

as three windows created by the Christian consciousness, whereby to gaze at the Divine.

This is, of course, the merest summary of a creed which is bringing many to have faith in, and love to, not the Jesus of history, but the Ideal Christ of Experience.

Yours, etc., R. C. FILLINGHAM (Vicar of Hexton).

Hexton Vicarage,
December 17, 1906."

So this is the Broad Church Creed. Our readers will see that the salt is all washed out of the sack; that the sack is empty, and has collapsed: and that nothing but the "Christianity" brand upon it is left to tell us what it was.

There is no "inspiration" or "revelation"—there is no objective, that is, no actual "Trinity"—the Old Testament stories are "absolutely unhistorical"; that is, the events they record never happened—all the important stories in the New Testament are of the same character, including the Gospel hero's introduction to the world and exit from it—indeed, the "Jesus of history" is nobody and the "Christ of Experience" is everything. In other words, Christianity is dead, and all that remains is the ghost of it—in the minds of its old professors.

We thank the Rev. R. C. Fillingham for this valuable declaration, which shows that Freethought criticism and propaganda have not been in vain.

G. W. FOOTE.

Dr. Clifford's "Blather."

THE new year brought with it the customary crop of addresses from the pulpit, and among them, one from Dr. Clifford. The year 1906, according to this gentleman, has been full of wonders. It has been a year of revelation, a year rich in achievements, a year of democratic conquests, "one of the years of the right hand of the Most High." And all this "pothor," so far as one can discern from the sermon, because a Liberal government has been returned to power, which includes a large number of Nonconformists. It seems a very little thing to justify so large a jubilation, but human nature is apt to make mountains of molehills, and Nonconformist human nature specially so. For one learns from Dr. Clifford that the result of the general election was almost wholly due to Nonconformist activity—and this really throws upon the Nonconformists the responsibility for the preceding elections, which he regards as a national calamity. The Chinese slavery cry may have influenced votes, but "not largely." The Trades Union agitation, the outcry against Protection, the crusade against the drink traffic; none of these singly, or in combination, were enough to explain the result. The real cause was the Nonconformist dissatisfaction with the Education Act. When the late government roused the resentment of the Nonconformists, "the fate of the government was sealed." Other governments must therefore beware. So long as the Nonconformists are satisfied they are safe. For it is Dr. Clifford and his followers who determine the fate of parties and who hold the destiny of England in the hollow of their hands. Cock-a-doodle-do!

An England blessed with such a body of stalwarts should be a fortunate country, one in which destitution and crime ought to be, at most, casual visitors. But Dr. Clifford, who is nothing if not extravagant, forgets himself, and proceeds to draw a picture of England that reflects little credit upon either "the right hand of the Most High," or upon Christianity in general. We learn that:—

"Our material prosperity is vast, but it feeds the lust of accumulation.....We increase our means of physical circulation and poison the springs of life.....Life is neither nobler nor sweeter.....Art and literature, instead of uplifting life, only add to its luxuriousness and levity and increase its sensuous amusements and wasteful extravagance. Overcrowding is nearly as bad as ever, with its dirt, wretchedness and squalor.....Sweated dens in which women and girls live, stunted and dis-

torted, abound in London East and West.....Gambling is on the increase amongst the workers.....Worse still, barbarous ideals of life, survivals of dark ages, still betray wonderful vitality; and men talk of 'a nation in arms' as though the normal work of the good citizen was to train himself to destroy his brother who happens to have been in another country."

Now the larger portion of this is just as extravagant as the assertions concerning the wonderful voting power and moral force of the Nonconformists. It is not true that our material possessions feed the lust of accumulation only, that our improved methods of communication poison life only, that life is neither nobler nor sweeter, nor that art and literature does nothing to ennoble life. Such extravagance does well enough for the pulpit, but it is a distortion of the truth. It is true that these things are often the occasion of evil, but they are also the occasion of good, and, at any rate, hold the promise of a much greater good. It is true there is much gambling, much drinking, much sweating, overcrowding, dirt, and vice. But then, in this case, where is the wonderful influence of Nonconformists? When the government passed an Education Act that favored its religious rivals, Nonconformity arose in its might and overthrew it, and a government of "All the talents" was elected in its stead. But all the time there were the evils existent of which Dr. Clifford complains, and Nonconformity bore it with the patience of a Job! Nothing could rouse it into activity but sectarian jealousy. And behind this is the larger question of Christianity as a whole. What conclusion is one to draw from the statement that a population, predominantly Christian, is reckless and drunken, filled with the lust of power or greed, and building up a life that is neither noble nor sweet? Is it not that Christianity, so far as its influence on life is concerned, is an obvious, a declared failure? And if this is not the proper conclusion to draw will Dr. Clifford, for once in a way, answer a straightforward question and say what is the logical deduction from his own expressions? If Christianity, with full power, has not succeeded in developing a civilisation better than the one depicted by Dr. Clifford, is it likely to be more successful with its influence growing weaker year by year?

Dr. Clifford's address bristles with "Cliffordisms," such as the statement that Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman is *the* great outstanding political personality—"Like a star he dwells apart"; that Sir Oliver Lodge is our foremost biologist, or that Mr. Birrell is, next to the Prime Minister, the most "powerful political personality." All these, with others, may be passed over, except as they exhibit the quality of Dr. Clifford's judgment. Equally curious and characteristic is the conclusion that whatever improvement is discernable is due to the growth of a purer conception of God. What this has to do with the matter it is difficult to see; but, of course, "God" had to be dragged in somehow, and it fitted as well here as elsewhere. In the light of purer conception the "secular" is disappearing, by which Dr. Clifford means that the distinction between sacred and secular is breaking down. By this is meant that the "secular" is swallowed up in the sacred—which is putting the cart before the horse. The truth is that it is the secular that has swallowed up the sacred. All the real problems of life, people are beginning to realise, are not religious at all, and have no necessary connection with any article of religious belief. They have, it is true, been always, more or less, intimately associated with religion, and it is this association that is now breaking down. As a matter of course, the clergy regret the separation; some are honest enough to say so; others, not so honest, profess to find in the phenomenon fresh proof of religious growth. It is a poor heart that never rejoices, and Freethinkers may well be content to let Christian preachers extract whatever comfort they can from the situation.

A speech by Dr. Clifford without a good dose of his now familiar humbug concerning "popular control" and the desire of the priests—the opposition

priests, of course—to capture the schools in the interests of their creeds, with the iniquity of the State patronage of religion is almost inconceivable. It is hard to conceive that Dr. Clifford really believes all he says on these topics, and hardly less hard to believe that he does not. Probably he belongs by this time to the class of people who—

“Keep on till their own lies deceive 'em,
And oft' repeating, at length believe 'em.”

Popular control is a good enough thing in its way, but in connection with the subject of religion in the schools it is entirely out of place. Dr. Clifford would leave it to the people to say whether they want “undenominational” religious teaching or not; and if they do, then all, no matter what their opinions, must submit. Now, in ordinary secular matters we act upon this principle—and because it is on the whole the best way of conducting public affairs. But with religion the case is quite different. Here we are dealing with a subject that it is the essence of a genuine Nonconformist's position to maintain should not be left to majorities at all. This is purely a matter of opinion, and if there is any good in Nonconformity it should be the principle that in matters of opinion—particularly religious opinion—the State should remain absolutely neutral. Otherwise, why all the shrieking about principle in connection with the Education Act of 1902?

The truth is that Dr. Clifford only believes in popular control in those cases where popular control will suit him. It is tolerably certain that in the present state of affairs the majority in any district would be Christians; and that being the case, if we put on one side exceptional circumstances, the majority would vote for some form of Christian instruction at the general expense. Christians have never been remarkable for their honesty of conduct in relation to outsiders, and there would certainly be no departure from the general rule here. But by what principle can Dr. Clifford justify popular control when it teaches “undenominational” Christianity at the public expense, and denounce it when it taxes the public for Romanism or Church of Englandism?

Again, the truth is that Dr. Clifford no more wishes the State to stand genuinely apart from religion than I wish it to patronise religion. We have lately seen him protesting—more than once—because his own church has not been entirely thrown upon the rates, but has had to bear the same rateable value as other buildings devoted to miscellaneous entertainments. And who has ever heard Dr. Clifford protest against the hundred and one ways in which the State supports and patronises and endows Christian belief? What Dr. Clifford is really angry about is that he thinks other Churches are getting more than their share. This is an important question, no doubt, to those who look upon themselves as entitled to a fair and equal share of the plunder. But as one of the plundered, and as one who will be plundered to the same extent no matter how many divide the spoil, I do not see how it properly concerns me. What I am concerned about is, not that these religious pirates shall share equally, but that there shall be some sort of an Anti-Piracy Act that will send them all back to honest labor for a living.

It is quite true that the “priests” are trying to capture the children; but then they are only acting in the same way as all the priests, Roman and Protestant, established and non-established. It is the game of all the clergy, the policy of men who are afraid to trust their creed to the adult intelligence; of men who are too cowardly to face men, but can only lie in wait for little children whose helplessness should be their best protection, but which is to the Christian clergy an invitation to attack. If Dr. Clifford had any real faith in the principles he preaches he would demand that the State should stand absolutely apart from all religious opinions—his own included. If he had any real confidence in the intellectual strength of his creed he would be content to trust it to a new generation when it was old enough to appreciate it, and keep it out of the schools altogether. We might not believe in a religion that did

this, but we should at least respect and treat it accordingly. But a religion that does neither of these things bids fair to have as a winding-sheet nothing but the contempt of all honest and self-respecting men and women.

C. COHEN.

Secular Causerie.

THE Rev. J. Macartney Wilson, who contributes an interesting column to the *Christian Commonwealth*, informs us, in the issue for January 3, that “two only of the great men of the Victorian era remain with us—Mr. Swinburne, who seems to have ceased to produce, and Mr. George Meredith, who seems as vigorous as ever and from whom a new novel is about due.” Then he observes: “If you add to these two names the honored one of Thomas Hardy, you have named the greatest living authors who use the English tongue.” Mr. Wilson's literary judgment is perfectly reliable, and there are very few who would venture to challenge it. There can be no doubt whatever that Swinburne, Meredith and Hardy, are the greatest living English writers; but Mr. Wilson does not add the further information that the three greatest living English authors are avowed Secularists. Writing for a religious journal, he discreetly withheld this fact; and yet no fact can be more indisputable, and to Freethinkers, no fact can be more comforting or reassuring. Looking back over the books he read during 1906, Mr. Wilson says: “I find that the book which has left upon my mind the deepest impression, has been Mr. Wells's book upon America.” Here, again, we are in agreement with him, and would only remind him that Mr. Wells also is a Freethinker. Another man of genius referred to by Mr. Wilson is Ibsen, who died during 1906; and Ibsen, as is well-known, was a pronounced Freethinker, and his Freethought is stamped upon all his works. Indeed, Dr. Robertson Nicoll deploras the undoubted fact that the most original and virile of our present day novelists are unbelievers in the Christian religion.

In the columns of the *Daily News*, Mr. Chesterton has lately been making merry over Nietzsche and his British admirers. Mr. Chesterton is a young man who glories in his paradoxes and contradictions. Nothing is more Chestertonian than to differ from Mr. Chesterton, and on this account, it is difficult to say when, if ever, such a writer is to be taken seriously. His chief charge against Nietzsche seems to be that he makes a distinction between the words *evil* and *bad*; but anyone who has read Nietzsche's great work, *Beyond Good and Evil*, is aware that the argument against the Christian morality is based, not upon hair-splitting verbal distinctions, but upon broad and incontestable ethical principles. Is not Mr. Chesterton aware that Christian morality is more honored in the breach than in the observance? Does he not know that Christian divines are now making excuses even for the Sermon on the Mount, on the ground that its being put into literal practice would result in the total disorganisation of society? Nietzsche was not a teacher of immorality but of the crying need for transcending any and every existing code of morality. To him, good and evil were relative terms, and he could not find language emphatic enough to condemn the folly of attaching absolute meanings to them. It was alone as absolute terms that he wished to abolish good and evil; and it was for the same reason that he attacked the belief in a divine will. He acknowledged only man and his purposes as deeply “writ in the world.” The moral codes of the past have not served the best interests of humanity. They have failed to produce the Overman. Not only have they failed to produce him, they have definitely militated against and retarded his advent. Had he retained his health and mental powers a few years longer, Nietzsche would have made it clear to all that “Christian morality is slave-morality in excelsis,” because it deprives all who

believe in it of the consciousness of power and of the desire to work out their own salvation. Well, such a deep and earnest thinker cannot be laughed out of court, as Mr. Chesterton seems to imagine. We may not be able to endorse his whole philosophy, but his theory of morality is the one now accepted by practically all scientific thinkers.

Nietzsche says that "the Christian resolve to find the world evil and ugly has made the world evil and ugly." Be that as it may, it is undeniable that, according to the Christian scheme, mankind are by nature hopelessly sinful and wicked. In the new Hymnal just issued by the Free Church Council, the underlying note is the sinfulness and utter lostness of humanity in itself. We claim that such lines as the following are essentially demoralising in their effect on those who believingly employ them:—

"Tell me the story simply,
As to a little child,
For I am weak and weary,
And helpless and defiled."

Fancy a congregation of comparatively ignorant people joining in singing the following miserable stuff and you will realise how morally hurtful it must be:—

"Take away the bent to sinning,
Every bitter root within,
Heal the tide at its beginning,
That has caused me oft to sin."

Would Mr. Chesterton be edified if he attended a Free Church Council revival service and were invited to describe himself as "weak and vile," "helpless and defiled?" One cannot conceive of Mr. Chesterton abusing and characterising himself in some such words as these—

"the basest of mankind,
From scalp to sole one slough and crust of sin,
Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven, scarce meet
For troops of devils, made with blasphemy."

As compared with that Christian doctrine, Nietzsche's teaching must be pronounced noble, manly, health-giving and soul-saving.

In 2 Cor. v. 7, we read: "We walk by faith, not by sight (appearance)." To show the reasonableness of so walking, the Rev. J. Illingworth says:—

"A man makes a simple engagement for the morrow, in the way of society or business, in the confident expectation of being able to keep it. But this involves a trust in his state of health, a trust, perhaps in the state of the weather, a trust that a number of heavily worked railway servants will do their duty, a trust that his friends or correspondents will keep their part of the mutual compact. There is not an atom of rational certainty about any of these things, and yet it is reasonable, on the ground of past experience, to assume their probability, and it would be unreasonable to doubt it. And so life is carried on."

That passage is eminently sensible and cannot be challenged at any point. In the manner described, we all undoubtedly *do* walk by faith. It is just so that life is carried on. But Mr. Illingworth steps right into the region of unreasonableness when he declares that "Christian faith (that is, belief in immortality) is only a particular application of what is the universal and inevitable law of life." It can be safely affirmed that the "universal and inevitable law of life" does not permit of the "particular application" implied in Paul's words. It is quite true that the various arrangements and appointments of society are based on the great law of probability. They are all conditionally made, though the condition may not be expressed in words. It is clearly understood by all concerned that I may not live to keep the compact I have just made. Multitudes die in the interval between the making of their contract and its fulfilment. It is a certainty that the twenty-one people who miserably perished in the terrible railway disaster in Scotland, during the recent snow-storm, had all some plans to execute, or some engagements to keep on the morrow; but the unforeseen accident upset everything. You may make your arrangements in the confident expectation of being able to keep them; but all parties to such contracts are fully aware that they may never be kept. This is sound logic. But the merest logical tyro can see

that there is no parallel whatever between walking by faith as regards the future events of this life and walking through this life by faith in the existence of another life beyond it. The fact that you may be alive to-morrow, or a year hence, furnishes no justification for the belief that you may still be alive after you have died. Death is the last point discernible by us; beyond it is the darkness, the mystery, that has never been pierced. Therefore, Mr. Illingworth's argument is wholly fallacious, because the faith by which a believer in immortality walks is absolutely without support. It has no past to fall back upon. It is faith in that concerning which no man living possesses the slightest information. And surely to walk by such a faith is contrary to all reason and injurious to character.

The attempt to establish the reasonableness of supernatural faith has always proved futile. Our forefathers were right when they maintained that religion and reason did not belong to the same category. Reason could not have discovered religion, nor could it justify it when revealed. They merely accepted the infallible word of the Lord, and set reason at defiance as a faculty of the natural man simply, which it was their duty to subjugate and silence. They were *believers*, not *reasoners*. We hold, on the contrary, that the natural man is the only *real* man, and that reason is his highest and noblest faculty. The *spiritual* man, in the Pauline sense, is contrary to nature, that is, an unnatural man, being the creation of supernatural religion. The orthodox saint is an unearthly, grotesque product, being a person whose abode is in dreamland, and who, as a rule, is of very little service to the present life. He is rooted in unreason, and his saintly career is a standing insult to his intelligence. This is a truth that requires to be specially emphasised at the beginning of another year. What society needs is a world full of duly equipped natural men and women, whose one ambition will be to glorify reason in all their ways, to bring all their faculties into glad subjection to the law of life in this world, and so to serve one another as citizens of the earth. We teach, with Nietzsche, that nothing is good or evil except that individual conduct which benefits or injures society, and that it is its effect on society alone that determines its ethical character; and we teach further that all supernatural hopes and fears, being utterly unsupported by evidence and contrary to reason, have always exerted and still exert an immoral influence upon the society by which they are cherished.

J. T. LLOYD.

Our Future.

IN the *Freethinker* of December 30, the Editor commented on my cautious prophecy that "the Secular Societies, the Ethical Societies, and the Positivist Societies, as now constituted, are all destined to a not very distant extinction." He asks what I mean by "not very distant." I will reply by using an illustration from his own remarks. He points out that numerous Secular Societies formerly existed on a basis of enthusiasm for the special combination of Freethought and politics represented by Mr. Bradlaugh; and that, after Mr. Bradlaugh's death, the mixed elements were more or less separated, the present societies being more precisely rationalist than their predecessors. Very well. Now suppose that about 1882, I had prophesied that the "Secular Societies, as now constituted, are destined to a not very distant extinction." I might, in 1907, claim to have made a not-such-a-bad shot. Secular Societies are still here, but the forms of a generation ago are extinct. Perhaps, in another generation, the present Secular, Ethical, and Positivist Societies will have undergone yet more drastic changes. Possibly, the transformation may be slower than I anticipate. In the year 1932, Mr. Foote may insert in the *Freethinker* some paragraph of this sort:—

"Our older and middle-aged readers may remember that, in 1906-7, the late Mr. F. J. Gould fluttered the

Freethought world with gloomy forecasts of the extinction of the then-existing forms of Secularism, Ethicism, and Positivism. Well, the Secular Movement and the *Freethinker* are still vigorously maintaining the traditions of 1907. Like the Prophet of Nazareth, Mr. Gould was too ready with his oracular word—'This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled.' "

In any case, I trust that, in 1932, Mr. Foote will still be instructing the nations with his epigrams, his courageous criticisms, and his common sense.

Let us, however, take a closer look at the problem of possible important changes.

Speaking broadly, the object of Secularism is to secure human betterment by the abolition of theology from belief and from institutions. The object of the Ethical Movement is to emphasize, independently of theology, the moral factor in personal and civic conduct. The object of Positivism is to establish the Religion of Humanity in proportion as theology, metaphysics, and militarism decline; to promote free and universal education, moral and scientific, up to the age of twenty-one; to subordinate wealth to the social welfare; to develop small republics the world over in a league of love, order, and progress; and to expand and deepen the moral influence of womanhood.

In affirming my adherence to the general methods (not the exact original forms) of Positivism, as I have done during the last few years, I abandon neither the Secular nor the Ethical positions; but regard them as embraced in the larger and more definitely constructive policy of Comte's Religion of Humanity. But so vast and comprehensive is Positivism that no organisation has yet arisen which can present the cult and doctrine in completeness. Hence we find groups at Newcastle, Liverpool, and elsewhere giving prominence to the religious (that is, ethical) element, and the London Positivist Society (of which I am a member) giving prominence to the historical and political factors. In time to come, these aspects must be and will be combined in a full propaganda, which will cover the whole ground marked out by Auguste Comte.

With regard to the Ethical Societies, of two of which I am still a member, and whose career I have followed with attention, I wish too well for their success to care to say anything critical. Nevertheless, I consider that they will not meet a large public need until they offer a more specialised program in relation to education, politics, and economics. That is only another way of saying they must adopt the methods of Positivism. For example, I am sure that the Union of Ethical Societies, as at present constituted, would not venture to affirm the establishment of republican forms of government as one of its recognised aims. Nor, to take another example, does it offer its members anything so schematic as the beautiful Calendar of Great Men framed by Comte both for the regulation of dates and for contemplation of grand types of humanity. Now, I do not mean that the Ethical Societies will necessarily include exactly these features in their constitution. But I mean that, in a world which is attempting to give expression to a new social order and progress, the humanist societies must impart more concreteness to their modes of propaganda.

Lastly, I come to the Secular Societies. I have had the honor of acting as Secretary and Organiser to one of these bodies for nearly eight years, and I have listened to an immense number of Secularist lectures, and read piles (and written piles!) of Freethought articles. From such experience, and without needing to cite from any printed principles, I can say that the aims of these Societies, as now constituted, are threefold—the removal of theology from the popular belief and from scientific theories, the separation of Church and State, and the deletion of theology from State-controlled education. Suppose, for instance, Mr. Foote brought out a number of the *Freethinker* in which these three aims were merely implied, and not pursued with the conscious deliberation now evinced. The paper would, I have no doubt, exhibit many excellencies, but it would wear a

curiously different air. Now, unless I misread the signs of the times, we shall have secular education in vogue before twenty-five years elapse. I do not think it unlikely that, within the same period, the Anglican Church will be disestablished. We English limp behind French initiative, but surely we shall manage to follow the example of France in less than a quarter-century. As to the state of the popular mind, it is notorious that orthodoxy is declining, that Biblical criticism is increasingly accepted, and that such proletarian bodies as Labor Churches are far advanced in heresy. I doubt if there is an orthodox Christian (in the sense of the Apostles' Creed or the Wesleyan code) in the whole round of platform and editorial Socialists. In the course of another generation, therefore, a large part of the Secular Societies' objects will have been achieved. The Secular Movement will see (as it is beginning to see) universal marks of its success. Generals do not send summonses to fortresses that have surrendered. Our triumph will be our delightful undoing. I have so intense a faith in the efficacy of the modern humanist development, that already I seek to plan the next campaign. Hence my strong personal interest in the reform of education on purely non-theistic lines. The warfare with theology is still a living issue, but it is changing in character. Seldom do we hear or read fierce debates on the infallibility of the Bible, such as disturbed the public mind forty or fifty years ago. The apologists who venture among Secularists tend more and more to set aside the miraculous elements of Christianity, and to maintain a simple theistic or Unitarian position. The attention of the working classes is less devoted than formerly to theological problems, and more fixed upon economic issues. There are Rip Van Winkles in the Freethought community (I do not refer to the Editor) who look on the world of 1907 with the eyes of 1887 or yet more primitive times. They do not see how theology itself has become transformed, and they do not see how vital questions relating to women, to moral, historical, and scientific education, and to the organisation of industry are calling for fresh dispositions of the pioneer forces. But some of us can perceive what is happening, and we ask for a readjustment of methods. And I do not doubt that, in 1932, the Secular Societies will have so evidently readjusted their methods as to warrant the observer of that date in pronouncing the constitutions of 1907 to be practically extinct. In saying this, I am paying a tribute to the influence of the Freethought agitation.

Some sanguine writers in the eighteenth century foretold the speedy disappearance of Christianity. They judged superficially, because they judged from the atmosphere of Rationalism in the literary circles in which they moved. The situation is now very different. A popular evangelisation (if I may borrow the word for this purpose) has permeated the nation with Freethought for many years past, and Board schools and Council schools have assisted the process. We are far advanced in the transition from theology to humanism. On all hands the very churches and chapels are manifesting tokens of the displacement of supernatural motives by natural ethics. The remarkable spread of the doctrine of evolution and the descent of man from brute-predecessors sufficiently attests the new attitude. I am almost inclined to say that the difficulty which confronts us to-day is not so much to attract people from the theological city, as to provide adequately for the re-housing of the emigrants. The people are on the point of abandoning the creed of the Middle Ages and of Luther's, Cranmer's, and Calvin's Protestantism. Burdened with many anxieties on questions of unemployment, old age, militarism, imperialism, and the like, they look for moral institutions which will serve for consolation and instruction on an entirely humanist basis. To meet that demand, the progressive societies must submit to reorganisation so profound that the next generation will not possess the types of 1907.

That is my prophecy. Meanwhile, I salute fraternally all the members of all the societies which, perhaps far too sternly, I have chalked on Father Time's list for very considerable "repairs and alterations"!

F. J. GOULD.

Concerning Joseph Symes.

THE funeral of Joseph Symes took place at Golder's Green Crematorium on Friday afternoon, January 4. Considering the scanty notice, there was a very gratifying attendance. About a hundred of the best-known Freethinkers in London assembled in the Crematorium chapel. Amongst them were the President and Secretary of the National Secular Society, in whose name the arrangements were carried through; Mrs. Foote, Miss Stanley, Mrs. Hunt, the Misses Trevillion, the Misses Poyser, Mr. and Mrs. Fincken, Mr. and Mrs. Cottrell, Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd, and Messrs. C. Cohen, Harry Snell, Victor Roger, F. Wood, James Neate, Dr. R. T. Nichols, E. Charlton, C. Quinton, Livingstone Anderson, E. Pack, H. Boulter, Wallace Ross, J. Durrant, H. Dobson, H. Samuels, J. Rowney, L. Trevillion, T. Shore, F. Garraway, W. Bowman, and W. Heaford. There was a curious absence of representatives of other Societies than the N. S. S. Perhaps his loyalty to the N. S. S. kept some away from his funeral. But as Joseph Symes was always a fighting Freethinker, so he was taken to his last resting-place by the fighting Freethinkers of London—representing all the fighting Freethinkers of Great Britain.

When the hearse arrived from distant Forest Gate with the corpse, four Freethinkers shouldered the coffin, carried it into the Crematorium chapel, and laid it upon the spot whence it was to glide through the opened doors leading to the cremation chamber. It was an unusually long coffin, for Symes was even taller than Bradlaugh.

Punctually at half-past two the N. S. S. President rose and read the last lines of Bryant's *Thanatopsis*. Then he delivered a heartfelt address on the career of Joseph Symes. Several times it was difficult to restrain the applause. A brief tribute was added by Mr. Cohen. Mr. Lloyd, who was also to have spoken a few words, was kept at home by an attack of bronchitis. Finally, as the mourners rose to their feet, while the remains of Joseph Symes glided into the cremation chamber, the President read Prospero's matchless lines at the end of Shakespeare's *Tempest*.

It was all over. The funeral was ended. Joseph Symes had become a memory—an imperishable one to those who knew him adequately, and in the traditions of English Freethought.

I am sorry to say that Mrs. Symes has been ill in bed ever since her husband's death, although she is now improving. All my communications with her have therefore been carried on either through the post-office or through Miss Vance, in whom I have

every confidence. Miss Vance has called frequently, and is doing everything that needs to be done for the present. Except for the irreparable loss of her dear husband, Mrs. Symes has no immediate trouble, and I hope this will be remembered. Whatever she requires is being, and will be, supplied by Miss Vance on my behalf. All the Freethought party need concern itself about is the "Joseph Symes Memorial Fund," which I herewith inaugurate, and towards which I have already received a number of subscriptions, acknowledged in another column.

With regard to this Fund, I do not know that I can add substantially to what I wrote last week. The whole case lies in a nutshell. Joseph Symes fought a long, hard, trying battle for Freethought. He never had any other idea than to go on fighting. He had no time for anything but to go on fighting. Making provision of any kind for his wife and young daughter were entirely out of the question. All he had in the world when he died was the little loose money in his wife's purse for domestic purposes. The old warrior has fallen in the last fight in which every man loses. And it behoves the party for which he fought to translate its gratitude to him into kindness for those he loved.

The best writer in the world could not say more than this if he filled pages. To those who wish to understand the situation is perfectly plain.

I am hoping to have a good chat with Mrs. Symes within a day or two after writing these paragraphs. In the meanwhile I wish to say that I hope this subscription will not be allowed to drag along in the *Freethinker*. We ought to raise what we mean to raise in a month or so. It would naturally be helpful to Mrs. Symes to know what she can depend upon pecuniarily in making her decisions with respect to the future.

On the last Thursday in January, which is also the last day in January, the National Secular Society's Executive meets; and I should like by that time to see the end of my personal responsibility in this matter. Prompt action had to be taken, and prompt action is always individual. Money had to be found for the funeral and other expenses, and I found it. This, of course, I shall be repaid. Not out of the subscription; that must be kept intact. The N. S. S. Executive will see to this somehow. And at the same time—on January 31—I should like to feel that the bulk of the Symes Memorial Fund is in hand, and to be able to pay it over to Mrs. Symes forthwith. What comes in afterwards ought to be only the subscriptions of the born laggards.

Let this be a short, sharp effort. Let every Freethinker ask himself, or herself, straight away what he or she can afford to give—and give it immediately. Every shilling sent to me direct, or to Miss Vance for me, will be promptly acknowledged in the *Freethinker*. And I beg everybody who means to send to send this month, if it be possible. Out of respect for my dead comrade, whom I loved, I ask the Freethought party to do this.

G. W. FOOTE.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Stuart Cumberland has been following up the nonsense about the "supernormal" powers of the Zancigs. It is perfectly well established now that they do use a code of verbal signalings, besides visual signalings which are not so easily reduced to a system. Even clever performers, Mr. Cumberland says, easily like to be thought "something beyond the common—something that no one else really is." "It is a sorry notion," he continues, "because stern, cold facts are dead against it. We, I daresay, would all like to be supernatural, something different from our fellows, but the liking is one thing, and the being is another."

Mr. W. T. Stead tells of the wonderful things that the Zancigs do in private performances. But these private performances are always open to suspicion. The only performances worth anything as evidence are performances under strict test conditions. Now, without throwing a shadow of doubt on Mr. Stead's honesty, we venture to suggest that he is not at all a proper person to play the part of a severe investigator on such occasions. The tests should be devised by persons who thoroughly understand their purpose. If the Zancigs use a code of signals, the tests should be devised by persons who have made that branch of business a study—that is, by professional thought-readers and trick performers. A single Cumberland or Maskelyne would be worth a thousand Steads in *this* case.

Mr. Stead stands up for the "telepathic" theory. He also appears to be a "telepathic" adept himself. "I use telepathy," he says, "in communicating with my friends much more frequently than I use the telegraph, and I am constantly in the habit of receiving long messages from friends at distances of many miles full of information of which I had no knowledge." This sounds very wonderful, but it might mean very little if we knew all the details—and the details are everything, all the rest being inference or imagination.

What a pity it was that Mr. Stead could not use "telepathy" instead of telegraphy when he particularly wanted Mr. Foote to be at Mowbray House on a certain day in 1905 when the Rev. Dr. Dixon, of America (one of Ingersoll's libellers), was putting in an appearance. It was a pity from Mr. Stead's own point of view, for he very much wanted Mr. Foote to be present at that interview. It was a pity, too, from Mr. Foote's point of view, for he would have been delighted to meet that clerical libeller face to face. But a wrongly-addressed telegram destroyed a golden opportunity. What a blessing "telepathy" would have been then!

According to the orthodox faith, every human being—even the dimpled, laughing baby—is "full up" with original sin. Well now, think of this. Frank Haynes, a coastguard's man, one of the two men drowned by the overturning of the Ryde lifeboat, volunteered at the last moment to take the place of one of the crew who had failed to turn up. He had a child lying dead at home at the time. Was it original sin that prompted that noble fellow to risk his own life, without any call of duty, but just to try and save some fellow men in distress? Will the clergy explain?

Religion is such a beautiful thing. They say it makes a man forget himself; but too often it makes him forget everybody else. It stands confessed, then, as the very principle of selfishness. Here is a case in point. The terrible Scottish railway accident, in which Mr. A. W. Black, M.P., was fatally injured, was one to fill decently constituted persons with earnest sympathy. This was not the effect, however, which it produced on the Right Rev. Dr. Niven, Moderator of the Established Assembly. Preaching in Pollokshields Church on the last Sunday in 1906, this gentleman is reported in the *Glasgow Herald* to have uttered the following sentiments:—

"We cannot forget those who are overwhelmed with sorrow to-day in this city and elsewhere by the appalling catastrophe which took place on Friday. We offer them our sympathy and our prayers, and I daresay those of us who have often to travel from home will once more give thanks to God that we and those dear to us have been by His goodness preserved from calamity, which might so easily overtake any of us, and which so many have experienced in all its terrors."

Dr. Niven asks people to think that God specially saved them from being in that railway smash. This is very flattering to their vanity. What important persons they must be for the Almighty to take such particular care of them! But cool, calm, disinterested reason points out that if God specially kept them out of the smash, he must have

specially rushed the unfortunate victims into it. While praising the Lord, therefore, for preserving themselves, they should blame him for destroying the others. If he is responsible on the one side, he is also responsible on the other side, and is entitled to the curses as well as the blessings. But the pious folk never see it in that light. They are so much occupied in thinking about themselves. "We're safe; that's enough; praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Rev. A. Waller, of St. Paul's Church, Southend-on-Sea, has trouble with the organist and the choir. They complain that his sermons are too "emphatic." A more intelligible complaint is that his sermons are "too long." The reverend gentleman doesn't see his way to curtail them. Consequently the choir is resting. If the rector won't rest the choristers will.

Getting Light is the title of a pamphlet by "Aliris" printed at 12 Cursitor-street, E.C., price threepence. It purports to be a Reply to the *Freethinker's* criticism on Mr. John Lobb, but it is not really anything of the kind. The author may be getting light, but he doesn't seem to have got it yet; at least, we do not see much of it shining through his pamphlet. He appears to think that we edit this journal for "fun," and to "pull the legs" of our "gullible" readers. Well, there is no "fun" in his pamphlet, unless it be of the unconscious variety. We wish somebody really would try to answer our criticism of Mr. Lobb's *Talks with the Dead*. Mr. Lobb himself ought to make the attempt.

The dear *Daily News* complains to all the universe it can reach that it has been excluded by the Moderates from the Fulham Libraries. Our contemporary cries out when it is itself a victim of bigotry. It has never turned a hair at the long and general boycott of the *Freethinker*.

General Booth wants £45,000 to carry on the social work of the Salvation Army with unabated vigor during 1907. Readers of Mr. Manson's book or Mr. Cohen's pamphlet know what fudge this is. We note, too, that the "Army" is being severely criticised in America. The Chancellor of St. Andrew's University, Nebraska, declares that its methods are "vicious and pauperising, and calculated to make the so-called relief work a plague." The Mayor of Cincinnati has made a similar declaration.

The newspapers report that a "promising" actor has left the stage for the pulpit. They might have said that he had left one stage for another.

"If a file of Guards," the *Daily News* says, "were turned into the Gilded Chamber on the 12th of February and refused admittance to every Peer who tried to take his seat, the country would laugh, and nine-tenths of it would assent." Well, if this be true, what a lot of cowards Britishers must be! And what has made them so? Is it modern Christianity?

Rev. Stephen Gladstone, a son of the late Grand Old Man, laments the loss of the Education Bill. "It was not perfect or logical," he says, "but it gave religion a place of honor in the schools." That is all he has to say for it—and that is all anybody can say for it. There was nothing about *education* in it from the first clause to the last.

The alternative may be Secular Education. Mr. Gladstone sees this, and is naturally alarmed. No man likes to see his own profession in danger. "A non-religious system," he says, "will gradually tend to produce a non-religious people." And where will the clergy be then?

Mr. Gladstone hopes it is not too late even now "at this eleventh hour for the hostile parties outside Parliament to meet, discuss, and agree." "O," he exclaims, "that it might be so!" "O," we exclaim, "that it may not be so!" When thieves agree, honest men have reason to trouble. But it isn't likely in this case—for the simple reason that the booty can't be divided.

There is not a single residential training college for teachers in England which does not impose a religious test. Even the few where the test is not definite the students have to profess (at least) to belong to some religious denomination, and are expected to attend its services on Sunday. A correspondent recently drew attention to this fact in the *Daily Chronicle*. Having religious doubts, and being conscientious, he could not himself enter into one of these training colleges, although he wished to do so, and would probably pass in

London matriculation. He knew two students, however, who shared his doubts, but intended to keep them quiet; and a third, a strict Presbyterian by training and conviction, who was "deliberately becoming an Anglican for a few years so as to enter one of the numerous 'Church' colleges." Tests have been abolished at the universities, but they still exist in the teaching profession. It is a wicked and deplorable state of affairs.

According to Dr. Clifford's new year address, 1906 was especially a year in which "the hidden things of dishonesty have been brought to light." We agree with him. The year 1906 has proved the utter dishonesty of the "Nonconformist policy." But it is a consolation that their Education Bill is dead.

Mr. T. Sitch, secretary of the Chainmakers and Chain Strikers' Association, writes of the women workers in the Black Country:—

"I found such a state of things as was simply astounding. From 4s. to 5s. was the average wage for a week of hard work and long hours. The most painful part is I found that some of these poor souls were making chains for persons who profess to be good Christians, and many taking part in religious observances."

Yet some people say that the only way to save the world is to make more Christians.

Christian Life praises the *Tribune* for trying to keep out all advertisements of "a fraudulent or offensive nature," and commends this noble example to "other papers, and particularly to our religious contemporaries." Fancy the religious papers particularly needing advice not to take money for fraudulent and offensive advertisements! Nothing we could say would be so severe a criticism of Christian morality.

Another good man gone wrong—or the wrong way. Rev. Canon Vernon Musgrave, of Hascombe, Surrey, left £79,316. "Blessed be ye poor.—Woe unto you rich."

William Crick having completed forty years' service as an evangelist under the Sussex Home Missionary Society, his congregation at Burgess Hill decided to present him with a nice testimonial. Accordingly they purchased twelve volumes of Dr. Maclaren's *Exposition of the Holy Scriptures*. God's Word wasn't enough; the poor evangelist was to have it expounded by the great Maclaren; then he would probably understand it. But when the poor evangelist caught sight of the big, burdensome present, he exclaimed, "I don't think I shall read them this side of Heaven." So he will go to his grave without understanding God's Word, after all; and, as far as William Crick is concerned, the great Maclaren will have explained it in vain.

The *Humanitarian* for January—an excellent number, by the way—reviewing an American pamphlet by the Rev. F. R. Martin entitled *Christ Among the Cattle*, begins by saying: "It is so rare for the clergy to say a word on behalf of the rights of animals that we are always pleased to be able to notice exceptions to the rule." So rare for the clergy to say a word on behalf of the rights of animals! What a comment on the moral pretensions of Christianity!

Mr. Thomas Sawyer, foreman at Bangor station, was an earnest member of the local English Wesleyan Society. On Sunday evening, December 23, he publicly returned thanks for having been preserved during the year through all the perils of his risky occupation. On Monday, December 24, he was run over by a light engine and killed. Comment is unnecessary.

More "Providence." Mrs. Clara Waterhouse, of Albany-road, Camberwell, was found kneeling dead by her bedside, with her hands clasped in an attitude of prayer. Will the clergy tell us if the lady's prayer was answered?

"Sunday—a Message to the Nation," is the heading of a communication to the British public which is signed by the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, and the President of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches. We venture to reproduce this document in full, partly because it is worth keeping for future use, and partly because we want to say something about it:—

"As representatives of various Christian bodies in England, we desire to call the attention of our fellow-countrymen to the combined efforts which are being made to set forth explicitly and forcibly the principle of Sunday observance.

We believe it to be literally impossible to exaggerate the importance of this matter to the well-being of the nation.

It is not merely that one day's rest in seven contributes vastly to the physical and mental efficiency of men, women, and children, and tends to make our home life more truly what English home life ought to be. There is more than this. Under the sacred sanction which attaches to the Lord's Day, it is intended that all should have opportunity in the worship of Almighty God to escape from the grip of ordinary cares and occupations into regions of higher thought and nobler aspiration.

We are convinced that on adequate and reasonable Sunday observance depends in no small measure the possibility of promoting in England the deeper, the more sacred, and the more enduring interests of our common life.

RANDALL CANTUAR,
FRANCIS, Archbishop of Westminster,
J. SCOTT LIDGERT, President of the National
Council of the Evangelical Free Churches.

New Year's Day, 1907."

These three gentlemen are a trinity in unity. They also remind us of the three tailors of Tooley-street.

When these gentlemen talk about the "day of rest" they are simply playing to the gallery. Sunday, in fact, is their busiest day in the week; and, as they intend to keep it so, they certainly do not mean to practise their own gospel. It is meant for other people—like nearly everything they preach; which is a truth that prompted a caustic wit to declare that a bishop was like a signpost—pointing the way without going.

Who wants the Christian clergy to go round shouting that one day's rest in seven is a good thing? People in general have no such insane desire for work as to sacrifice their weekly day of rest. They would rather have two Sundays a week than none at all; and Freethinkers are just like other folk in this respect—although it is lyingly reported that they want to "abolish the blessed Sabbath." Human beings know they require rest, they mean to keep the rest they have, and to add more to it as soon as possible. Yes, the clergy need not be alarmed on this score.

It is in the third paragraph that these clerical friends of the people of Great Britain really get to business. They desire all people to have an opportunity to worship Almighty God—that is, in plain language, they wish all people to be in a position to go to church on Sunday, and to go there; in other words, they are anxious to see the clerical business well patronised; and their message to the nation is nothing but a trade circular.

How laughable is the idea that churches and chapels lift the people of this country into "regions of higher thought and nobler aspiration." Far better stuff than the average sermon may be read in most of the penny papers. And nowadays, when a man can buy literary masterpieces for sixpence or a shilling, and slip them in his pocket, and go away with them to fresh woods and pastures now, and bathe his mind in the sea of one or other of the world's mightiest intellects, why on earth should he waste his precious hours in listening to the droning of a professional exhorter, who never by any chance has a particle of genius, and who generally works off on his long-suffering congregation an inherited stock of religious commonplaces, all of which have an ancient and fish-like smell? Is it not better, even without the noble books, to get on a bicycle, a tramcar, a train, or a steamboat, and journey away from great cities to places where skies are blue, and the sunlight is a glory, and the sea flashes and shimmers under it, and the land stretches away in soothing tranquility, and the broad backs of the grazing oxen soothe away the fever and the fret of city existence? Opportunity for these rich pleasures is not what the clergy desire to see multiplied. On the contrary, they desire to see such opportunities diminished—and this is what all their manifestos aim at. For the Churches, which can agree about nothing else, naturally agree to minimise what threatens their common interests.

INDIRECTION.

"Pat," said his reverence, "I shall be very busy this afternoon, and if anyone calls I do not wish to be disturbed." "All right, sor; will I tell them you're not in?" "No, Pat; that would be a lie." "An' phat'll I say, yor rivorance?" "Oh, just put them off with an evasive answer." At supper time Pat was asked if anyone had called. "Faix, there did." "And what did you tell him?" said the priest. "Suro, an' I give him an evasive answer." "How was that?" queried his reverence. "He axed me was yer honor in, an' I sez to him, sez I, 'Was yer gran'father a monkey?'"

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

January 20, Camberwell; 27, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 13, Leicester; 20 and 27, Romford-road, Forest Gate.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 6, Leicester; 13, Forest Gate. February 3 and 10, Forest Gate. March 10, Birmingham.

T. W. HORNER.—Pleased to hear you have secured us a few fresh readers lately. We wish all our friends would do ditto, as many of them easily might.

H. R. CLIFTON.—An excellent letter, but we are not surprised at its non-insertion in the *Morning Leader*, which nevertheless printed Father Vaughan's nonsense that you replied to.

THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £11 19s. 0d. Since received: A. G. Lye, 1s.; L. Brandes, 6d.; J. Haydon, 2s.

THE JOSEPH SYMES FUND.—R. Johnson, £5; G. B. H. McCluskey, £1; F. R. Theakstone, 2s. 6d.; Clifford Williams, 2s. 6d.; Harry Organ, 2s. 6d.; James Brodie, 2s. 6d.; J. Partridge, 5s.; A. G. Lye, 2s.; W. P. Pearson, 2s.; Edith J. Hall, 5s.; Dr. R. T. Nichols, £2 2s.; T. Ollerenshaw, 5s.; J. W. de Caux, £2 2s.; F. S., £10; F. Bonte, £2; G. W. Foote, £1 1s.; C. Cohen, £1; Mathematicus, £1; D. M. W., 10s.; T. Edmonds, 5s.; J. Brough, 3s.; W. H. Holmes, £1 1s.; Thomas Dixon, 5s.; E. Bowen, 2s. 6d.; A. Lewis, 7s. 6d.; J. Sanderson, 2s.; S. M. Peacock, 2s. *Per Miss Vance*—A. Marsh, £5; E. A. Charlton, £2 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. Neate, £2; E. G. H. and R. T. H., £1; Family of the late Mrs. Trevillion, £1 1s.; J. Chick, £1 1s.; W. Breedman, 2s.; C. Bowman, 5s.; J. Miller, 10s.; F. Schindel, 10s.; H. Cowell, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. Roleffs, £1.

T. MAY.—The writer of "Acid Drops" is the editor of the *Freethinker*. You can hardly expect to instruct him so cheaply in his own paper. We have given more pledges of our hatred of superstition than you have; and to charge a publicist with bias towards the thing he hates because he demands justice for it, as well as for himself, is only a too common form of foolish partisanship. You do not answer anything we have said. It is the merest commonplace to say that the Government should be master in its own house. Of course it should. But opinion, whether religious or irreligious, does not legitimately belong to the Government's house; and the organisation of opinion should be perfectly free, subject to the preservation of public peace and order—in the proper meaning of those terms, not in some forced meaning set up by the Government of the day or hour. In defending that position we are defending the permanent interests of Freethought; and those who cannot see it are shortsighted. That is all.

G. B. H. McCLUSKEY, who knew Joseph Symes in the old pre-Australian days, says: "I always esteemed him as a thoroughly manly man; one of the few. I am sending a token of my sympathy with his wife and daughter, who should have all the help they need in their bereavement. Joseph Symes spent his best years in fighting the good fight, and making it easier for those who follow him, and Freethinkers will not be slow to show their gratitude."

R. JOHNSON writes with reference to Joseph Symes's death: "The news has given me quite a shock, and I am unable to express my deep sorrow. I enclose a cheque on behalf of those he has left behind."

GEORGE PAYNE (Manchester), hearing the sad news from Mrs. Pegg, wrote a letter to us at once, from which we make the following extract: "I am not surprised to see it will be necessary to do something for Mrs. Symes. His fearful struggle for so many years in Australia has no doubt left him a poor man amongst a class who can never have any hope of becoming rich. I shall be ready to contribute my mite to any fund that may be started, and I hope that it will be well and widely supported, for the Freethought cause has never had an abler or more indomitable champion than Joseph Symes."

EDITH J. HALL, who "knows what it is to lose one so dear," trusts that there will be a "hearty response" to our appeal for Joseph Symes's widow and child.

F. R. THEAKSTONE.—Many, like yourself, will regret their inability to subscribe more to the Symes Fund.

CLIFFORD WILLIAMS writes: "This seems to me a special opportunity for Freethinkers to show their appreciation of the good work carried on by our leaders, by subscribing a sum that will surprise Mrs. Symes and her daughter. May I suggest that the rank-and-file interest themselves by appealing to their friends, who are Freethinkers, for financial help, and forwarding such donations direct to you? I enclose my mite, and hope to send again a little later."

HARRY ORGAN, subscribing to the Symes Fund, says: "The grand articles from his pen recently should move the heart of every Freethinker to show a little substantial sympathy."

J. PARTRIDGE (Birmingham) hopes our Symes appeal "will result in a very substantial sum being subscribed."

C. BLYTHE.—You are probably mistaken about Canon Wilberforce's utterance. Certainly there have been Scottish missionaries in Africa, and Dr. Moffat was one of them; but we fail to see what bearing this has on the question of Christianity and Slavery.

J. G. writes:—"Last July I was a Roman Catholic; now I am pleased to say that I am a Freethinker. The *Freethinker* is the best paper I ever read. I know more now than ever I did in all my life, and it's all due to the splendid *Freethinker*." There now! That's the way to convert Catholics. To convert a man by persuasion is a triumph; to try to convert him in any other way is a folly or a crime.

G. VIGGARS.—We were seeing what could be done, but your letter removes the necessity of further action. We regret that the Crewe friends have lost their opportunity of hearing Joseph Symes in debate.

T. ROBERTSON (Glasgow) writes: "Although Mr. Symes was only a few days with us in Glasgow, we feel his death as that of an old friend. Your remarks about him were touching in their simple truthfulness. The Branch here will not be unmindful of your appeal for his widow."

J. BROUGH.—Pleased to hear from you again.

ETHEL.—Luke xix. 27 contains the text referred to on p. 43 of Mr. Bonte's pamphlet.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Thanks for new year's good wishes. Newspapers, such as the one you mention, don't want a free expression of opinion. Their "Correspondence" column is always carefully selected and doctored, The "glorious free press" is one of the most contemptible shams.

T. OLLERENSHAW.—We note with pleasure that Joseph Symes was the means of your conversion to Freethought.

E. MOORCROFT.—Pleased to know you will always look upon Joseph Symes as one of the men you have met. Thanks for cuttings.

LETTERS for insertion in the *Freethinker* must be written only on one side of the paper. Letters not bearing the full name and address of the writers go into the waste-basket.

W. MANN, one of our valued contributors, writing to us concerning the late Joseph Symes, says:—"I was a great admirer of his, although I never saw him. His pamphlets made a great impression on me, being the first Freethought works I read besides the *Freethinker*. He was an uncompromising and brave fighter, of which the race seems dying out."

J. A. REID.—Pleased to read your genial words, and to inspire such sentiments. We note your wish that "we had some wealthy Freethinkers who would assist to provide for the widows of men who give their life to the cause."

F. S. sends us a handsome cheque for the Symes Fund as "a mark of my esteem for his sterling character." S. F. thinks "Cynicus and God" in last week's *Freethinker* is the smartest thing Symes ever wrote, and ought to be reprinted as a Tract and circulated by the million wherever the English language is spoken. F. S. has known Joseph Symes long enough to speak with certainty about him, having heard him lecture during the first year of his association with the Freethought party, and many times prior to his departure for Australia.

T. McILWRAITH, who has been reading the *Freethinker* for three months, has no doubt that he will go on reading our "splendid paper" with the greatest of pleasure.

A. J. ARMSTRONG.—Our recent article on "Birmingham Bigots" will partly answer your question.

T. H. ELSTOB.—We are quite sure the Newcastle friends will do their share towards the practical testimony to Joseph Symes's worth.

W. H. HOLMES.—It is indeed a great loss to your Liverpool Branch.

J. L. LAWSON.—Glad you have got so much good from reading this journal. Mr. Foote is taking all the care he can of himself.

T. DIXON hopes the Freethought party will "generously respond" to our Symes appeal.

J. ROBINSON.—The best edition of Marcus Aurelius is George Long's, published by Bell.

E. BOWEN.—Pleased (in one way) to know you would sacrifice all other papers to retain the *Freethinker*. Your whole letter is encouraging.

A. LEWIS.—Many a Freethinker, like yourself, will wish he were wealthier when thinking of the dear ones Joseph Symes left behind. Thanks for your good words and good wishes.

R. CHAPMAN.—Just room to note the South Shield Branch's vote of sympathy to Mrs. and Miss Symes.

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.

Sugar Plums.

The new effort of the West Ham Branch started very successfully on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Do the Dead Live?" The Workman's Hall was densely packed, all the standing room being occupied as well as the seats, even the passage being full of people. Mr. Foote's lecture was most enthusiastically applauded. Mr. Marshall, who made a pleasant chairman, pointedly invited questions or discussion, but none was forthcoming. Someone in the audience cried "We're all Freethinkers here," and the lecturer said he was glad to hear it in one way and sorry in another. We understand that excellent music was dis-

coursed before the lecture by Mr. Quinton's band; and we should add that the collection taken up was, by resolution of the committee, devoted to the fund being raised for Mrs. Symes.

Mr. Lloyd will be the lecturer at the Workman's Hall to-night (January 13). He will be followed by Mr. Cohen.

Mr. Foote's lecture for the Camberwell Branch, announced for January 13, has been postponed to January 20. South London "saints" will please note.

A special meeting of the Liverpool N. S. S. Branch will be held this evening (Jan. 13) at 7 o'clock to consider the future arrangements of the Branch, with particular reference to the situation created by the sad death of Mr. Joseph Symes. The committee earnestly request the attendance of every member who can possibly be present.

Not for many years has a Freethought lecturer visited Ilkeston, but Mr. Cohen lectures in the Town Hall there on Monday evening (Jan. 14), his subject being "The Salvation Army."

Freethinkers in Wolverhampton and district are requested to meet Mr. Dannatt, Mr. Christopher, and Mr. Bevins, at 10 Snow Hill, on Thursday, January 17, at 8 p.m., to discuss the advisability of forming a branch of the N. S. S.

Mr. F. Bonte's very able and important pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*, is still going off well, although the first heavy demand is, of course, abated. We believe it is going to circulate steadily for many years to come. Certainly it ought to, for it is calculated to be of immense service to the cause of Freethought, as it gives the *bonâ fide* mental history of an accomplished and most intelligent convert from Catholicism to Secularism. To borrow the language of its apt title, it is not fiction, but fact; and no less a person than Dr. Tylor, the great ethnologist, says that the English mind, while not fond of theories, moves freely under the impulsion of facts. For this reason, not to mention others, we expect the best results from the distribution of Mr. Bonte's pamphlet; and we hope Freethinkers will continue to give it the widest possible circulation. The price of one penny does not cover the cost of production, and is only placed upon the pamphlet to prevent waste in its distribution.

In a letter we have just received from Mr. Bonte, he deploras the untimely death of Joseph Symes. "I had built high hopes on him for the Liverpool Branch," he says, and adds: "It is a sore disappointment. It is also a loss to all your readers, who will miss his spirited articles."

Mr. Bonte informs us that the French translation of his pamphlet, which is being done by Professor Anspach, of Brussels, is nearly finished. A Flemish translation is finished already and will shortly appear in a Liberal paper, *De Volksvriend*, as a *feuilleton*, after which it will be published in book form. The German translation will be heard of presently.

Mr. Bonte is in Belgium at present, and reading a good deal in English, French, and Flemish. "But no literature," he says, "is more welcome than the *Freethinker*. After a glance at your answers to correspondents, I fall at once on the 'Acid Drops,' where I find in a few trenchant sentences the sanest, the profoundest appreciation of current events in England, in France, and elsewhere. The Education struggle in England, and the Separation law in France, have nowhere been more intelligently set forth than in the pages of the *Freethinker*. The fresh and pungent style of your remarks never fails to enlighten me, while your humor is ever exhilarating." There now! That is praise. And of course we like to be appreciated. The writer who says he doesn't is—well, he isn't what we are. And when we get praise from a good judge we like it all the better. But it wouldn't be good for us to get too much. Only a little now and then redresses the balance—for we have had tremendous quantities of abuse.

We congratulate the editor of the *Essex Weekly News* on his courage and fair-mindedness in printing some letters criticising the orthodox outpourings of the Rev. A. J. Waldron at Maldon. We note particularly the able letters by Mr. J. K. Sykes, the Southend veteran, and Mr. Aylmer Maude, the translator of Tolstoy.

The Underground Movement.

[A revised edition of an article first published nearly two years ago, and now republished as a stimulus, and in part a guide, to Freethinkers at the beginning of 1907.]

THIS is not to be an article on earthquakes and volcanoes. I am not an expert on such questions. What I want to write about is the underground movement of thought where open propaganda is impossible or at least extremely difficult. For a long time in Germany the Social Democratic movement was carried on in spite of stern repressive laws. It was driven below the surface but it was not destroyed; on the contrary, it gained new life and vigor, for every adherent became a missionary. The revolutionary movement in Russia has been entirely subterranean—and it has honeycombed the nation from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Pamphlets and leaflets had to be printed surreptitiously or smuggled into the country from abroad, and distributed quietly and carefully, with Siberia waiting for a single mistake. Even the printed propaganda was often impossible. The only alternative then was propaganda by conversation. That went on wherever two men could talk out of earshot of the police. And the result is—what we see.

Here in Great Britain the law and the police do not stop the propaganda of Freethought. But we have everything short of that against us. The Churches, the public press, "respectable" society, and all vested interests, try to frown or boycott us out of existence. We may smile at the frown, we may despise and defy it; but the boycott is a very solid obstruction. The press boycotts us, booksellers and newsagents boycott us. All the machinery of publicity is used for our enemies and against ourselves. I know there is a comparatively free market for sixpenny reprints of advanced books of a non-inflammatory character; books which had their vogue in educated circles, and did most of their work, a good many years ago. Such books are useful as far as they find fresh circles of readers as well as purchasers. But they are not, and cannot be, the vital propaganda of the day and hour.

Look at our lectures. How seldom do the newspapers take any notice of our biggest meetings. I have seen a Birmingham Town Hall meeting dismissed with a few lines, or none at all, while half a column has been devoted to some insignificant orthodox gathering. Then look at the *Freethinker*. More honest brain work is put into it than into the vast majority of journals, but let the writing be ever so good, it must never be noticed. There is a tacit agreement that it is not to be mentioned. But that is far from being the worst. That might be borne with a shrug and a smile. It is the trade boycott that does the greatest damage. Some wholesale agents will not supply the *Freethinker* in any circumstances; the bulk of the retail newsagents will not get it for their customers, or will not keep it on sale; every conceivable difficulty is put in the way of those who want to obtain it; and the result is that its circulation is not a half or a third of what it would be if it had a fair field and no favor.

I appeal to Freethinkers to fight the boycott by all the means in their power. Let them accept the present situation, since it cannot immediately be altered, and do their best in spite of it. Let them try the underground propaganda. Every one of them can do something. First of all, they should endeavor to get new readers for this paper. They can pass their own weekly copy into other hands when they have done with it, or they can buy an extra copy (or more) and pass it round directly it is published. They can order this paper through the newsagent who supplies them with other periodicals, and threaten to take all their custom elsewhere if he raises an objection. They can provide themselves with cheap pamphlets and leaflets, and distribute these wherever the opportunity occurs. Let them all become missionaries. If they can do nothing else but talk, let them do that. In the course of

conversation with friends or acquaintances, or with strangers in trains, tramcars, omnibuses, or elsewhere, let them put in a word every time they can for Freethought. And if they can also manage, at the finish, to plant a bit of Freethought literature, so much the better. Sometimes it will live and grow, and bear fruit and seed in after days.

Freethinkers are not as active as they should be in inducing Christians to listen to a Freethought lecture. I feel sure they could bring along some Christians to the meetings if they tried. Why don't they? Some of them do not care to be known as Freethinkers, for business or domestic reasons; but this is far from applying to all, and an effort should really be made in the direction I have indicated.

I am constantly receiving letters from readers of the *Freethinker* who have only recently become acquainted with it. Some of them say that they caught sight of it by accident, some that it was brought to their notice by a stranger, some that it was introduced to them by a friend. Some say they did not know that such a paper existed. I have known a man find a copy left in the train, read it, begin thinking, and go on reading fresh numbers purchased with his own money until he became an out-and-out "infidel."

These facts should encourage Freethinkers to continue if they have begun, and to begin if they have not attempted, the underground propaganda. It is their best means—I believe it is their only means—of fighting the boycott and the conspiracy of silence against their cause. What they can do in this way is beyond the power of mere money to achieve. Thousands of pounds spent in advertising would not be a tenth part as effective as their individual and unbought efforts.

G. W. FOOTE.

What would You Substitute for the Bible as a Moral Guide?—I.

By COL. R. G. INGERSOLL.

YOU ask me what I would "substitute for the Bible as a moral guide."

I know that many people regard the Bible as the only moral guide and believe that in that book only can be found the true and perfect standard of morality.

There are many good precepts, many wise sayings and many good regulations and laws in the Bible, and these are mingled with bad precepts, with foolish sayings, with absurd rules and cruel laws.

But we must remember that the Bible is a collection of many books written centuries apart, and that it in part represents the growth and tells in part the history of a people. We must also remember that the writers treat of many subjects. Many of these writers have nothing to say about right or wrong, about vice or virtue.

The book of Genesis has nothing about morality. There is not a line in it calculated to shed light on the path of conduct. No one can call that book a moral guide. It is made up of myth and miracle, of tradition and legend.

In Exodus we have an account of the manner in which Jehovah delivered the Jews from Egyptian bondage.

We now know that the Jews were never enslaved by the Egyptians; that the entire story is a fiction. We know this, because there is not found in Hebrew a word of Egyptian origin, and there is not found in the language of the Egyptians a word of Hebrew origin. This being so, we know that the Hebrews and Egyptians could not have lived together for hundreds of years.

Certainly Exodus was not written to teach morality. In that book you cannot find one word against human slavery. As a matter of fact, Jehovah was a believer in that institution.

The killing of cattle with disease and hail, the murder of the first-born, so that in every house was death, because the King refused to let the Hebrews go, certainly was not moral; it was fiendish. The writer of that book regarded all the people of Egypt, their children, their flocks and herds, as the property of Pharaoh, and these people and these cattle were killed, not because they had done anything wrong, but simply for the purpose of punishing the king. Is it possible to get any morality out of this history?

All the laws found in Exodus, including the Ten Commandments, so far as they are really good and sensible, were at that time in force among all the peoples of the world.

Murder is, and always was, a crime, and always will be, as long as a majority of people object to being murdered.

Industry always has been, and always will be, the enemy of larceny.

The nature of man is such that he admires the teller of truth and despises the liar. Among all tribes, among all people, truth telling has been considered a virtue and false swearing or false speaking a vice.

The love of parents for children is natural, and this love is found among all the animals that live. So the love of children for parents is natural, and was not, and cannot be, created by law. Love does not spring from a sense of duty, nor does it bow in obedience to commands.

So men and women are not virtuous because of anything in books or creeds.

All the Ten Commandments that are good were old, were the result of experience. The commandments that were original with Jehovah were foolish.

The worship of "any other God" could not have been worse than the worship of Jehovah, and nothing could have been more absurd than the sacredness of the Sabbath.

If commandments had been given against slavery and polygamy, against wars of invasion and extermination, against religious persecution in all its forms, so that the world could be free, so that the brain might be developed and the heart civilised, then we might, with propriety, call such commandments a moral guide.

Before we can truthfully say that the Ten Commandments constitute a moral guide, we must add and subtract. We must throw away some, and write others in their places.

The commandments that have a known application here, in this world, and treat of human obligations, are good; the others have no basis in fact, or experience.

Many of the regulations found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, are good. Many are absurd and cruel.

The entire ceremonial of worship is insane.

Most of the punishment for violations of laws are unphilosophic and brutal.....The fact is that the Pentateuch upholds nearly all crimes, and to call it a moral guide is as absurd as to say that it is merciful or true.

Nothing of a moral nature can be found in Joshua or Judges. These books are filled with crimes, with massacres and murders. They are about the same as the real history of the Apache Indians.

The story of Ruth is not particularly moral.

In first and second Samuel there is not one word calculated to develop the brain or conscience.

Jehovah murdered seventy thousand Jews because David took a census of the people. David, according to the account, was the guilty one, but only the innocent were killed.

In first and second Kings can be found nothing of ethical value. All the kings who refused to obey the priests were denounced, and all the crowned wretches who assisted the priests were declared to be the favorites of Jehovah. In these books there cannot be found one word in favor of liberty.

There are some good Psalms, and there are some that are infamous. Most of these Psalms are selfish. Many of them are passionate appeals for revenge.

The story of Job shocks the heart of every good man. In this book there is some poetry, some pathos, and some philosophy, but the story of this drama called Job, is heartless to the last degree. The children of Job are murdered to settle a little wager between God and the Devil. Afterward, Job having remained firm, other children are given in the place of the murdered ones. Nothing, however, is done for the children who were murdered.

The book of Esther is utterly absurd, and the only redeeming feature in the book is that the name of Jehovah is not mentioned.

I like the Song of Solomon because it tells of human love, and that is something I can understand. That book, in my judgment, is worth all the ones that go before it, and is a far better moral guide.

There are some wise and merciful Proverbs. Some are selfish and some are flat and commonplace.

I like the book of Ecclesiastes because there you find some sense, some poetry, and some philosophy. Take away the interpolations and it is a good book.

Of course there is nothing in Nehemiah or Ezra to make men better, nothing in Jeremiah or Lamentations calculated to lessen vice, and only a few passages in Isaiah that can be used in a good cause.

In Ezekiel and Daniel we find only ravings of the insane.

In some of the minor prophets there is now and then a good verse, now and then an elevated thought.

You can, by selecting passages from different books, make a very good creed, and by selecting passages from different books you can make a very bad creed.

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT AND THE DAILY MAIL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The *Daily Mail* occasionally wobbles when dealing with religion, but on the whole, I suppose we can assume that it poses as the defender of the faith. The proprietor, now a member of that august body, the House of Lords, has a commercial interest in the sale of several religious periodicals propagating exploded ideas. My opinion has always been that he does not care two straws what his readers believe so long as they purchase his innumerable journals. He knows his public and panders to it. If, however, you carefully follow the *Daily Mail*, you will become acquainted with the fact that evidence is not wanting that the conductors are not unaware of Freethought activity. But the *Daily Mail* is like the gentlemen of the pulpit. Incorrect statements and false philosophy may be propagated in its columns, but no one may be allowed to correct them. But doubtless it will change when it thinks it safe to change. Already, despite its bluff, the situation is "embarrassing," and certain satirical charges are "painfully accurate." As it has admitted as much, one cannot but admire its impudent audacity in continuing to pose as the "defender of the faith." It probably knows what pays best. That appears to be its guiding spirit. It is a wonder that it does not issue an Art Bible and Gladstone's *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*. In a recent issue, this profound oracle declared that "modern science at last speaks in unison with revealed religion." Does it? In the *Daily Mail Year-Book* for 1907, there is an article by C. W. Saleeby, M.D., F.R.S. (Edin.), in which he says:—

"It would be absurd to say that the mind of the people is determined in our own day by patient and critical study of such books as Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* or Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. But these books have revealed to us a supreme truth which, whether consciously recognised or not, has entered into the mind of the people, and is the dominating idea of this hour."

Do those books speak in unison with revealed religion? The *Daily Mail* knows, or ought to know, that the philosophy of Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin conflict with so-called revealed religion. The *Daily Mail* further says "that the verdict of the psychologist is true, 'man is not a planetary or a transitory being; he persists as very man among cosmic and eternal things.'" Who is this psychologist upon whom the *Daily Mail* professes to rely? The late Professor Bain probably knew as much about psychology as anybody, and he could hold out no such hope. He was a Darwinian and

a negationist. It is wrong to delude the people. If man is immortal, every living thing must be. How can consciousness exist apart from brain? I believe that man's activity is confined to this world. It is for us to accept the fact and make the best of it. The millions of money now spent in propagating exploded ideas could be devoted to more serviceable purposes, such as providing old age pensions for deserving people, relieving the financial strain of the hospitals, promoting secondary education, and judicious experiments in co-operation.

J. A. REID.

ANNO DOMINI.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am sorry to say that for once I do not follow your reasoning in the last "Acid Drop" on page 5, in reply to Mr. Castle. Mr. Castle may be answered, but the point remains. There is a distinction and a difference.

It is granted that we openly acknowledge the Pagan divinities every day of the week, but why not go further and acknowledge by the date 1906, the sovereignty of Christ?

Why differentiate?

We acknowledged Pagan divinities by the days of the week *some time ago*; but, in the case of Christ, we have a *definitely stated number of years*—e.g., Sunday given up to the worship of the Sun in the past (date unknown). Time of the first worship of Christ in the past, *some 1,906 years ago*.

The former we may say is *abstract*—Names.

The latter we may say is *concrete*—Figures.

Again, if we do not acknowledge the birth of Christ, what is the explanation of 1906? The world is millions of years old, but the present year is reckoned 1907. For what reason, and why, was the change made? What do we mean by A.D. and B.C.?

If you have followed me thus far, and care to reply, I shall be exceedingly obliged. I hope I have made my point clear, it is rather a subtle one, and your "Acid Drop" does not cover it. Thanking you in anticipation, and with every good wish for the new year and all years.

PERCY BOWEN.

[It would take a long article to deal with all the points raised in this letter. For the present, this must suffice. Reckoning from the supposed birth of Christ is not yet a thousand years old throughout Christian Europe. When the Christians ruled the roost, after crushing out all opposition, they began to fix up what they called the Christian era, and they had to start by taking several hundred years of their era for granted. Prior to that they all used the Roman era—because they couldn't help it; and Freethinkers use the Christian era now for the same reason. How on earth this involves them in a recognition of the *sovereignty* of Christ passes our comprehension. It does not, to our thinking, involve an admission that Christ ever lived at all. "Anno Domini" to Freethinkers is a mere matter of social convenience.—EDITOR.]

GAMBLING.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The letter of Mr. Hopkins in your issue of December 30, relating to my article on "The Church and Gambling," shows, I think, a little misapprehension as to my purpose. My object was to exhibit the incompetence of our religious teachers as moral reformers, since, on their own showing, they understand neither the nature, the causes, nor the remedy of this appalling evil, against which they so vociferously declaim. I regret that my humble effort was disappointing to Mr. Hopkins, and I would have been pleased if he had stated in what particulars my shortcomings consisted. The answer to his question, "What is the use of contending for exact definitions?" is suitably given in the words of a correspondent immediately opposite his own letter, that "it is a truism that *definition* is one of the most important factors in controversy." It is the failure of our friends to define what gambling is that renders their efforts so ineffective, and I am a little surprised that any reader of the *Freethinker* should fail to see this. "Intellectual consistency" is a necessity of moral progress. Mr. Hopkins thinks that "the correct labelling of causes and effects might well be left to a later period," and associates the ethical consideration of the subject with the "mere verbiage of academic discussion." Well, Mr. B. Seebohm Rowntree, in his book on *Betting and Gambling*, gives as the cause of the national apathy towards this widespread evil, three main causes; and one of these is "the lack of clear thought regarding the ethics of the question." In the "matter of reform," therefore, it is surely some little service to exhibit the ethical muddle of ecclesiastics, and attempt to establish a clearer conception of the ethical and economic principles which the practice of gambling violates. A

physician is more likely to treat a malady successfully when he understands the true nature of the disease; and a moral reformer will be the better able to combat an evil when he understands what the evil is, and what constitutes it a moral and social offence. I am, perhaps, as fully conscious of the "painful objective realities" connected with the practice of betting, as Mr. Hopkins, but the question is of much wider import than he seems to recognise. If our friend can frame a definition of gambling that will exclude so-called "legitimate" speculation, he will render the reverend gentleman, whom I criticised, a very signal service; and personally, I will be glad to sit at his feet and learn the result of his mental deliberations. If he can contribute in any way to a greater clearness of thought on the subject, he will help to remove the national apathy towards its evils, and thus materially help forward the cause of moral reform.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

DEATH AND FUNERAL OF A SECULARIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—About a fortnight ago, Charles Newell, a very aged Secularist, breathed his last. He had been bedridden for many months. I had known him for many years as a consistent Freethinker and a very bitter opponent of priest-craft and superstition. He had often told me that he had arranged with Mr. Lyon (who died recently) to read a Secular Service over his remains.

I visited him soon after the cremation service at Mr. Lyon's interment, and he then told me he wished me to do the same for him, as I had done for Mr. Lyon's, and which he had wished Mr. Lyon to do for him. All this, however, has fallen through.

Mr. Newell's daughter and housekeeper (herself a widowed grandmother) never seemed opposed to his wishes on this matter, but the day after his death she asked me to visit her, and it came out that she had allowed her son-in-law to arrange for a Wesleyan service. She desired me to speak after this service and render a testimonial to his good character—which is undisputed—and to his public work, about which I knew something by hearsay but nothing by experience. I told her that Mr. Newell desired me to announce the fact that he was a Secularist, but if I were to endeavor to claim this, in such circumstances, it would be a futile and probably disorderly proceeding. She seemed relieved to have a sort of refusal.

The lesson to be learned is, that if Freethinkers desire a Secular Funeral, they must execute a proper codicil to their will and hand it to trustworthy parties outside their own families.

GREEVZ FYSHER.

WHAT IS ATHEISM? A PLEA FOR SINCERITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—While appreciating the candor of "South Devon," who pleads for the abandonment of the term "Atheist," it has always appeared to me that the same intellectual sincerity which has driven the Freethinker from the untenable position occupied by his opponent, logically impels him to recognise that, when the subject of Theism is under consideration, and until some more valid argument is advanced, the word "Atheist" is the only one which precisely describes those who are "without God in the world." I submit your correspondent is in error in declaring that "It is too vague—all things to all men. Every man defines it differently. Each different user has a different meaning." These latter are statements that involve a question of fact, and a reference to the definitions of Bradlaugh, Foote, Mirabaud, Robertson, McCabe, Cohen, Southwell, Watts, Lewins, Lloyd, etc., together with those of Theists like Drs. Cumming and Buchanan—all practically identical—will reveal the unintentional inaccuracy of "South Devon." An acquaintance with the works of Bolingbroke, Paine and Voltaire, will disclose the truth that they were Deists, and have only been designated Atheists by unphilosophical writers.

F. R. THEAKSTONE.

JOSEPH SYMES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is a curious coincidence that I had an overwhelming desire to hear Mr. Symes when he came to Birmingham, and I reasoned to myself that he being nearly 70 years of age, I might rarely have that opportunity again. I therefore made special sacrifices in order to hear him at both meetings, so that I might take a report of a few of the chief points in his speeches. After hearing of his lament-

ably sudden death, it is needless for me to add how much shall prize the few humble records that I made of his remarks. I am sure that I shall be voicing the sentiments of all, in stating how painfully abrupt it is for such a splendid warrior to be snatched from us whilst his last words are quite fresh in our minds. Long may the memory of him linger with us.

HAROLD GRAFTON.

EX-MAYOR BEAUGRAND DID NOT RECENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your "Acid Drops" of December 16, you quote the *Catholic Herald* as stating that ex-Mayor Beaugrand recanted on his death-bed. There is not a word of truth in the statement. He never sent for Archbishop Bruchesi or any of his tribe, but he was pestered on his death-bed by these infernal meddlers, whom nothing short of personal violence can keep out of such houses on such occasions. Beaugrand played a very clever joke on the Church on that occasion, as he often did before. He did not argue with the priests; he simply listened. But his Will was entrusted to staunch Freethinkers, who executed it to the letter. He died as he lived, a Freethinker of the school of Voltaire, and was cremated without any religious ceremony whatever. It is true that before his death false reports were circulated as to Beaugrand's recantation, but the cremation settled all that. The Church does not allow cremation.

Montreal.

NORMAN MURRAY.

CONSEQUENCE AND PUNISHMENT.

Mr. Gladstone wastes his time in trying to show the similarity of punishment and consequence. One is arbitrary, the other is natural. If I put my hand in the fire, it burns me. That is consequence. It is indifferent to morality. There is no discrimination. The hand may be a honest man's or a scoundrel's. If I think for myself under the Inquisition I am burnt at the stake. That is punishment. The two may run parallel, but they have no connection. If I steal I injure my fellow men and debase my own nature. That is consequence. If I am found out I am sent to prison. That is punishment.—G. W. Foote, "The Grand Old Book." p. 40.

All my fears and cares are of this world; if there is another, an honest man has nothing to fear from it.—Robert Burns.

Obituary.

By the sudden death of Robert D. Campbell, Paisley has lost one of its most energetic workers in the cause of Freethought. The deceased, although young (23), had been connected for a number of years with the Secular movement, and acted as local secretary for some time. Of a cheerful nature, he was much respected by all who came in contact with him, and to his parents he was a source of pride; his father said of him when he died, "He is dead and he had not one vice." He contracted a severe cold but was at a meeting on Thursday, December 27, and died on December 31. His remains were followed to the grave by a large number of people, including several Atheists, who received a surprise by the presence of one of "The priests of the bloody faith," who had come on the invitation of his parents, who are Presbyterians, and could not get away from conventionality even for a son. It matters little what they do now; we had him when he was alive, they can have him now he is dead.—J. STIRLING.

On December 28, Frederick William Plater, of Luton, Beds., died, and on the following Monday afternoon was buried, when Mr. J. T. Lloyd conducted a Secular Service. Mr. Plater was a staunch Freethinker from boyhood, and succeeded in making more than one convert. He was a deep thinker, of sterling character, and highly respected by all who knew him. He died, as he had lived, a convinced Secularist.—J. T. LLOYD.

On Tuesday, the 1st inst., passed away, at the ripe age of 85, Mrs. M. Ridgway, wife of our old and esteemed member, Mr. J. H. Ridgway. At the Secular funeral, which took place at Lodge Hill Cemetery on Sunday, the 6th inst., a large number of friends and members of the Birmingham Branch attended to pay the last tribute of respect to one whom they had known so long, and whom they so highly esteemed.—J. PARTRIDGE.

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): 3, Annual Meeting; 7.30, Ernest Pack, "The Glorious Reformation."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, 27 Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Secularism at War."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): H. Percy Ward, 3.15, "Can a Socialist be a Christian?" 7, "Eminent Infidels." With lantern views.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Masonic Hall, 11 Melbourne-place): 6.30, J. Hutcheon, "Dalton, Chemist and Deist."

FALLSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Falls-worth String Band.

ILKESTON (Town Hall): Monday, Jan. 14, at 7.45, C. Cohen, "The Salvation Army: A Study in Social and Religious Failure."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): 7, Member's Meeting.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, Sheikh Abdullah Quilliam Bey, "Morocco and the Moors." With lantern views.

PLYMOUTH RATIONALIST SOCIETY (Foresters' Hall, Octagon): 7, G. McCluskey, "Christianity and Women."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (44 Mary-street): 6, Andrew White, "Charles Bradlaugh."

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