight because one can *see* the same beauty through a microscope.

Well, in the name of all that is wonderful, what is it that looks through the microscope? And how can one disprove the statement that beauty is a purely subjective thing by seeing the same beauty in the infinitely little, as in the larger aspects of nature? Perhaps Dr. Horton will explain.

He also has, as is to be expected, a great deal to say on the evidence of the existence of God, furnished by a study of human history. Nations, he says, rise and fall in accordance with moral principles; and, of course, these are to be seen more clearly in English history than elsewhere. Now, if it were quite true that the most moral nation always triumphs, one portion of Dr. Horton's thesis would be established, although even then it would not follow that there was a God regulating the process. But the theory is at conflict with the facts. We ourselves have just emerged from a severe war in South Africa. As a result the Boers, as a nation, are destroyed. Yet I am not aware that, as a nation, we are superior, morally, to the Boers. And the lesson here can be seen over and over again in the history of the world. Moral qualities are, of course, factors in determining the destinies of nations as of individuals, and this for reasons of which Dr. Horton is apparently unconscious; but they are not by any means the invariably determining factors in the triumph of nations in the international struggle for existence.

Some of Dr. Horton's illustrations are amusing. Henry the Fifth, he says, went to France to establish a quite indefensible title to the crown. He besieged Rouen, fought Agincourt, and inflicted great hardships on the French people. Again, the Duke of Bedford captured the "pure and holy Joan of Arc," and burned her at the stake. Surely, says Dr. Horton, one might say "Justice sleeps, and God does not observe." But see; within a few weeks of Agincourt Henry the Fifth was smitten with disease, and died; and, on the morrow of the burning of Joan of Arc, England lost for ever her possessions in France.

Now I promised to deal seriously with Dr. Horton, and therefore, with all solemnity, I ask how on earth could either of these events prove either the existence or the providence of God? Dr. Horton evidently believes that Henry the Fifth died of his disease because of his unjust claim to the French crown. Well, let it be so, and that disposes of *him*. But what of the others? What of the people who suffered from Henry's invasion? And, be it remembered, the Christian soldiery of that day were anything but a congregation of Bayards. Would anyone seriously argue that the injustice of a foreign invasion, and the butchery and outrage that followed, were all redressed by killing one man? Presumably Dr. Horton believes this, but does anyone else? Similarly with the case of Joan of Arc. Can anyone see how the injustice of her execution was put straight by England losing its French possessions, even assuming that the one thing resulted from the other—and no one but Dr. Horton does believe this. Obviously the justice of God would have been better demonstrated by preventing both the invasion and the burning. It is a vulgar assumption that a wrong is righted when the wrongdoer is punished; but it is quite false. A wrong once done is done for ever. Punishing the wrongdoer may relieve the feelings of those who are conscious of the wrong, but it cannot undo the wrong, nor destroy its consequences. Besides, if God is to be seen in history, Henry the Fifth invading France, and the Duke of Bedford burning Joan of Arc, are all parts of the general plan. May it not just as well be that the maid was burned because of the wrongdoing of the French, as that the English lost their hold on France because of the burning of the maid? Or God may have first urged Bedford to the murder, and then punished him for doing it. There are Biblical precedents for this assumption, as Dr. Horton is aware.

Mind, I do not deny for a moment the power of moral forces in the life of a nation. It is quite true that righteousness exalteth a nation—even though the Bible says it. But it is true for reasons of which



Dr. Horton is apparently as oblivious as is an Esquimaux of quadratic equations. It is true that a people with the elements of kindness, co-operation, justice, and foresight, will stand the best chance, not of immediate supremacy, but of ultimate persistence, because morality is, in its essentials, an expression of the conditions of persistence. To say, therefore, that in human history the better peoples, sooner or later, assert their supremacy, is only another way of asserting the truth of the principle of the survival of the fittest. The moral is ultimately the fittest, the fittest is ultimately the moral. (Ultimately, mark, for there may exist conditions which give the immoral a temporary advantage; but there is little question that such qualities are not in harmony with the larger and permanent human environment.) Only one wonders what on earth has God to do with it? The moral persists because morality is one of the conditions of persistence. This is the whole truth in a nutshell.

Dr. Horton returns to this question in dealing with the testimony of consciousness. First he says that "unless men are untrustworthy and their witness cannot be believed.....people.....have had, and have, direct experience of God, a knowledge.....rich and illuminating.....and absolutely certain. I say if that is not to be believed, it means that we must discard human testimony altogether." But there is no need either to question the honesty of those who bring forward such testimony, nor is there any need to accept their stories as objectively true. In the absence of proof that such people are deliberately lying, we may take it that they believe what they say to be true. But need we also believe that they were not mistaken in what they took for the truth? Dr. Horton himself once told a wonderful yarn of the way in which God Almighty helped him to find a lady's golosh in Norway. No one need accuse him of saying what he knew to be untrue, but very few will believe that God joined Dr. Horton in a holiday game of hunt-the-slipper. Plenty of people have given evidence of the supernatural beings they have seen, and of the temptations they have been subjected to by devils. The stream of evidence is broad and constant in such matters. Until it went out of fashion, the evidence of Herne the Hunter's existence could have been established on the same lines as Dr. Horton tries to establish the existence of God. It is not at all a question of the general trustworthiness of human experience, but only whether people are (1) speaking on a subject on which knowledge is possible, and (2) whether they were, at the time stated, in a condition to discriminate between the true and the imaginary.

According to Dr. Horton, this knowledge of God is reached by these favored individuals because of their superior moral development. "Where a man is bent upon purity the experience grows. The pure in heart see God"—which is Dr. Horton's method of again suggesting that the man who does not believe in God is an unbeliever because of lack of moral development. A very flattering conclusion for Nonconformists, who are nothing if they are not highly moral, but one that is again out of conformity with facts. As a matter of fact, more—far more—people have ceased to believe in a God because of their absolute sincerity to themselves and to others, and because of their purity of mind, than have ever believed for a similar reason. The pure in heart are no nearer seeing God than are the foul in heart. The conviction as to God's existence is as strong with the one class as with the other. All that can be said in favor of the pure in heart is that the kind of God they evolve is generally of a rather more humanly admirable type. And the God of either class is equally a human product fashioned in the likeness of its creator.

This question of the human origin of the gods—the only one that goes to the root of the subject—Dr. Horton, like all other preachers, leaves severely alone. The evidence is extensive, world-wide, overwhelming; but it is studiously ignored. Anthropologists have made plain the way in which the

belief in a God came into existence, and the stages through which it has passed; but there is a common conspiracy among religious advocates to act and speak as though it had no existence. Psychology and medical pathology have also shown how this conviction of communion with God arises; how it is rooted in self-induced abnormal mental states, or in a misunderstanding of normal ones. But this evidence also is ignored by the pulpit. Preachers prefer to stick to a mediæval psychology, to dilate upon the testimony of unsound or uninstructed minds, or to deal at length with arguments to prove the existence of a God which never yet produced belief where it was not previously existent. For no one ever believed in a God because of any of these elaborate pseudo metaphysical arguments, nor will Dr. Horton's far from powerful rehash of them bring back to the fold a single wanderer. At most they will comfort the minds of those who continue to believe by disclosing to them what profound thinkers they are all, unconscious to themselves, and keeping, for a time, some within the Churches who show a tendency to stray outside. And if the truth were known, I expect Dr. Horton no more thinks to convert unbelievers by his sermons than I expect to convert Dr. Horton by my criticism.

Dr. Horton's final burst of philosophy and display of courtesy is that "One who [finds] himself in a universe which has no key, no meaning, no goal, nothing intelligible, and his own mind therefore reflects the meaninglessness and the chaos of the godless universe in which he imagines that he lives." So that Dr. Horton is evidently under the common and stupid impression that so long as he continues to mumble "God" this magic word supplies him with an explanation of natural phenomena. But it does nothing of the kind. He might just as well repeat "Abracadabra," which has slightly more to commend it because it is longer. "God" gives no key and no meaning to the universe. It never was and never will be anything more than a formula of ignorance. And one might retort on Dr. Horton that the mind of the average Theist is as vacuous as the term he is so fond of using. And if Dr. Horton would only *think* a little more and preach a little less, he might discover that the universe has only had a meaning given it as the idea of God has been excluded from the departments of actual and possible knowledge. Never during the entire history of mankind has a single problem been solved by the use of "God." It has over and over again stood in the way of their solution. In the infancy of the race the savage, fronted by things he feared and could not understand, mouthed "God." Thousands of generations later Dr. Horton stands a living demonstration of the persistence of savage ideas, and that, no matter how disguised by tricks of language or grace of expression, religion remains true to its beginnings.

C. COHEN.

### Saints.

IN a very readable sermon the Rev. James Capes Story tells us that the one business of the Christian Church is to "furnish the earth with saints." He says that "saints are the best product of the Spirit of God working through, and by means of, the Church of God." We are exactly of the same opinion. But what are saints? They are people suffused with other-worldism. They are those who live in closest communion with God, and to whom the present life has absolutely no value in itself. Christian saints are those who have been redeemed and consecrated to God through faith in the atonement of the cross, and who have developed a splendid "scorn of time and space and sense." The distinguishing characteristics of sainthood are devoutness, holiness, piety, consuming zeal for God, aloofness from the world. The claim is, that every saint has "a window which looks towards heaven, and through which the light comes direct from the throne of God." "This



saintly life," says Mr. Story, "will probably be acknowledged the worthiest and the most beneficent the world knows." He instances the Lollards, the Reformers, the Puritans, the Quakers, and the Methodists as examples of illustrious saints. He also regards the Nonconformist Conscience as a notable expression of saintship. We are quite willing to subscribe to all Mr. Story says on this point. The only criticism we wish to make is that most of the historical saints singled out by Mr. Story were anything but beautiful and lovable types of human character. The Puritans were eminently pious, but they made life on earth a hell for most of their neighbors. The Covenanters did make God their supreme reality, but charity towards those who differed from them was never in their hearts. Those who did not see as they did on matters of religion were accursed, and deserved pity and consideration from neither God nor man. Both the Puritans and the Covenanters had many most admirable qualities, and there are respects in which we owe them much; but they lacked other elements even more essential to a natural and happy life on earth. King David was a saint, "beloved of God"; but his character, as portrayed in the Bible, was not, to say the least, of the highest order. There is a man now living whom the half of Christendom pronounces eminently saintly, and yet he is one of the most narrow-minded, bigoted, censorious, and repelling of men.

Mr. Story is an ordinary English gentleman who, if he wished, could easily pick holes in the character of many of the saints to whom he refers with such unction in his sermon. The significant fact, in this connection, is that defects of character do not seem to have affected the saintship. King David was a cold-blooded murderer and adulterer, and yet he was "a man after God's own heart." The majority of the Crusaders were saints, and yet they went through the world slaughtering and plundering without a scruple, leaving behind them nothing but suffering and sorrow.

When Mr. Story comes to enumerate the "distinguishing features which mark the saints" he goes seriously astray. One of these features, according to him, is "hatred of sin." By *sin* the preacher evidently means that which displeases God. He says that hatred of sin marks the saints of every age. But are not murder and persecution and uncharitableness and bigotry hateful to God? And yet these were conspicuous traits in the character of not a few of the saints eulogised by Mr. Story. But if by *sin* we understand *wrong*, then haters of sin need not be saints—need not even be believers in God at all. We are surrounded by thousands of people to-day whose hatred of wrong is an irresistible passion, exceeded only by their love of right; but they bow the knee to no God in the heavens, nor acknowledge him in any of their ways. The love of right is not a saintly virtue, but a distinctly human one. Some of the stoutest and most successful fighters of wrong have been pronounced Freethinkers. Is not Mr. Story himself aware of this? Has he not read of Pagan women who sacrificed their lives rather than surrender their honor? The hatred of wrong springs naturally from the healthy love of life; and the love of life in full blossom is only another name for the love of humanity—the love of self glorifying itself in the love of others.

Another feature of the saints specified by Mr. Story is "high moral integrity." "High moral integrity," however, is often exhibited by people who are not saints, even by people who actively oppose all forms of supernaturalism. Morality has absolutely nothing to do with God and the heavens. "Moral integrity" is simply a social relationship. A morally upright man is a man who is in right relations with his fellows. Godliness and morality have nothing in common. Mr. Story seems to think that the hunger for righteousness in the human breast is the product of a righteous God. The truth, however, is that the righteousness of God is a gift to him from man. When God first appeared he had no moral

character. More than that, he was often represented as highly immoral in his treatment of mankind. "The great attribute of justice in God" is only a reflection of the attribute of justice in man. You may call it "the grit, the rock, the unbending principle" by which society is preserved, but it has had its origin on the earth. Righteousness, justice, and truth are simply social relations essential to social prosperity and happiness.

Mr. Story informs us that the world is against saints. "The world," he says, "is always antagonistic to the saintly mind." That is true. But the worldly antagonism to the saints is not on the ground of their superior morality, but because of their characteristic impracticality. Their citizenship is in heaven. Their minds are set on the things that are above where Christ is. Their gaze is fixed, not on the things which are seen, but on the things which are not seen. In so far as they are saints, they are out of place on town councils and commercial committees: it is towards the sanctuary they are constantly gravitating. The saintly face and the pious whine do not suit the market-place and the counting-room. Mr. Story refers to a Christian man who, in consequence of "carrying a vote in a town council which stopped a recurring carnival of vice, was cast out of the council on presenting himself for re-election." But we are not told what the "carnival of vice" was that the Christian man was the means of stopping. It is a notorious fact, however, that, as a rule, Christians oppose things which are of a most innocent and harmless character, simply because they are looked upon as likely to hinder the cultivation of saintship. Have not Christians resolutely stood up against the opening of Libraries, Museums, and Art Galleries on the Sabbath, simply because it was likely to interfere with church and chapel attendance? Their desire is to preserve Sunday as a day of solemn worship, and they are determined to have their way when they know that the great majority of the people do not believe in worship, but would much prefer to indulge in healthful forms of recreation. "The saintly mind" considers Sunday sport wicked; and "the saintly mind" being in the minority, it follows that it gets buffeted and bruised and insulted at every turn. It is a mind in revolt against all the secularising processes of the age. The Christian man is opposed, not because his ideals are too high, not because he is too good a man, but because his ideals savor of another world and are not suitable for this, and because his goodness is of too limited and one-sided a nature. In other words, he is out of favor because he has not progressed with the age, and is therefore not able to understand its requirements.

Mr. Story winds up by saying: "Whether men receive us or reject us, our great business in life is to be saints." We have no right to doubt the sincerity of the preacher. He evidently believes in saintship because he believes in God. But he has no right to condemn the great world because it does not share his faith. Is he not aware that, morally, the world stands quite as high as the Church? There are black sheep in the world as well as in the Church; but certainly they are not more numerous in the former than in the latter. Even saints are not always above suspicion. Some of us remember the following striking passage in which the late Laurence Oliphant dealt with the financial crash in New York in 1873:—

"Founders of theological seminaries, secretaries of charitable associations, and the leading elders of the various denominations are among the principal defaulters..... There is scarcely an instance of a prominent fraudulent bankrupt who has not made a show of piety the mask under which he ensnared his victims."

Morality is not a monopoly of the Churches, nor is it an invariable trait of saintship. Neither is immorality a monopoly of the world. But there is a radical difference between the morality of the Church and the morality of the world. The morality of the former is a duty it owes to God, and the intensity of the moral sense is in exact proportion to the strength of the belief in God; but the morality of the latter



is purely a social obligation, and the intensity of the moral sense is in exact proportion to the strength of the social instinct. In the Church, the better part, the one thing needful, is piety, saintship, consecration to heaven; and morality, of necessity, is relegated to a subordinate position. In the world, the conviction is steadily gathering greater and greater force that morality is the only thing that counts. Science informs us that our great business is, not to be saints, not to secure our titles to eternal habitations in the heavens, but to learn how to live peaceably and happily in the midst of our fellows. Nothing is right except that which makes for the public weal, and nothing is wrong except that which impedes social progress. This is the scientific law of human life. The world has broken with the Church because it understands and appreciates this law more fully than it ever did before. It is not saints that are wanted, but men of grit and principle, who know and love their kind.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Mr. Keir Hardie and the "Sermon on the Mount."

THE papers of November 5 reported that Mr. Keir Hardie had delivered a speech or sermon in Edinburgh, in the course of which, he affirmed his fondness for Socialism because it realised or fulfilled the conditions of the "Sermon on the Mount." As many other fanatics and misdirected persons seem to be enamored of that ancient and crude discourse, I propose to give it a brief examination; my object being, not to attack Socialism, but to expose the unparalleled absurdity of endeavoring to place Christ at the head of any movement for the uplifting of the masses. Nobody can sympathise more than I do with the efforts of the people to better their wretched condition; and it is because I am satisfied that Christ is not only useless, but absolutely adverse to all human advancement, that I expose this attempt to set his name and notions in the van of Reform.

"Blessed [or happy] are the poor in spirit," is the first proposition of Christ's sermon. The description means spiritual beggars, low, mean mendicants, the poor, wretched, spiritless, shiftless, helpless beings who are quite incapable of looking out for themselves; beings without enterprise or push, who, however muscular and physically strong, have not so much as a desire for self-help, for they are morally and mentally halt and lame and paralysed to the extent of being incurable. And those utter imbeciles are declared to be blessed or happy! How and why? Oh! they will be, or already are, the humble, undeserving recipients of that impalpable charity called "kingdom of heaven." And they are the only parties to whom such alms will be given—so declares and implies the "Preacher on the Mount."

I was under the impression that our Socialists were a wideawake and energetic race, eagerly and vigorously bent upon conquering and possessing the kingdom of earth and controlling all the wealth the world contains. I never heard or read that Mr. Hardie and his fellow Reformers belonged to the meek and lowly family which this sermon blesses; on the contrary, many people regard them as men of action, as most vigorous scramblers after wealth, and, they say, wealth that does not belong to them. If those described in Matthew v. 3 are Socialists, and all Socialists are of the same mould and quality, the rich and well-to-do have no need to dread the threatened Socialistic revolution, for those who are supposed to imperil the wealthy must be far too weak and contemptible to *desire* a revolution, not to mention participating in one. And if Mr. Keir Hardie really and truly does admire and endorse the "Sermon on the Mount," then let him be consistent and set his followers an example by showing that he cares no more than the youngest baby for the necessary things of this world. Let him wait in helpless

humility and spiritual paralysis for the charitable gift of "the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed [or happy] are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth," says the ancient Preacher. Not those, then, who call for State Socialism and strenuously strive to capture Parliament in order to nationalise all existing wealth and "all the means of producing" more—they will never inherit the earth; but the meek, the forbearing, the mental and moral paralytics—those will be the inheritors of the earth! So says the Preacher. And Mr. Hardie worships him as a Savior and a Socialist! Is it conceivable that this modern oracle has read the "Sermon on the Mount"? And is it possible that he can expect Socialism to be realised in actual fact by following the teaching of that sermon?

That Christ should have enjoined the imperative duty of poverty of spirit and of unresisting meekness was quite consistent with his main object, which was to make himself the absolute ruler of the world, with not a single rebel or opponent in it; nay, with not so much as a solitary thought, hope, or desire of liberty in one of his subjects. But is anyone sufficiently courageous to say that such a state of society would be a realisation of Socialism? Will Mr. Hardie venture to make such an open and explicit statement?

Perhaps I have misunderstood Mr. Keir Hardie. The sermon contains another declaration—"Ye are the light of the world." Does he consider himself to be the party, or one of them, so addressed? Doubtless. Who else could Christ mean? And is it in the least wonderful that the Edinburgh orator should be so gushingly fond of Christ, considering how he prophetically designated him? The proverb anent mutual scratching can here be applied by every reader without a hint from me. Of course, "an evil and adulterous generation," unsympathetic and scorning, may sneer at the light of the Socialistic leader and his friends, and even say "the light that is in them is darkness," "darkness visible," serving "only to discover sights of woe.....and doleful shades" impending over the unfortunate workers, who are so befogged and be-bogged by will-o'-the-wisps.

And, further, does this inspired prophet so "realise" the "Sermon on the Mount" as *never* to put himself in "danger of hell fire" by calling his brother a fool? And does he ever take an oath? for that is more solemnly, and in more emphatic detail, forbidden by Christ than is adultery or murder. And does this pious gentleman really swear upon the very New Testament which forbids all swearing whatsoever?

And is this champion of the rights of Labor so Christianly meek and lowly as to turn the other cheek when one of his is smitten? Will he tamely, nay, spontaneously, part with his "cloak also" to the robber who demands his coat? Will he tramp two miles to gratify the tyrant who has already "compelled" him to walk one? And does he give to all who beg, and never send a would-be borrower away empty? Or is Mr. Hardie in sober borrow a canny Scot who knows the full value of a bawbee, and who menacingly mutters his country's proud and most un-Christian motto, "*Nemo me impune lacessit*"? I should not care to put his flaunted Christianity to the test, for I should expect to see his pious cloak slip from his shoulders, and to find myself confronted by a man as eager for the fray as was the late lamented Roderick Dhu. It is possible that even Mr. Keir Hardie may be too modest to proclaim his love for his enemies; nor do we expect him to advise his followers to love the opponents and bitter foes of Socialism. His appreciation of the "Sermon on the Mount" has not yet reached that degree of perfection. And yet one can never feel sure that he may not to-morrow deliver a sermon on "Love your enemies" and he would mean it as much as Christ did. A man who can at this time of day parade the antisocial drivel of Christ as a standard and guide for political leaders and Socialist Reformers must be capable of much that rational people instinctively avoid.



Again. Does this patron of Christ perform all his prayers in the strictest privacy? and does he fast too, while hypocritically pretending to have fed as usual—as Christ commands? And does the saint carefully and scrupulously abstain from laying up treasures upon earth?—not so much as one pound in any bank? And has he reached that pinnacle of perfection and Christian imbecility in which he takes no thought for the morrow, for food, clothes, or life? Does he follow the example of the fowls which neither plough nor sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns? And is it true that he no more exerts himself to secure the good things of life than do the grass and the flowers? If so—if Mr. Keir Hardie does “realise” and obey the “Sermon on the Mount” to so sublime an extent, I must seek an interview with him. What a *rara avis* he must be!

Is it true that Mr. Hardie never judges another—not because it is wrong to do so, but lest he himself might be judged in return? And has he overlooked the essential fact that Christ “taught with authority,” not as a man among his fellows? as a king, as an owner of abject and helpless slaves? as a being without comrade or peer? Christ claims absolute rule over all; claims to be the owner of all; claims the right to damn whom he pleases. And from him and his decision there can be no appeal. Of all absolute and irresponsible rulers, Christ pretends to be the most absolutely absolute. Yes; and those who set him up as a Democrat or as a Socialist are guilty of the worst grotesquerie it is possible to conceive.

When Democracy becomes an accomplished fact, priest and pope and Christ and God, and every species of prescriptive ruler will have been set aside, and those who should suggest their restoration will be laughed at for their pains.

JOS. SYMES.

### Acid Drops.

Before the Lords had done with the Education Bill, Mr. Birrell went down to Bristol and declared that the Government “had no use for it” as it stood at that stage of the mangling. This, of course, is what everybody expected. What the right honorable gentleman did not state was what the Government intended to do—and that was what everybody wanted to know.

Mr. Birrell frankly confessed that the Government had “thrown their whole weight and energy upon a Christian solution of this great difficulty.” There you are! That is the natural assurance of the elect. They want a Christian solution of everything—even at the expense of people who are *not* Christians. They will have to be taught—and they will be taught in time—that neither the country nor the country’s exchequer belongs to them; and also that their Christianity should be left at church, or at home, or anywhere else they like, instead of being impudently brought into public assemblies of citizens of all religions and of no religion at all. How often you hear an out-of-season Christian telling a public meeting, called together for a purely secular object, that he stands there to carry out the teaching of his Master, Jesus Christ. What the deuce do the Jews and Freethinkers (to go no further) care about his Master, Jesus Christ?

One remark of Mr. Birrell’s was loudly cheered. He said that “In introducing this Bill the Government might have adopted the secular solution.” The applause that greeted this observation may have emboldened him to add that “it would not have been so unpopular as many people affected to believe.” This is what we have said all along. The anxiety about religious education nearly all belongs to the thousands of gentlemen who have a professional interest in it. The parents have never been greatly concerned about it. And those who keep saying that the people of England *won’t* have Secular Education are letting the wish be father to the thought. The people of England have never had a chance of having Secular Education. And the champions of the other side are afraid to let them have it.

The tip seems to be going round. Mr. Birrell’s speech at Bristol was followed in two days by Dr. Macnamara’s speech at Dudley. This gentleman, who appears to have had peeps

behind the scenes in relation to the Education Bill, declared that the action of the House of Lords would “recruit the growing ranks of those who, as a counsel of despair, were being driven to secular education.” Poor fellows! Still, if they swallow the medicine it will operate, without respect to their motives.

Amongst the “Representative Views” of Mr. Birrell’s speech, published in the *Tribune*, were two by Labor members of parliament. Mr. Keir Hardie, who says a good thing now and then, expressed himself thus:—

“Obviously the Bill as it now stands is impossible. That shows the wisdom of those of us who wished entirely to exclude religious controversies and adopt secular education, a solution to which the country is bound to come ultimately, and which has been appreciably hastened by the action of the bishops in the House of Lords.”

Mr. Philip Snowden said:—

“Of course, it is impossible for us to accept the Bill as mangled by the House of Lords. But when the inevitable conflict between the two Houses comes, I should like to see it on some issue which excites more complete and general agreement on our side than does the Education Bill.”

This implies that the Education Bill is not exactly popular in the House of Commons, even amongst the Liberals. We have heard this more than once, and we hope it is true—for it improves the chances of Secular Education being carried in the last resort.

President Roosevelt has taken the English language under his charge. Presumably the late Mr. Gladstone did the same in this country, if we are to follow the *Daily News*. Defending its use of the expression “two alternatives”—which we won’t discuss—that paper quotes Gladstone as writing that “the alternatives of action proposed by the Christian faith are two only,” and then it adds, “What was good enough for Gladstone is quite good enough for us.” This, of course, may be perfectly true, and yet be nothing to the point. The devotion of the *Daily News* to Gladstone—except where it differs from him, as on the Education question—is too well-known to cause any surprise. But what on earth has that to do with the etymology of “alternative”? As the orator said, we pause for a reply.

President Roosevelt is a good Christian; so was the late Mr. Gladstone. But there are better authorities on English in the ranks of non-Christians. George Meredith, Thomas Hardy and Algernon Swinburne, for instance.

King Edward is probably not a first-class judge of poetry. To do him justice he never affected to be anything of the kind. But we suspect that his letter of thanks for some verses from an Isle of Wight poet was a formal affair. Mr. Albert Midlane is described as “a well-known veteran writer of children’s hymns,” and his verses on the King’s birthday seem to have been written for his old public. Here is a sample:—

“Peace, with its olive spray,  
Greets Edward’s natal day,  
Borne on dove’s wing.  
Where’er his footsteps tread  
There discord hides its head,  
And heart to heart is wed—  
God save the King!”

Poet Midlane’s “vision” is a bit mixed. It is *feet* that tread, not *footsteps*. On the whole, we hope his hymns are better than his loyal verses. But we have our doubts.

Woman Suffrage is not going to lose a chance. We see it is to have the benefit of prayer. A prayer-meeting has been held at the residence of the Rev. George Piercy, Cathay, Cambridge-road, Leytonstone, to “ask for divine guidance to be specially given to the members of the House of Commons on the second reading of the ‘Political Enfranchisement of Women Bill.’” Considering how little divine guidance has resulted from the daily prayers of the House of Commons chaplain, it seems improbable that the Rev. G. Piercy’s efforts in this direction will be attended with much success.

The printed notice calling this Leytonstone prayer-meeting stated that one of its objects was “to pray that members of the House may be moved to further, as far as is in their power, the Christian principle of equal human rights, by favoring the removal of sex disqualification in the political world.” Surely the author of this notice must be a conscious or unconscious humorist. Fancy calling Woman Suffrage a Christian principle! There is not a text in the whole Bible in favor of it, and there are many texts against its very essence. “Wives obey your husbands in all things.” Just think of a married woman asking for a vote “on her own” after reading a text like that. Even with regard to widows



and spinsters, the New Testament lets us see what the "Christian principle" is. "I suffer not a woman to teach," says the great Apostle. Well, if a woman must not teach, how on earth should she vote—which is really taking part in legislation?

The women who want a vote, or any independent rights, should throw over the New Testament. Most of them, we suspect, have thrown over the Old Testament already. That book is perfectly insulting to their sex. Why, even in the very Ten Commandments, which are written up behind the altar in churches, the wife is lumped in with the house, the ox, and the ass, as the man's property—and she doesn't even take the first place in the catalogue.

The Rev. Dr. Horton, preaching the other Sunday morning in London, wore his usual "lachrymose visnomy." He was proud to think that "there is no part of the city where there are not churches and mission halls and other benevolent institutions," but, alas, truth compelled him tearfully to admit the "sorrowful fact" that "the tides of human life surge round these houses of prayer, but do not enter." Then he added: "It is an undisputable fact, which we must sorrowfully admit, that the Christianity of London—Christendom speaking through the Christian Church in London—is a matter of almost absolute indifference to the great bulk of the people of the city." Dr. Horton never made a truer statement; but the significant fact is that the same statement would be equally true if not truer of almost every other large city throughout Christendom.

Now, the meaning of Dr. Horton's "sorrowful" admission is that, in London at least, Christianity has proved a stupendous failure. The reverend gentleman explains this failure by the assertion that London is cursed with a *spurious* Christianity—a Christianity that has "exactly reversed the principles of its Founder," and that "misrepresents the Christ whose name it bears." This also is doubtless wholly true; but what about the abiding presence of the Living and Omnipotent Christ in the Church, of which we hear so much from the pulpit? Was not that presence sufficient to prevent the appearance and prevalence of a sham Christianity. On Dr. Horton's own showing, the existence of a perverted Christianity is an outstanding proof of the utter impotence of the ever-living and present Savior, who is claimed as the Head of the Church in London, as well as elsewhere.

The Rev. Dr. Tymms has just published a sermon in which he dwells on the importance of the testimony of James, "the Lord's brother," to the Resurrection. As a matter of fact, however, James never claimed to have seen the risen Christ. He is supposed to have written an Epistle, but that Epistle makes no reference whatever to the Resurrection. Even the four Gospels do not include James among the witnesses to the stupendous miracle. The alleged fact that the risen Jesus appeared to his brother rests alone on Paul's statement, "Then he appeared to James" (1 Cor. xv. 7). Another curious thing is that not one New Testament writer, with the doubtful exception of Paul, poses as one who had seen, with his own physical eyes, the risen Christ. Indeed, the New Testament does not even pretend to present a single first-hand evidence of the Resurrection.

Dr. Tymms' whole sermon is built upon the shifting sand of imagination. He gives us a picture of James drawn by the pencil of fancy, which, for evidential purposes, possesses no value whatever. He speaks of the "unique value of James as a witness to the fact that Jesus had indeed risen from the grave." But James himself, as far as the records are concerned, does not come before us as such a witness. This only shows how extraordinarily credulous Christians are.

The above paragraphs were written on the assumption that 1 Corinthians was the work of Paul. But the best Christian criticism of to-day rejects that assumption as wholly groundless. In the *Encyclopædia Biblica* we read that none of the canonical Pauline Epistles can be looked upon as from Paul's pen. "They are all, without distinction, pseudepigrapha." That is sweeping enough, in all conscience. And we are to bear in mind that that criticism was by a Christian professor. The Epistle of James is pronounced equally spurious. Where now is the "unique value of James as a witness to the fact that Jesus had indeed risen from the grave"?

Our readers remember Dr. A. C. Dixon, the slanderer of Col. Ingersoll, and how Mr. Foote and Mr. Stead exposed him. The following sentence, uttered by the coward, may serve as his defence: "Christians may do what they please,

because they please to do God's will." How convenient to hide behind God's will when a wicked action has been done in God's name!

With reference to a strikingly good performance at the Alhambra—which ought to be outside the purview of a pious journal—the *Daily News* says: "The phenomena of thought-transference have been investigated pretty deeply, and we never heard of anybody who had gone into the matter thoroughly and with an open mind who doubted that a transfer of ideas from one mind to another may and does take place without any communication through the physical senses." Our contemporary has guarded itself against contradiction; for it can always say that anyone who challenges its statement has not investigated thoroughly or has not an open mind. But obviously this is begging the question. Never mind the opinions some persons may have of others; let us go by the facts. Where is there a scientifically established case of telepathy in the *Daily News* employment of the word? We know that hundreds of tongues have wagged over this matter, and gallons of ink have been shed, but where is the case? We want it, if it is to be had.

Some people talk about telepathy as if it were on all fours with wireless telegraphy. But wireless telegraphy belongs to the same category as wire telegraphy. There is a wire in one case, and no wire in the other, but there are instruments in both. Man has never yet been able to use the forces of nature except through material agency—and there is no reason to believe that he ever *will* be able to. We can only judge of the future by the past, for no one has any other guide within the limits of reason.

Mrs. Callow, of South-place, Chadwell Heath, left home on Saturday, November 10, for Camberwell, to have her baby christened in the Roman Catholic faith. After the ceremony she called at a friend's house. A few hours later, about eleven at night, she jumped off the Thames Embankment and drowned herself and her baby. "May God forgive me," she said in a letter she left for her husband, whose being out of work seems to have upset her mind. We do not wish to deepen this pitiful tragedy by any ill-chosen words; but we are entitled to say that if a Freethought mother had got her baby "named" at a Secular meeting-place, and had then drowned herself and the baby in the Thames, the Christians would have seen in it a theme for a thousand sermons.

Mr. J. Macartney Wilson maintains, in the *Christian Commonwealth* for November 15, that Shakespeare was a Christian, at least during the latter part of his life. He believes that the poet "fell into sin, probably some sin of passion," in consequence of which he experienced the "bitterness of death." Later he believed the Gospel, received the Divine forgiveness, and became a new man. Yes, Shakespeare was "converted." Others are quite as confident that the king of poets was throughout his life a consistent Freethinker. Others claim him as a Catholic, while Mr. Wilson is pretty sure that he "leaned to Protestantism." Mr. Wilson is opposed by Mr. R. J. Campbell, who says that "you do not read the character of Shakespeare through his works," as we do that of Dante. Of course, if you take a dramatic poet literally, you may read whatever you please concerning himself from his works; and Freethinkers are as likely to be right in their reading as any others.

It is often asserted by Christian apologists that the old theology is dead; and those who venture to assail it are reminded of the uselessness and folly of flogging a dead horse. But the old theology is *not* dead, as the following extract from the Rev. David Smith's Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly* abundantly demonstrates. Addressing an inquirer, Mr. Smith says:—

"Your trouble is that, like a great many others, you are believing on the Lord Jesus but not trusting him. Pray disregard your changeful moods and lean all your weight on his 'finished work.' It is not your grip of him that counts, but his grip of you. You have nothing to do with your sin. It is his concern. He has undertaken it. Honor it by leaving it to him."

Comment would be superfluous. The immorality of the teaching is patent to all sane people.

Dr. Agar Beet has published a *Manual of Theology*, in which he "attempts to reach, by a method strictly historical and philosophical, definite and assured results touching the unseen foundations of religion." But he is attempting the impossible. Greater scholars than he pronounce the documents on which he relies utterly unreliable. The unseen foundations of religion do not come within the purview of history. They are at best but so many inferences which ignorant and



superstitious people drew from phenomena which are now seen to be capable of a perfectly rational and natural explanation.

The Rev. Dr. Cuyler, of Brooklyn, still contributes bright, plausible, and sentimental articles to the religious press, and they all go round the Christian world. In one of his most recent productions, he deals with God's promises, all of which, of course, are contained in the Bible. To account for their notorious non-fulfilment Dr. Cuyler says that they are "nearly all conditional." To be forgiven, this divine informs us, you must repent. But, then, in the Bible God is spoken of as the giver of repentance. To be saved, he continues, you must have "faith on the crucified Son of God." But the Bible calls faith the gift of God. Dr. Cuyler forgets that in the Bible "God's terms" are all among "God's promises." To get the promises fulfilled, he goes on, "you must go to Calvary." But Jesus is reported to have said that no one could go to Calvary unless the Father drew him thither. The good Doctor forgets half his Bible while explaining the other half. But theologians must do this, or throw up their job.

Mr. Rider Haggard's most appreciative readers can hardly regard him as a profound thinker. Too much importance must not be attached, therefore, to his recent remarks on religion to a *Christian Commonwealth* interviewer. Mr. Haggard "fails to see the use of the preaching of active scepticism," for "deprive man of the hope taught by all the creeds, and what is left?" Well, the fear of hell isn't left, anyway; and that is the biggest part of what the creeds offer. Mr. Haggard will not thus help the Churches to avoid the question of whether Christianity is true. That is the point on which people are making their minds up now.

They are holding a week's "great united Gospel Temperance Mission" in the Wesleyan Church, Fernhead-road, Paddington, and Dr. Clifford was announced to take part in the proceedings. We hope the reverend gentleman will explain how Jesus Christ turned all those gallons of perhaps bad water into good wine at that wedding-fuddle in Cana of Galilee.

The *Daily News* rebuked a Church parson, the Rev. Bruce Carnford, the other day for his "manners." It appears that the Rev. F. B. Meyer, the Nonconformist leader, had "claimed that the Free Churches were more fitted to give direction and tone to the new age than the Established Church, which at best stood for the mediæval type of Christianity." Whereupon the Church parson remarked: "This is really funny. It is as if a newsboy with threepence profit on his evening sales were to gravely inform the public that he knew more about finance than the Bank of England." How on earth can any friend of Mr. Meyer's legitimately find fault with the "manners" of Mr. Carnford? Each tries to be nasty to the "other Church," only the parson is the livelier; besides, the Dissenting minister gave the provocation.

The Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan, preaching recently at the settlement of a new minister at Chelsea, said that the ministry is "created by a direct and supernatural and mystical gift upon individual members of the Church." That is an ancient, orthodox claim; but how can the truth of it be tested? On this point Dr. Campbell has no light to throw. Indeed, he grants that which completely nullifies the claim. He says: "The Holy Spirit never confers the gift, the spiritual equipment, upon a man for preaching, unless he have natural ability for preaching." Thus the whole case is given away. If a man has natural ability for preaching, what need is there for any supernatural gift? Dr. Morgan declares that the people who think that "the Holy Spirit, filling a man, will make him a minister apart from any natural endowment" are fundamentally mistaken. What then is the use of the Holy Spirit? Is he not a superfluity?

Dr. Morgan is quite right, and yet quite wrong. He is right in saying that no man can become a great preacher without natural gifts for the work; but he is wrong in maintaining that successful preaching is impossible without the Holy Ghost. He says that Moody was "a master of assemblies naturally." "Whether his matter had been political or social, he would have moved men like a hurricane, if he really had believed the thing he was dealing with." Quite so; but what more did he do as a revivalist? He thoroughly believed what he said, and had naturally a special gift for saying it effectively, and therefore he "moved the people like a hurricane." If he had naturally the requisite equipment there was nothing to prove the presence and activity of the Holy Ghost. *All the results achieved*

*could have been satisfactorily accounted for on exclusively natural lines.*

Dr. Morgan's own phenomenal success at Westminster Chapel entirely discredits his theory. Others, as good and devout as he, were signal failures because they lacked the natural equipment. He succeeds, because preaching blood flows through his veins, because he is a born pulpit orator. But where does the Holy Ghost come in?

Rev. J. H. Jowett, preaching at Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham, on Sunday morning, said some good things—for a Christian minister. They have all been said before in the *Freethinker*, but they were rather novel in a place of worship. He said that Hindus were going back to India from English universities as new men, but, alas, not as "new men in Jesus Christ." The awakening of Japan had been still more remarkable; she had borrowed much from Germany and England, but she "had not come to Europe for her religion." China was waking up too, and "there were to be no more immoral conspiracies among European nations to parcel out the territory of other people." Mr. Jowett had a good word to say even for Chinese morality. People, he said, talked of the morals of the Chinese as if the riff-raff to be found in South Africa to-day were typical of the ethics of Confucius. Some of the goals of China had been emptied in order that Chinese laborers might be sent to South Africa. Mr. Jowett is getting on. But if he continues talking the truth like this he may talk himself out of his pulpit.

The author of the explosion in St. Peter's on Sunday is unknown, but of course they write him down an Anarchist, and several English newspapers had grave leading articles on that supposition. But the culprit may simply be an ordinary criminal lunatic who has not yet been put under lock and key. He may even be a person hired by friends of the Papacy. For, after all, nobody was hurt, and no particular harm was done. Bomb-throwers who mean business generally do better (or worse) than this. Anyhow, there is no need to get excited and to throw blame about indiscriminately.

Rev. G. Bainton, of Coventry, wrote a long letter in the *Midland Daily Mail* to show that "Socialism is seen to be both Atheistic and immoral in its teachings and tendencies." The "immorality" may pass—for we all know how the men of God fling that charge at everything they dislike. As for the "Atheism," the reverend gentleman thinks he has done the trick by showing that several leading Socialists have been, or are, Atheists. But how does that fact establish any connection between Atheism and Socialism? There are plenty of Atheists who are not Socialists. Charles Bradlaugh, the great English Atheist of the nineteenth century, was strongly opposed to Socialism. Mr. Bainton is not a first-class logician.

The woman dressed as a nurse, who jumped into the Thames a few days ago and could not be rescued, was carrying a Prayer Book in her hand, and presumably had been using it. Dr. Torrey couldn't say she was an Atheist.

James Berry, the ex-hangman, has turned revivalist. Coalminers flocked in hundreds to hear him at Bedworth. Some of them may have had friends who know him—not wisely, but too well.

Heaps of newspapers are daily liars. Professor Lombroso is not converted to Spiritualism, after all the press paragraphs. He informs the Turin correspondent of the *Standard* that, while he believes in the reality of certain "manifestations," he is far from believing that the souls of the departed have anything to do with them. He says that the "soul" which Spiritualists call an emanation from God is to him an emanation of the brain. Another mare's-nest shattered.

Pastor George Wise, of Liverpool, has been asking, "Shall Women Have Votes?" Some of the Liverpool women who have seen and heard Pastor Wise may wonder why men have votes.

It's the best joke we have heard for a long while. According to a Laffan telegram from New York—which may not be true, though—Radical Aked, of Liverpool, has been preaching at the Fifth-avenue Baptist Chapel, and his sermons have so pleased Mr. John Rockefeller that the Standard Oil Trust boss wants him to become the regular pastor of that house of God. Exquisite!



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

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

## To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 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; 15, Bedlington; 16, Newcastle; 17, Hetton; 18, Spennymoor.
- W. ADAMSON.—Sir James Crichton-Browne advances nothing fresh. He merely repeats the hackneyed arguments in favor of the soul; and those arguments are not at all better for being backed up by a medical man—for doctors deal with the *body*, the treatment of the *soul* being the perquisite of priests. When he talks about the "it" which "remains the same through all the changing scenes of life" he is talking nonsense; *old* nonsense, it is true, but still *nonsense*. There is no "it" which remains the same. Who can see the same "it" in a child a week old, a man of forty, and a very old man in his second childhood? It is true that the matter of the body changes, though "once in seven years" is a foolish way of stating the case. But the change is very gradual, just a little every day, and the small amount of new matter is introduced into a vast and complex organism, where it falls into its place and function. Just in the same way, individuals go out of the English nation every day by death, and come into it every day by birth; but they go out and come in a few at a time—and the English nation retains its identity in spite of the change in its constituent "atoms." Do you see it now?
- W. H. LONSDALE.—Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation. The very best way is to put the *Freethinker* into fresh hands, as you do. There is a good little book on Voltaire by the late J. M. Wheeler. You will find it in the Freethought Publishing Company's Catalogue, which you can obtain from our office. There is no cheap book on Giordano Bruno, but there is a brief biography of him in our *Infidel Death-Bells*.
- H. J. WHIPP.—We have read the letters with interest. Of course there is always apt to be some difficulty in such a matter, but the teacher does not seem in this case to have been much to blame.
- THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £4 19s. 6d. Since received: F. Collins 5s., J. McMurray 2s. 6d., J. G. Dobson 2s. 6d., Young 6d., E. A. Small 3s., F. Horrman 2s., H. E. V. 1s., W. H. 2s.
- E. C. CORNETT.—Sorry to hear that the gentleman you refer to joined so lustily in singing "God save the King," which is one of the most miserable things ever written. Even the music is a trifle stodgy. A British national anthem ought to be something less personal, less pious, and less silly.
- G. SCOTT, one of our valued contributors, says: "I, too, have been pleased with the attitude you have taken up on the Church and State question in France, and thoroughly appreciate the tone of to-day's (Nov. 18) article." Mr. Scott, like Mr. Bonte, is himself a convert from Catholicism.
- J. BROUEN.—Thanks for cuttings. Your intervention in the matter of that handbill was well-advised, and we are glad to know it was successful.
- "UNCLE TIM" writes: "I was very glad that you replied to that question *re* politics. I have often wished to have seen your opinions on many such subjects, but after reading your answer it is clear to me that this is better left out." This correspondent suggests that on a fixed date—say December 22—all readers of the *Freethinker* should order one extra copy, to be given away. He says he feels sure that this would result in a great increase of our circulation, especially if performed once a quarter. This correspondent knows something of "the trade." What do others say?
- W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always very welcome.
- E. MOORCROFT.—Cuttings received with thanks. Glad you consider our article on "Women and Freethought" as "pregnant with thought and humanity," and Mr. Symes's articles as "ripping."
- FRANK SMITH.—(1) Shakespeare's will was written by his attorney. The pious flourish in the preamble neither came from the pen, nor reflected the mind, of the author of *Hamlet*. Mr. Sidney Lee, in his *Life of Shakespeare*, admits that the said pious flourish was merely formal and of no personal significance. It was simply a common formula in wills of that age. Personal declarations of faith, as in Bishop Sanderson's will, for instance, were very different; and a personal declaration of faith by Shakespeare would have been something majestic and moving. (2) In addition to the forged passage in Josephus there is the disputed passage in Tacitus, which we have dealt with at length in our pamphlet, *The Sign of the Cross*, with reference to Wilson Barrett's play. There is also the disputed passage in Pliny, which does not, however, refer to Jesus as an historical personage. That exhausts the list of non-Christian testimonies.
- A. KEBLER.—We shall not do anything of the sort. We do not intend to print all the things your "Christian friends" choose to say about Mr. Lloyd, or any other Freethought advocate. Why should we devote some of our limited space to "denying"

such things? It is for those who accuse to prove; not for those who are accused to spend their lives in proving their innocence. The best plan is not to trouble about what casual Christians say of leading Freethinkers; but if you *must* trouble, you should ask these "Christian friends" for *evidence*. When you ask for that you'll probably find that they have something else to do.

- C. W. M. L.—Registered places of religious worship are exempted, provided they are not used for other purposes.
- C. F. BAYLIS.—With regard to the various topics in the list, all we can say is that you might get a Freethought Publishing Company's Catalogue and select pamphlets bearing upon them.
- T. HESLOP.—Thanks for your successful efforts to promote our circulation. We hope you will be able to start a new N. S. S. Branch at Spennymoor.
- J. WATSON.—Pleased to learn that you persuaded your newsagent to let the *Freethinker* lie on his counter on Thursdays and Fridays, and that this has already secured us four fresh subscribers.
- H. J. G. F.—An old yarn, and a very silly one, and worthy of the paper you cut it from. Some such silly yarn may be found in most rural parishes in England.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and *not* to the Editor.
- 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.

## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's meetings in the Birmingham Town Hall have hitherto been held on Sunday afternoon and evening. The N. S. S. Branch found, however, that it could not have the use of the Hall last Sunday afternoon. Something was said to be in the way, but there was nothing on, after all, and it was a pity that the Branch could not have been informed of the fact before getting its bills out. As it was, the first meeting had to be held in the morning, which is always less favorable than the afternoon; and as the weather was what the schoolboy calls "beastly" it was no wonder that the audience was not quite up to the former level. Still, it was an extremely good one in the circumstances, and augured well for the evening. The weather continued "beastly," but did not prevent the assembling of a magnificent evening audience, which was really worth seeing. It was not only big, but appreciative, and even enthusiastic. The overwhelming majority of those present were in sympathy with the lecturer—who, by the way, was in excellent condition; and the applause at the end of his address was as loud and long as the most ambitious speaker could wish to hear. And the best of it was, from one point of view, that there were no exterior aids to a good meeting. The press, as usual, did not give a line of announcement, but the people found out from the bills that Mr. Foote was coming, that there was to be a Freethought lecture in the Town Hall, and they flocked in without any artificial stimulus. And that is well.

Discussion is not allowed at these Town Hall meetings, but questions are, and several were asked after the evening lecture, and the answers seemed to be much appreciated. The last question was: "When is he (meaning Mr. Foote) coming again?" It provoked laughter and cheers.

The chair was taken at both meetings by Mr. Fathers, the Branch president. Mr. Partridge, the quiet, business secretary, looked a little melancholy because he had no bookstall to see to—for the foolish embargo is still laid upon the sale of Freethought literature by the "authorities," on the miserable ground that the writings of Paine, Ingersoll, Foote, and Blatchford are "offensive" to certain nameless citizens of Birmingham. We should add that the veteran Mr. Ridgway sat on the platform at the morning meeting. He said that he had felt better during the last few weeks than for a long while previously. Wonderful old man!

We had 500 extra copies of last week's *Freethinker* printed and given away outside the Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday evening. Of course they were only a few amongst so many people, but they were all we could afford. We might have sold 300 copies inside. We lose the money, but 200 more people get hold of the *Freethinker*. Perhaps the "authorities" will think that out.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Cohen had good audiences at his Freethought lectures in Newcastle-on-Tyne on Sunday, in spite of some serious rival attractions in the city. An excellent report of the afternoon lecture appeared in the *Daily Chronicle*. Tynesiders will please note that Mr. Foote lectures at Newcastle next Sunday (Dec. 2) and Mr. Symes a fortnight later.



Manchester "saints" will note that Mr. Lloyd lectures at the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, both afternoon and evening to-day (Nov. 25). They ought to give him the audiences and the reception he certainly deserves. We hope to hear a good report of the meetings.

In connection with Mr. Symes's coming visit to Spenny-moor, a meeting will be held at 69 Durham-road this afternoon (Nov. 25) at 3 o'clock. Local Freethinkers are invited to attend, or to communicate with Mr. T. Heslop, Well-cottages, Middlestone.

Applications are coming in satisfactorily for Mr. Cohen's tract on "The Salvation Army and Its Work," which we have published for "free distribution" by special request. Large quantities have been applied for, in one or two cases, without any remittance for the cost of carriage; but it must be distinctly understood that we are neither a millionaire nor a charitable institution. We shall supply the tract itself free of cost, as long as we receive subscriptions to cover the cost of production. Anything beyond that is outside our province.

Mr. Harold Begbie contributed to Saturday's (Nov. 17) *Daily Chronicle* a long and important interview with M. Marcellin Berthelot, who is Perpetual Secretary of the French Academy of Sciences, and perhaps the greatest living scientist in Franco. M. Berthelot is a pronounced Freethinker, and Mr. Harold Begbie, as a god-fearing Englishman, deplors the fact; but he does not attempt to hide the truth—he only bewails it. M. Berthelot smiled at the idea that the Catholic Church has any serious hold upon Frenchmen. He did not say anything, however, about Frenchwomen—which is a point of considerable importance. When the Church dies in France there will be nothing to lament about:—

"M. Berthelot does not fear that the destruction of the Catholic Church will endanger the moral sense of humanity. He points out that ethics existed before Christianity, and that it is as natural for man to desire and strive after the highest of which he is capable, as it is for him to feel hunger or to experience pleasure in the presence of that which is beautiful. Morality is part of man's nature. Goodness does not belong to the Church."

All that was most serious and energetic in the youth of France, M. Berthelot said, had its eyes turned upon science, which was the religion of modern Europe.

On the question of "the soul" M. Berthelot was refreshingly outspoken. "It has certainly not yet been demonstrated," he said, "that such a thing as spirit exists independently of the manifestations in human organisms which are grouped together under that name." "For myself," he added, "I think that when life has become physically extinct, the manifestation of that consciousness ceases absolutely, as far as the physical world is concerned."

M. Berthelot was just as refreshingly outspoken on another point:—

"I ask him questions concerning Deity. He distinguishes between Creative Force and the Spirit of Goodness, and declares that as for the God manifesting himself in creative energy—the only God which science can approach—so far as the human mind can decide at all, that God is neither moral nor immoral; rather is he a being sublimely indifferent to all such purely human questions."

No wonder that Mr. Harold Begbie feels uncomfortable. But when he talks about the sad loss of faith and hope in France he talks nonsense. There are other hopes than those planted and cherished by faith.

The Glasgow paragraph in last week's *Freethinker* is well followed by a Newcastle-on-Tyne paragraph in the present number. The following is from the *Evening Chronicle* of November 17:—

"This afternoon, whilst one of the Newcastle Corporation trams was travelling up Shields-road, a child got in front of it, and was in danger of being run over, when a young man named Chiswell rushed forward and succeeded in getting it out of danger. Chiswell had one of his feet injured. He was taken to Messrs. Inmans chemists' shop, where his injury was attended to. He was afterwards able to go home."

Chiswell is really the "pen name" of a member of the National Secular Society. We are glad to hear from him that he is "no worse for the experience."

London Freethinkers will make a note of Mr. Foote's lectures at Queen's Hall on the second and third Sunday evenings in December. The subjects will be advertised in next week's *Freethinker*.

## Compel Them to Come In.

THE House of Lords, as was anticipated, is making hay of the Education Bill. The Bishops—who are absent when a Bill to prevent pigeon shooting is before the House—have turned up in full force when they see a chance of forcing their religion down the throats of children whose parents regard it with mingled feelings of disgust and contempt. The Bill has been so mutilated that the Bishops are getting frightened at their own success. According to the *Chronicle* (Nov. 9), the Bishop of Hereford feared that "Their Lordships were piling Pelion upon Ossa, not sufficiently remembering that the whole structure would probably tumble about their heads." Which is just about what will happen.

Notwithstanding this admonition, the Lords, temporal and spiritual, went at it again with undiminished ardor. Their next exploit completely disembowelled the Bill, so far as Freethinkers are concerned, by carrying an amendment to leave out Clause 7, which provides that children need only attend during the times allotted exclusively to secular education—the only valuable part of the Bill. The Bishop of Chester was very much concerned over the clause, and drew a dreadful picture of "a large proportion of the children of England growing up in something not far removed from heathenism." Perhaps he was wondering what would become of the unemployed Bishops if Clause 7 became law. The Bishop of London, of course, "strongly opposed the clause."

But the real old genuine spirit of Christianity flashed out in the speech of the Bishop of St. Albans; for a moment the veil hiding the villainous features of priestly intolerance was dropped, and the Bishop revealed the real aim and object of the Church. He said—and it should never be forgotten by Freethinkers—that:—

"The parents who were likely to withdraw their children from religious instruction were the very parents whose children most needed it."

This means that he would force his religion upon the children of parents who do not believe in it. That is his idea of religious liberty. He is like the American who defined liberty as the right to do as he liked and make everybody do the same.

If the parent says, "I don't believe in your God who made the universe out of a large amount of nothing, who pronounced it good and then cursed it to all eternity; a curse so fervent and efficacious that the only antidote involved the excruciating death of God's innocent and only-begotten Son—begotten of nothing—this God of yours must be either bad or mad, and I do not wish my child to be taught to reverence such a being"—then the Bishop would reply, "Oh, you don't, don't you? Then you are the very person whose children we want to get hold of."

When the Spaniards resolved to expel the Moriscos from Spain, the ecclesiastics suggested that all the children of tender age should be taken from their parents, kept in Spain and brought up in the Catholic Faith. The vile suggestion was not carried out, not because of any feeling of pity for the children or the parents, but simply because the government foresaw that such an inhuman order could not be carried out without bloodshed. So the priests were baulked of their prey.

The Bishop of St. Albans is a modern representative of the Christian spirit which inspired the Spanish ecclesiastics. The spirit of the Inquisition. The spirit of Jesus Christ, who declared "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me." (Luke xix. 27.) How true are the words of Feuerbach, "Faith has within it a malignant principle. Christian faith, and nothing else, is the ultimate ground of Christian persecution and destruction of heretics." The Bishop is a survivor from the Middle Ages. He is an intellectual Rip Van Winkle, out of touch with the spirit of the time, but



he has said enough to show us Freethinkers what we may expect from him and the Bishops who voted with him, if ever they have the power in their hands to enforce it. Let us attack this evil faith with still more energy. *Ecrasez l'Infame.*

W. MANN.

### Saint Paul and Our Preachers.

SAINT PAUL is, amongst Bible writers, perhaps the most commonly quoted by our present-day preachers. And yet an examination of his writings will disclose the fact that his teaching and theirs are utterly and hopelessly at variance. For instance, whatever their practice may be in dealing with Freethinkers, our Evangelical exhorters proclaim truth-speaking as the highest virtue, and maintain the sinfulness of double-dealing under any and every circumstance whatsoever. St. Paul, however, speaks differently. He says (Rom. iii. 7):—

"For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?"

Our spiritual guides are strong upholders of the doctrine of "Free-will," and lay especial stress upon the power of a belief in Christianity to save a man from sin. Paul was opposed to both these beliefs. Here are his words:—

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for that I would that do I not; but what I hate that do I. If, then, I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not: For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. vii. 14-20).

And in the face of this candid confession on the part of this chosen apostle of the Lord, with the very words clasped in their hands, our preachers parade before the world as spotless creatures "saved from sin," saying that the very moment a man gets converted he becomes a changed man. Paul was converted, not by man, but directly by God—by means of a sunstroke or a stroke of lightning, as to which the learned differ; and yet he by no means claimed the learned differ; and yet he by no means claimed infallibility, and was even grateful to the Lord for being a sinner; for, as if to clinch the whole matter, he bursts forth thus (v. 25):—

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

Are the preachers better than their Master? Are the servants better than their Lord? Are the uninspired better than the inspired? I trow not.

As stated above, present-day Christians, Calvinists excepted, are strong believers in individual free-will. They say we can do and believe what we like. "God has given us a free will" is one of their favorite phrases, and therefore, if we hear and reject the gospel, and are damned, it is our own fault, and serve us right. Learned disputations have taken place, and volumes have been written, in favor of free-will on the one side and determinism on the other. Christians are divided on the question, when a simple reference to Paul, in whom they all pretend to believe, would, one would think, set them all right. The apostle is plain and explicit. A child could understand him. He was a thorough believer in predestination as opposed to free-will. He says:—

"For whom he [God] did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. viii. 29-30).

Throughout chapter ix. he argues election—i.e., that those whom God will favor by gathering them into eternal bliss have been selected for that purpose,

not alone before they were born, but before the foundation of the world; in other words, that they were created for that purpose. Verse 11 reads thus:—

"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."

Of course, a God who deliberately creates one set of people, "before they have done good or evil," to eternal bliss, and another set of people to eternal torture, is not a God at all, but, as the terms are understood, an Almighty Devil. This obvious objection Paul anticipated, and attempted to reply thereto, thus:—

"Thou wilt say, then, unto me, Why doth he [God] yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory" (verses 19-23).

If there be an Almighty God it is, of course, idle to deny his power to do as he likes; but I do deny that might makes a wrong action right, and the God depicted by Paul, though he has the power to send me to hell, has not the power to command my admiration; and, indeed, if I am foreordained to eternal perdition, my admiration would be wasted; and if created for the glory of God, to glory I shall go, according to Paul, whether my actions be good or bad. "But," a believer in predestination will say, "your very actions and prayers, nay, everything that occurs, are preordained items adapted to fit into the great whole." But in that case the argument remains as before, and I have no choice in the matter, my very choice itself being prearranged before my birth.

Our preachers nowadays affect to take a great interest in social problems, and they aver that all reforms have emanated from Christian men because they were Christians. Well, now, considering that every reform has been achieved in the teeth of a fierce opposition, and that that opposition has come from the powers established, this is rather curious teaching. For Paul says this:—

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive unto themselves damnation" (Rom. xiii. 1, 2).

We have lately had in this country a "Passive Resistance" movement, conducted by Nonconformity, and we are threatened with another by Catholicity. Let me call the attention of these good folk to the word "resist" in the passage quoted above, and also to the ominous sentence, "and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Was Paul inspired? Do these gentry believe in him? O the terrible thought! Christian Evidence folk lie lustily for the glory of God, as commanded by Paul; Nonconformists preach, pray, rail, and rant; Catholics assemble in their thousands, and thunder forth their defiance against the powers that be—and all for what? According to Paul, all the reward they will ever reap for so doing is to eternally burn among the damned!

Many of our modern Christians are fond of disputation. The Christian (want of) Evidence Society is formed for the avowed purpose of arguing Freethinkers back to "the faith." It is based upon the Biblical saying: "Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord." But this is in direct opposition to the teaching of Paul; "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputation" (Rom. xiv. 1). It is, perhaps, good in one sense that we do not follow Paul. If all Christians became "real" Christians to-morrow, all butchers and barmen would



be on the unemployed market the following week. Look at verse 21 :—

"It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

But perhaps I labor this subject in vain. Maybe Paul is as innocent of these epistles as your humble servant; for I find (xvi. 22) these remarkable words: "I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord."

We have been taught for centuries that unbaptised babes go to hell. Catholics modify this, and merely send them into "limbo." But in any case, Christians agree in the main that baptism is an all-important function, without which we are not acceptable to God. Here once more Paul, or whoever wrote his epistles, was not a Christian according to the later acceptance of the term. He wrote as follows:—

"I thank God, that I baptised none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. For Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. i., 14, 17).

With regard to marriage, as every other important point, the modern Christians do not take Paul into account. They call it a "sacrament." They exploit it in the name of Christ. They solemnise it for filthy lucre, and tell us that pure home life is impossible without Christ—in fact, that it is a peculiarly Christian institution. Paul, however, condemns marriage in the following scathing, if not very elegant, terms:—

"I say, therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I [*i.e.*, single]. But if they cannot contain, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. vii. 8, 9).

The modern Christian affects to patronise education, in order to control it, so as to manufacture little Christians, with a view to perpetuating his damnable superstition. Here again he is at sea, and speaks, or acts, without his book. Paul says that "knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth" (1 Cor. viii. 1). Again, the Christians who do not love the good old roast beef of old England are few and far between; whereas St. Paul says:—

"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. viii. 13).

Again, we are ever told that Christianity has raised woman from a state of slavery to the high pedestal upon which she stands to-day. Methinks Paul's heart must be well-nigh breaking every time he looks down from his throne in heaven and sees the gesticulating, tambourine-beating Salvation Army lasses step out in the ring, spitting forth fire and brimstone upon the unhappy sinners. Harken unto him and judge, O reader:—

"But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. xi. 3).

Verse 8: "For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man."

Verse 9: "Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man."

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church" (Eph. v. 22, 23).

Again:—

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law; and if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35).

Still, there seems to be some confusion as to the authorship of these epistles of Paul. Take chapter xvi. 21 of 1 Cor., for example: "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand." Footnote:—

"The first epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi by Stephanus, and Fortunatus, and Achaïus, and Timotheus."

The 22nd verse reads thus:—

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha."

This was evidently a bitter curse, whereas nowadays Christians say they bless fellow-believers and opponents alike.

In conclusion, we come to visions. The modern Christian believes that these have taken place—two thousand years ago, and that they will take place at some future time. The Spiritualists see visions *now*, but the Christians do not accept them. At the time when the Clapton Messiah paraded before the public it was reported that he had been expelled from the Salvation Army "for his erratic views and dangerous visions." A Christian who nowadays sees visions is "dangerous." Paul, however, saw visions with a vengeance. The whole phantasmagoria of the Christian superstition, and especially "the scheme of salvation," was revealed to him by a sunstroke, and later he relates an extraordinary vision which he had:—

"I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. xii. 1-5).

If such stuff were to be found in any other book but the Bible, which has at least for fifteen centuries been upheld by the sword, the faggot, the thumb-screw, and all kinds of penal laws, together with the inherent inclination to superstition within the human breast, would the writer thereof not be considered to be graduating for a lunatic asylum?

J. K. MAAGAARD.

## Correspondence.

### NATURE AND DESIGN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I ask you to allow me a little of your space in which to take exception to a proposition made by Mr. G. Scott in your last issue?

In reviewing a recent book on *Evolution and Design*, Mr. Scott states that "One may, indeed, conceivably reason from nature up to nature's God." This, now, seems to me to be making too much of a concession to the theologian's case; and, if I may be permitted, I would like to point out an aspect of the freethought case on this subject which Mr. Scott seems to have overlooked.

The question is one of design in Nature. Now, as a designer, may I point out that the very psychological nature of design is utterly opposed to the very constitution and processes of objective nature; that, in short, these two things are mutually destructive as far as logic goes, and mutually exclusive as regards their structure; and that, therefore, the idea of reasoning up along these lines to a Nature's God is not only illogical, but impossible.

To put it briefly as possible:—

1. All Design depends upon previous psychological copying and imitation.

2. All Creation (= uncopied origination) arises *only* from the combination and interaction of objective forms according to natural laws.

(a) That, therefore, Design and Creation are utterly and mutually exclusive; because, as the former implies copying, it excludes absolute uncopied origination; whilst as the latter implies the exclusion of all imitation, it shuts out the possibility of design.

(b) That, consequently, as design and creation are utterly and exclusively antagonistic, no one thing can be both at the same time.

(c) Now, if the cosmos was created, it could not have been designed; whilst if it was designed, it could not have been created. So that, whichever horn of this dilemma the theologian chooses (and one he must take), its counter-implication will destroy the other phase of his argument—which, by-the-by, cannot stand without design and creation, intact.

(d) Further, the psychological process of design can only arise by imitating its ultimate source—objective Nature. Therefore the fact of design depends upon the fact of objective origination. But the theologian makes origination and creation (by a deity) depend upon design!—or, in other words, that which is animated and spontaneously originated is produced by a process



whose essential fact is imitation! It is just as if he will tell us that a child gives birth to its mother.

3. In fine, the Designing Deity is impossible, because his existence depends upon the belief in the compatibility (in one thing) of characters which are incompatible, and are never found in interinvolution—origination and design. And because, also, to believe in this deity we must believe in a process which is as non-existent as it is absurdly self-contradictory—the alleged creative origination by design.

CHAS. D. THOMSON.

### DARWIN ON "DESIGN."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In regard to the able articles you have recently published dealing with the "argument from design," I thought it would be of interest to quote from a letter Charles Darwin wrote to Dr. Asa Gray in 1860. Darwin said: "One word more on 'designed laws' and 'undesigned results': I see a bird which I want for food, take my gun and kill it; I do this designedly. An innocent and good man stands under a tree, and is killed by a flash of lightning. Do you believe (and I should really like to hear) that God designedly killed this man? Many or most persons do believe this; I can't, and don't. If you believe so, do you believe that when a swallow snaps up a gnat that God designed that that particular swallow should snap up that particular gnat at that particular instant? I believe that the man and the gnat are in the same predicament. If the death of neither man nor gnat are designed, I see no good reason to believe that their first birth or production should be necessarily designed."

I should think the clergy must be hard pressed to reply to the facts stated by your contributors, Mr. Mann and Mr. Scott. Probably the clergy think of the "argument from design" when they shave themselves with a blunt razor, or when almost worried to death by the flies on a hot summer's day.

J. A. REID.

### Safe in the Arms of—"the Purple Mother!"

No religion that we know of has ever been guaranteed to be a perfect safeguard against vice and crime, and even Theosophy, that calls itself "the religion of religions," gives us occasionally a shining illustration of the fact that the most pretentious pietist often turns out to be one of the most vicious of criminals. It is not long since, that one of the most prominent Theosophists, a sort of Adept or Mahatma, we believe, known among common people by the name of Leadbeater, visited Toronto, and delivered to the awe-struck Toronto Theosophists a series of addresses so full of occult wisdom and sacred injunction that discussion of them was deemed either unnecessary or undesirable and was not permitted. The holy man left the rostrum as he concluded each address, and thus avoided contamination with less exalted mentalities. This gentleman, we have heard, is today charged, on the evidence of a number of boys, with one of the vilest offences known to the law. We need not say that Theosophy caused this man's sin; we do say, beware of the unco' guid.

Mrs. Tingley, the Purple Mother, seems to have about as good a reputation as the Scarlet Woman, but we are told that, whatever shadows there may be over her career, her professed ideals are lofty. There is nothing strange about this. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," is an ancient excuse. Mrs. Tingley has chosen a beautiful location for her head-quarters, and, with the assistance of a few millionaires, she no doubt leads a very comfortable existence. Mr. Gage—will he be known as the Golden Father?—is to be a member of the Council of Twelve appointed by the Purple Mother to govern the colony.

One of the customs of the Point Loma Theosophists is to meet at sunrise on "sacred" ground, clothed in classically-cut cheese-cloth garments, to listen to the reading of passages from ancient Hindoo sacred books. The early rising seems all right; so is the reading—for those who can understand it; but the cheese cloth, though good for ventilation, seems a trifle too diaphanous even for a bathing-suit.

Among the curiosities of the colony is a dog, named "Spot," which the Purple Mother asserts contains the soul of a former leader of the Theosophists, William Q. Judge. The dog has several suits of clothes, and is carefully guarded, for what would become of W. Q. J.'s soul if the dog got drowned or was lost? Lyman Gage's soul will doubtless be re-incarnated in a jackass.

Point Loma is in southern California, and has long been regarded as one of the most beautiful spots in the world.

—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

### God Never Said a Word.

PROUD stood the cities of the coast,  
Their stately fanes towered high  
O'er all that wealth and culture boast,  
And sacred to the eye;  
But 'midst their solemn peace and prayers  
The slumbering earthquake stirred,  
And wreck and fire and death were theirs,—  
God never said a word.

The typhoon rose and a tidal wave  
Swept over a city grand,  
And thousands sank in a watery grave,  
Praying with uplifted hand;  
And babes were snatched from loving arms,  
And shrieks of mothers were heard,  
And prayers were blent with the soul's alarms,—  
God never said a word.

When across the earth stalks Famine dread,  
And pitiless pestilence reigns,  
And ghastly eyes of the upturned dead,  
Reveal to Heaven their pains;  
When nations clash in covetous wars,  
And the earth with blood is blurred,  
And human semblance is lost in scars,  
God never says a word.

When nations sunken in selfish greed,  
Their kindred starve—the savage slay,  
When frantic faith that crouches in creed,  
Stabs its victims, e'en as they pray;  
When difference of race, and chance of belief,  
The massacre foul have incurred,  
And the innocent cry to Heaven in grief,  
God never says a word.

Men storm the stars with their passion cry,  
For mercy and justice here;  
But whether they pray or not—they die,  
Whatever their trust or fear.  
Were I the great God, and He were I,  
No matter how men have erred,  
Were it mine to help in calamity,  
I'd certainly say some word.

—J. B. WILSON, M.D.

Wrapped up in gray cloud-garments,  
The great Gods sleep together;  
I hear their thunder-snoring,  
And to-night we've dreadful weather.

Dreadful weather! what a tempest  
Around the weak ship raves!  
Ah, who will check the storm-wind,  
Or curb the lordless wave?

Can't be helped though, if all nature  
A mad holiday is keeping;  
So I'll wrap me up and slumber,  
As the Gods above are sleeping.

—Heine (Leland's translation).

The fact is, the oath is absolutely useless if its object is to prevent false witness. Should there be any likelihood of a persecution for perjury, a two-faced Testament-kisser will be on his guard, and be very careful to tell only such lies as cannot be clearly proved against him. He dreads the prospect of daily exercise on the treadmill, he loathes the idea of picking oakum, and his gorge rises at the thought of brown bread and skilly. But so long as that danger is avoided, there are hosts of witnesses, most of them very good Christians, who have been suckled on the Gospel in Sunday-schools, and fed afterwards on the strong meat of the Word in churches and chapels, who will swear fast and loose after calling God to witness to their veracity. They ask the Almighty to deal with them according as they tell the truth; yet, for all that, they proceed to tell the most unblushing lies. What is the reason of this strange inconsistency? Simply this. Hell is a long way off, and many things may happen before the Day of Judgment. Besides, God is merciful; he is always ready to forgive sins; a man has only to repent in time—that is, a few minutes before death, and all his sins will be washed out in the cleansing blood of Christ. Notwithstanding all his lies in earthly courts, the repentant sinner will not lose his right of walking about for ever and ever in the court of heaven, although some poor devil, whose liberty or property he swore away, may be frizzling for ever and ever in hell.—G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."



**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 Absolute Absurdity of a Belief in the Christian's Heaven."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "Some Religious Humbugs."

**COUNTRY.**

FAIRWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Fred Morgan, Recital.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): H. E. Sheikh Abdullah Quilliam Bey, 12 noon, "Six Months Amongst the Balkan Mountains"; 6.30, "Islam and Christianity: a Contrast."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Wednesday, Nov. 28, at 8, Alexander Gray, "A Witness for Christ."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): C. Cohen, 3, "Rome or Freethought: the Great Alternative"; 7, "Barbarisms of Civilisation."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Is Secularism Reasonable?" 6.30, "Does Christianity Produce Good Men?" Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Nov. 29, at 8, R. Mitchell, "The Socialist."

PLYMOUTH RATIONALIST SOCIETY (Foresters' Hall, Octagon): 7, W. Warren, "The Freethinker's Death-Bed."

PORTR BRANCH N. S. S. (N. S. S. Room, Town Hall): 6.30, S. Holman, "The Wonderful Ways of the One Above."

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

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