

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Beatitude is not the reward of virtue, it is virtue itself; and not because we restrain our evil passions do we possess it, but because we possess it we are capable of restraining our evil passions.*—SPINOZA.

## Science and Religion.

“Therefore Religion is put under foot, and trampled upon in turn.”

So wrote Lucretius—exultingly; and so, in different words, writes the editor of the *Christian Commonwealth*—complainingly. This gentleman is distressed at the manner in which religion cringes to science nowadays, and at the common assumption that it is the work of science to propound laws and the duty of religion to obey them. Which is only what one would expect from the Christian editor of a Christian paper. But it is not at all likely that he will experience any immediate relief. On the contrary, all the symptoms point to the conclusion that, in spite of all that men like Sir Oliver Lodge may do, men of science will become still less tolerant of the intrusion of religious speculations into their domain, while their own work will be gradually recognised by the general public to cover the whole field of human life.

The danger is, says the editor, that theology is to-day inclined to give up too much, and to convert itself into “a sort of appanage, a sort of echo, of what science has previously announced..... Theology, in fact, almost cringes to science; and, while she speaks, she keeps her eyes turned towards the scientific judgment-seat, to see whether she can discern the frown of criticism there, and endeavors to make her statements appear as if they did but pronounce, in very slightly varying language, the formulas which science has already employed.” This is true enough; but it might be asked, What else is theology to do? What chance would a religion stand to-day that pronounced itself independent of scientific teaching, and which put forth its teachings careless of whether it was in harmony or in conflict with science? It would simply become an object of ridicule to all decently-educated men and women. One may rest quite content that religion has not assumed this subordinate position from choice, but from necessity. While it could, it gave laws to the scientific worker, and prescribed what he should teach. When it could no longer do this, it assumed an independent attitude—but not for long. Its upholders soon began to realise that, with the multiplication of the avenues of information this attitude meant annihilation, and then the process of reconciliation and subservience began. Careless of how it lived, so long as it lived, religion gradually became more and more of a hanger-on in the outer court of the scientific temple, ready and anxious to play the bully when occasion offered, and when it did not, asking permission to live because it was only saying in other words what science itself was teaching.

This process was inevitable; but as the *Christian Commonwealth* correctly sees, it has the effect of divesting religion of all real value. Sooner or later Christians approximate to the Freethought point of view, and for years Freethinkers have been asking what is the use of an elaborate system of religious belief if it has no independent truth of its own to

propound, or if it can only wait for science to say what is the truth, and then tamely cry ditto? To justify the maintenance of religion in a civilised country, one must be able to show that it is doing what nothing else can do, either in quality or in kind. But what is it that religion does to-day that cannot be done equally well without it? It has nothing to say of value concerning man or the world that is not said elsewhere, and which is usually said better elsewhere. The history of intellectual development is a record of the correction of blunders made by religion, and for long protested in, despite the clearest proofs to the contrary. It does nothing that cannot be done as well without it, it says nothing of value that has not been forced upon it from the outside. And for this we maintain an army of men, place them in a position working incalculable harm to the nation, and spend millions of money annually on them and their buildings. If a mere fraction of the money spent on religion were devoted to scientific research it would soon make disease and degradation a far less robust factor in our lives than it is at present.

Of course, to make religion a mere appanage to scientific and social pioneers is to avert slaughter by suicide; but what else is to be done? Properly speaking, religion ought to dominate life. It should be the principal force in life, and is so under certain conditions. But these conditions only obtain in very primitive times. The ignorance, fear and wonder that give all religion birth, soon become modified, and so of necessity does the dominance of religious beliefs. But while it lasts, religion is supreme, is alive, and so to speak, healthy. It is dominant because, as man's earliest interpretation of the world is in terms of himself, the assumed vital aspect of nature overshadows everything else. And it is healthy because it does, then, correspond with man's intellectual and moral conceptions. But every advance in human knowledge puts religious beliefs more out of harmony with man's whole nature, and thus forces upon religion the alternative of either admitting its growing weakness, or by a process of apologising, seek to adapt its teachings to current thought. Moreover, when religion ceases to be naturally dominant, it becomes dangerous. It represents a force derived from a lower plane of life, seeking to impose itself upon a more developed generation. Religion is, therefore, only healthy among savages. And it is only harmless when it is dead.

The editor of the *Christian Commonwealth* falls back upon the now common plea that what is needed is a clear boundary line marking off the sphere of religion from that of science. But no such boundary line ever did or ever could exist. “Science,” we are told, “deals with nature, with the world of physical facts and forces, with things seen”; which is not true, if “physical facts and forces” are taken as the equivalent of “nature,” and this as including all that science is properly concerned with. There is nothing in the whole realm of nature—using that word in its most inclusive sense—either physical or psychical, that does not belong to science. For “science” does not, in essence, consist of the things dealt with so much as the method employed in dealing with them. It no doubt suits the religionist to confine the scientist to certain fields and retain the rest for himself; but it is none the less untrue to fact.



There is no such division as apologists draw between religion and science, for the simple reason that all religions are sciences—fossilised. The primitive savage, speculating as to the nature of dreams, swoons, or fits, or endowing nature at large with life, is, within his conditions, as scientific as a modern thinker dealing with problems in physics, chemistry, or biology. He is classifying phenomena and explaining them in the only terms possible to him. There are neither two spheres of investigation nor two modes of mental investigation, but one throughout. The vitalistic theories of primitive man, and the mechanical theories of Newton, Laplace, Lyell and Darwin, are two ends of a continuous chain of development. All that lies between these two extremes are so many stages of this process; and therefore, what we witness in the conflict of religion with science is the clash of two different phases of culture, not the antagonism of two fields of inquiry. The only distinction between the two is that the religious—or primitive scientific—view is inextricably bound up with a vitalistic theory of things, while modern science is just as much committed to a mechanical interpretation of all phenomena without exception.

The writer of the article I am dealing with, says that science has committed its own errors and cannot afford to throw stones. Of course, scientists have committed errors; but there is this distinction between the two cases: a scientific theory is cheerfully discarded when it is seen that it fails to harmonise with current knowledge; a religious theory is upheld as an article of faith in spite of all the evidence brought against it. In the one case, the theory is valued only because, and so long as, it explains the facts. In the other case, the facts are valued only so long, and so far, as they support the theory. And there are two reasons for this religious attitude. First, all religion begins in fear; and the fear that originally kept man from crossing the gods he had called into being became, so to speak, part and parcel of his nature, and so made criticism of religion a matter of great danger to all concerned. In all early societies this fear is very apparent, and will partly account for the fact that to run counter to the supposed will of the gods has always been treated as a kind of moral offence. Secondly, the development of a priesthood meant the establishment of an economic interest, which became in turn associated with other vested interests, to all of whom the maintenance of religion became a matter of supreme importance. These two considerations seem ample to explain why it is that while scientists have been, on the whole, willing to surrender theories that were shown to be faulty, and have always upheld the duty of examination and criticism, religionists have invariably acted in quite a contrary manner.

Doubtless if scientists were paid or supported only so long as they taught certain theories, they would behave just as do theologians. But the case is different. A scientist is neither paid nor supported to teach a truth, but the truth. His duty is to investigate. He is not sworn to uphold anything—save a method; and no one thinks the worse of him should he declare false what we have hitherto accepted as true. But in religion no one is paid to investigate; more often people are paid not to do so. A religious preacher is valued, not for the new truths he discovers, but for the old teachings he supports and his dexterity in keeping new ones from those committed to his care. He clings to the past because it is the past only that furnished the suitable environment for his vitalistic theories. And his struggle against advancing knowledge is an attempt—foredoomed to failure—to create an artificial environment in which his out-of-date ideas may flourish.

The opposition between religion and science is, therefore, radical. It is an opposition of method, spirit and result. And between the two no lasting peace is possible. Both deal with the same facts, both cover the same field. The fundamental aim of each is to explain man and the world, and the two explanations offered are the vitalistic and the

mechanical. One of these must give way, and no competent student has any doubt as to which this will be. Every generation for the past two hundred and fifty years has seen the theory of vitalism pushed further and further back. Continuous advance on the one side, and continuous retreat on the other. The halts between the retreats may be more or less prolonged, but there is no chance of an advance but from one side. The most that can be hoped for is that the victors may be gracious enough to afford the vanquished the honors of decent burial.

C. COHEN.

### Ernst Haeckel.—An Interview.

SOME weeks ago, I wrote to Ernst Haeckel, the famous philosopher and scientist, asking him for an article. His reply was that he had been ill for four months and was, moreover, at the end of his work. Upon this I decided to go to Jena to see him. Berg Gasse No. 7, was the address which had been given to me, but his house really faces the street which bears his name. It is seldom in this country that a street is named after a man during his lifetime, but here it is, and there isn't a man in Jena who cannot tell you where Ernst Haeckel lives.

Berg Gasse is a little lane leading up a hill, and it is on a little promontory that the quiet-looking but dignified structure, which is the home of Ernst Haeckel, stands. A servant announced me, and I was at once ushered into the large library which is now the great man's living room. Even his bed stands in this room. Although a man of great age, sick and tired out, yet he will not be parted from his books. As his illness is an affection of the heart, there is nothing especially noticeable in his appearance which would lead the casual observer to think him seriously unwell. He looks fresh, his eyes are clear, and there is a ring in his voice that denotes the vigor of youth in spirit if not in body. He rose to greet me and spoke of other Americans who had been to see him. His tall figure is not bent, but there is about him a suspicion of delicate health.

When I repeated my request for an article, he told me that there was nothing more that he could say; quite aside from the fact that it was too much an effort for him. He declared that he was not able to write essays with the same facility as his old friend Professor Huxley—he really had nothing more to say. When he was in Berlin last spring he gave his last lectures. These lectures, he considers, contain all the rest of his message to the world. He said that even when he had written the *Wonders of Life* he felt that he had come to the end. When I spoke to him about his illness he said that his trip to Berlin had been too much for him, physically as well as emotionally. It had been so many years since he had been to Berlin, and to go back there now with all the thoughts of what had taken place since that time, namely, the antagonism of Virchow and the political attitude that Prussia had taken against him for so many years! He spoke of Virchow but he did not speak of how Prussia had treated him. He also told me the story of his friend, Professor Helmholtz, who immediately after returning from a trip to America, was taken ill and died. The thought of death, however, did not seem to trouble him, for in one part of his conversation he mentioned that he quite welcomed the thought that his heart would stop suddenly and all be over. In fact, he was quite cheerful about it; but then he is so wonderfully endowed by nature as to see everything from the most sanguine point of view.

I asked him about his books and whether it was true that his latest book, *The Struggle for Progressive Thought*, had been forbidden in Russia. He answered this quite cheerfully and said that anyone who had reached his age must know that the strangest fates befall books and he was not surprised at anything. He mentioned how his best books had gone through but few editions, while those on which he placed



least value had gone through hundreds of editions. As a man, Ernst Haeckel impressed me in the same manner that his books impress one: frank, candid, perfectly simple and honest, whole-hearted and kind. Finally, he took me through his house and showed me a splendid portrait of himself, which was painted by Lenbach, and the medallion by Joseph Kopf (Rome). He also showed me the many pictures he had painted himself when he was in Ceylon, though he did not place the value on them Goethe did on his. He merely showed them to me, though there was a suspicion of a glance which showed that he was proud of his work.

Haeckel's house is large, airy, filled with many curious pictures and mementoes that had been given him on different occasions of birthdays and jubilees. From his windows there is a fine view of the woods and the little river below, and on the opposite bank stands the yellow brick building containing his collections. He gave me a permit so that I might go and see this collection, where he keeps his most valuable books and all other material that has been necessary for his work. Most interesting in this collection are several gorilla skeletons of immense proportions and specimens of birds; fish and monkeys are largely represented. Before I went away he gave me a little book called *The History of Philosophy since Kant*. It was the thirteenth part of this book which treated on Ernst Haeckel and is written by Dr. Otto Gramzow, and when he gave me the pamphlet he said, "this has just come out. I appreciate it because it is the first book written on me by a man of great learning." The pamphlet is splendid, and not only tells the life of Haeckel and his work, but also goes into the philosophy of Monism.

When the great difference occurred between Haeckel and Virchow, not only all Prussia rose in arms against him but the greater part of Germany. It was at this time that a theologian came to the Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach (who was himself still under the reflected glory of Weimar's golden age—the days of Carl August and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe) and asked him to make an end of this man's (Haeckel) talk. The Duke replied: "Do you suppose for one moment that he believes the stuff that he preaches?" The theologian replied that he thought very likely he did. The Grand Duke then remarked very drily, "Well then, the man is only doing the same thing that you are doing"; and with that he closed the interview. The Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach has been Haeckel's home ever since he was called to the university of Jena, and will remain his home until he dies.

MAURICE MAGNUS.

### The Modern Torture of Jesus.

If Jesus ever lived and taught as the Gospels report, he deserves our profoundest pity. How terribly he has suffered and still suffers at the hands of his interpreters. They throw upon him the full responsibility for whatever peculiar opinions and strange doctrines which they may happen to hold. His words may be, and often are, so explained as to teach whatever the expounder may wish them to teach. Every existing school of theology claims to be legitimately deduced from the Gospels. It is well known that just now a new gospel is being introduced which prides itself upon being up to date. In the pulpit its most popular and effective champion is Mr. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple. It must be frankly admitted that Mr. Campbell is an exceptionally clever man, and has learned the art of putting things in the most winsome manner. But his theology is totally new. It is completely out of harmony with the theology of the orthodox Church in all ages. And yet he asserts that it is in the Bible, and that Jesus came into the world on purpose to proclaim it.

Let us carefully examine that assertion. The other Thursday morning Mr. Campbell delivered a striking

sermon, entitled "The Spiritual Temple," and founded on John ii. 19: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Jesus had just performed a mighty miracle. With a scourge of cords he had cast out of the temple all "those that sold oxen and sheep and doves and the changers of money." "The Jews therefore answered and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." What did Jesus mean by such words? The Jews understood him as speaking of the temple out of which he had just driven the worldly traffickers, for they said: "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days?" The Evangelist thought the Jews were wrong, for he adds the comment, "But he spake of the temple of his body." Mr. Campbell, however, confidently declares that both the Jews and the Evangelist were mistaken. Before coming to Mr. Campbell's interpretation, let us note the fact that this unique saying which John attributes to Jesus does not occur in any of the other Gospels except in Matthew and Mark in the form of an accusation at his trial, and in both these Gospels the accusation is characterised as false. Now this points to the conclusion that in the opinion of the authors of Matthew and Mark, Jesus never uttered such a saying. Yet Mr. Campbell, though convinced that John's Gospel is not a history, but "a spiritual treatise," accepts this saying as perfectly genuine.

Let us now consider Mr. Campbell's interpretation of the saying, which differs from that of John as well as from that of the Jews. He says:—

"By the temple Jesus meant the spiritual Israel, the fabric of faith, the organised succession of the spiritual witness of the Jewish people in the world. This chosen nation had been for ages the true temple of the living God. The magnificent temple of wood and stone which stood in the city of Jerusalem was but the outward symbol of this age-long spiritual fact.....From the patriarchs downwards we have in Israel the true temple of God amongst mankind."

The whole sentiment of that passage is false. The Jews of the Old Testament were not a superior people. As we read their history and compare it with the history of other nations of antiquity the only conclusion to which we can come is that if Jehovah chose them, of all people, to be his true temple, his faithful witness to the world, he must have been a respecter of persons on a gigantic scale. This talk about the moral and spiritual superiority of the Jews is the most intolerable cant, and the sooner it is discontinued the better for all concerned.

Granting that Mr. Campbell's interpretation of the saying is correct, what follows? Did Jesus mean to say, "Destroy yourselves as God's true temple in the world, and in three days I will raise you up"? If that was his meaning he has never kept his word. His own people rejected him, and by so doing put themselves outside the pale of salvation, where they have remained ever since. According to Christian teaching, the Jews are no longer God's chosen people but why did not Jesus fulfil his promise and in three days raise them up again?

Evidently conscious of having fallen into a glaring inconsistency here, Mr. Campbell tries to rescue himself thus: "The writer of this chapter said he meant 'his body.' Well, so he did, if you will interpret that word as St. Paul would have used it—the body of Christ, the Church of Christ—the totality of those who are filled with his spirit. It is the means by which his ideal still finds expression in the world." This is not honest exegesis. It is a resort to subterfuge. The meaning now is this: "Destroy yourselves as the temple of God, and in three days I will not raise you up, but will cast you off as hateful dross, and raise up another people to be God's true temple in the world." If Jesus returned to the earth and paid a visit to the City Temple he would not be able to recognise his own words.

Mr. Campbell proceeds from bad to worse. The following is rich: "Well might the Savior say,



'Destroy the temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' For human experience knows that that is exactly what he has done." When and where has the Savior done such a thing? There has been a Church of Christ in Europe for nigh two milleniums; but has there ever been a period at which that Church could be accurately described as a temple of God, indwelt by the spirit of eternal Truth and Love? Mr. Campbell knows full well that the true answer to that question must be in the negative. He must be aware that Europe has never been the temple of an infinitely holy and loving deity. The Europe of to-day may be a little nobler than the Europe of the Dark Ages; but we are indebted to that slight improvement not to the Christian Church, but to the revival of classical learning and art, to the partial emancipation of the old Greek culture and of the spirit of scientific inquiry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Mr. Campbell himself admits this when he says that "at the end of the Middle Ages serious-minded Christians spoke the language of despair." Those "serious-minded Christians" knew that the Ages of Faith had been Ages of Darkness or of mental and moral slavery; and peering into the future with the light of the past, all hope of improvement abandoned them. "But," says Mr. Campbell, "the Renaissance and the Reformation were already prepared in the awaking soul of Christendom." Whatever may be thought of the Protestant Reformation, it is beyond dispute that the Renaissance was essentially a literary and scientific movement, the spirit of which has always been out of touch with, and largely in opposition to, the spirit of the Church.

Mr. Campbell admits that the "older forms of religious faith have largely lost their power, not only for thinking minds, but even for the masses." But is he not also aware of the fact that "the older forms of religious faith" are to be found in the Bible? "The old evangelical appeal, as popularly presented," he tells us, "is all but dead; neither the worst nor the best of men see in it any beauty to desire, and it awakens no response in conscience or heart." Quite true; but is the famous text (Mark xvi. 16), "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be damned," upon which, and upon other texts of similar import, the old evangelical appeal was founded—are this and such-like Scriptural passages likewise out of date? Is the old Gospel, which is said to have conquered Europe, now obsolete? Then Europe was won by that which is now declared to be untrue, by "forms of religious faith which have largely lost their power, not only for thinking minds, but even for the masses." What a distance there is between Dr. Torrey and Mr. Campbell; and yet they both claim infallibility. As between the two, we take our stand by Mr. Campbell. So far as he goes he is perfectly right; but his being so far right only proves that he is wholly wrong in his central contention—namely, that a God of infinite holiness and love has always had his true temple in the world. The truth of that contention would be a sad reflection on God's character and power. It would signify that the world has been too mighty even for such a Divine Being.

With the "fabric of organised religion" Mr. Campbell has very little sympathy. He believes that "a great part of the moral seriousness, and the earnest redemptive purpose of the age, is outside" such a fabric; and here, again, he states a half truth. But he is distinctly in error when he affirms that the movement of the age is towards a fuller and nobler conception of God. The tendency of the age is to dismiss theology altogether, and adopt Secularism as the truest and most fruitful philosophy of life. Mr. Campbell expresses a great truth when he maintains that "there is evident a renewal and deepening of confidence in a happier human destiny and a disposition to help to realise it," and that "men speak of good with a sweeter accent"; but it is neither just nor fair on his part

to add, that when men "say good, they mean God." Mr. Campbell cannot be ignorant of the fact that there are thousands upon thousands of people in Great Britain alone who believe, with all their hearts, in the reality and beauty of goodness without believing in God at all. They speak of good with an exceedingly sweet accent, but when they say good they do *not* mean God. On this point Mr. Campbell's dogmatism is quite intolerable. His God is a radically different being from the one so confidently proclaimed by Dr. Campbell Morgan. Mr. Campbell's God is the God of a heretic, and is in turn disowned by greater heretics still. Has the oracle of the City Temple never heard of the Secular Societies, the Ethical Societies, and the Positivist Societies of the present day, all of which are non-theological, and most of them anti-theological?

The comical characteristic of Mr. Campbell's teaching is its claim to be "the fuller and more perfect expression of the message of Christ." If Christ still lives, and has a sense of humor, how it must amuse him to find himself spoken of as the founder of so many different and conflicting gospels! But through all, and in spite of all, "the dawn of the new era is already here," and the full day of Humanity shall, eventually, be with us.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Church and State in France.

MY previous articles and paragraphs on this subject have all been written very carefully and with profound conviction. One foolish correspondent, whom I answer very briefly in another column, has started the noble theory that all I have written is the result of bribery. It never occurred to his poor mind that to bribe the editor of the *Freethinker*, even if he were bribable, would be a most profligate waste of money. The circulation of this journal is limited; it takes no part whatever in the great political scramble; it does not even try to influence votes; it addresses nothing but pure intelligence in the interest of certain ideas; it has nothing to do with what are called "practical" affairs; and whoever thought of bribing the editor of such a paper, with a view to affecting the immediate course of public events in England or elsewhere, would be fairly entitled to the first prize for imbecility. Besides, an editor who went to prison for his paper rather than yield an inch to the bigots—an editor who has kept his paper going amidst desperate difficulties for a quarter of a century—an editor who has for a considerable time done all his hard work without being able to draw his salary—such an editor may be allowed to smile at the puny attacks of the disappointed on his good faith.

There are two Freethinkers, known to many of my readers, who have come out of the Catholic Church. One of them is the author of a trenchant exposure of Catholicism, which I had some share in placing before the public. I refer to Mr. F. Bonte. The other is one of my valued contributors, whose articles have all been written gratuitously. I refer to Mr. G. Scott. Both of these able and accomplished ex-Catholics, whose honor is unimpeachable, have expressed their unqualified approval of my attitude towards that part of the Separation policy which I have criticised. And I think I am justified in regarding their approval as of special value and significance.

One of the most mistaken notions in the world is that which pictures fire-breathing fanatics as possessing the sublimest courage. I have never found them so. It has always been my experience that the only men who can be depended upon to fight for their own rights to the bitter end are the men of calm and steady conviction, who have a keen sense of the rights of others as well as their own. I have known some obstreperous friends of Freethought in my time, who might have been expected to eat Christians for breakfast if trouble came; but they



did not deceive me, and I should never choose one of them to go with me on any forlorn hope. The dog that barks a lot can generally be silenced with a kick. It is the quiet dog who is to be feared.

One man was following all that I wrote on Separation in France with a careful eye. I was not aware of it at the time. I know it now that he is dead. His name was Joseph Symes.

During the course of his fatal illness he wrote something for me with his own hand. It was passed on to me when that hand was still for ever in death. I opened it with a curious feeling of awe. It was almost like a message from the tomb. The first words, as I read, were so personal that the feeling of awe deepened. But I soon saw that my dear old friend and colleague, between whom and myself there had never been the shadow of unpleasantness, had been troubled, as I had been, about the situation in France. To some extent he did not see eye to eye with me, but he saw that I had got hold of a serious and difficult problem, and he began—like the gentleman he was—by expressing at least admiration for my attitude. What he wrote was meant only for me, but I do not think that I am really violating any confidence by printing it for my readers. I do this all the more readily because my dead comrade throws some queries across the path of my argument. I think, however, that in answering these queries I shall make my argument all the stronger; and I would fain believe that Joseph Symes, with his candid intellect and transparent sincerity, would have seen this if we had enjoyed that "exchange of sentiments" which he suggested.

And now let me print Joseph Symes's communication in full:—

#### Mr. Symes's Letter.

"DEAR FOOTE,—

I am too ill to work, and not much inclined to play. Am better a bit, but the cold is only mitigated, not gone.

This is not intended for controversy, nor do I expect any reply, though an exchange of sentiments is always acceptable.

I have admired your treatment of the French Church question; and if it were the Church or a Church pure and simple, I do not know of any shade of doubt that would cross me in reading your articles and notes. When I left England, and for a year or two in Australia my Liberalism towards Pope & Co. was about perfect; but hard facts forced themselves upon me in ways I could no longer ignore. I found the Romish priests dominating Australia, and since Cardinal Moran arrived in Sydney and Archbishop Carr in Melbourne the tyranny has vastly developed. Probably there is no journal in Australia which is not partly run by the priests; certainly the leading ones are—and that is an almost open secret.

The priests run laundries, the magistrates sentence likely women to those places, to slave for the owners, the Government (of Victoria) paying the priests 1s. a week for those women. The priests make enormous profits out of their so-called charities, and, of course, can bribe the papers, while politicians are bribed and terrorised wholesale by means of the 'Catholic vote.'

In New Zealand, a few years back, there arose a horrible scandal at the Romish orphanage, near Nelson; but when everybody expected justice to be done Mr. Seddon, the boss of New Zealand, quashed the affair, and the priests went off with flying colors.

The Romish Church in Australasia is nothing more nor less than a trading concern for enriching and enthroning the leading priests.

If the Pope were merely head of a Church, I should agree with every item of your articles and notes. But I cannot forget that for over a thousand years Pope & Co. have unswervingly proclaimed their right to rule all rulers, to give away kingdoms, to oust every popular ruler and destroy every popular government.

I cannot blink the 'Syllabus' and the 'Encyclical' of Pius IX., the 'Vatican Decrees' which

followed, endorsed and bound them upon the whole Romish world. Nor have I failed to examine their Canon Laws or their Notes on the Douay Bible. I do not forget either that the Pope who abolished the Jesuits in 1763 gave them the blackest possible character—which their history and tenets fully justified. And, of course, I need not mention the fact that since then Popery and Jesuitry have ever been identified.

You remember Manning's Lectures on 'Cæsarism,' etc., and his sermons, openly declaring their object to be the conquest, subjugation and ruling of England, and other nations also.

The Dreyfus case showed the Republic almost throttled in the coils of the Jesuit snake.

Now when I find the most perfect, rich and powerful organisation the world has ever known teaching its dupes that an oath is not binding except the swearer intends it to be; that no Romanist is bound to answer truthfully in courts not ruled from Rome; that the Pope is the only rightful ruler of all mankind, and all other rulers are rebels against his authority until they have his authority to rule, which course is open to me in dealing with that organisation? It seems to me that I cannot do otherwise than welcome any and every force that tends to weaken or destroy the monster.

No doubt the other Churches would be quite as bad with equal power and opportunity; but they can never unite, and therefore are comparatively negligible.

Presumably, French statesmen have, since the Dreyfus Affair, profoundly studied the Romish question, and have come to the conclusion I was reluctantly driven to about twenty years ago—that every government must, at no distant date, dethrone the priests and bring them as fully under municipal law as the laity. England, America, and the Continental nations *must* do that, or disrupt. I heartily wish some scheme could be devised that would put the priests in their proper place without outraging the honest sentiments of their dupes; but I see no hope of that.

I may add that I am half afraid the French Government may have entered upon a task too formidable for their strength. When Bismarck passed the Falck Laws, in 1873, I was in the *Newcastle Chronicle* office, and told M. E. Adams that the said laws must prove abortive, or worse; that Bismarck evidently had not gauged the power of the priests. Adams met my forecast with scorn; but the laws were abortive, and worse, for all that. Possibly Liberalism in France to-day may carry the Government through. We shall soon see.

I may say this is for your eye alone. I have not opened my mouth upon the subject since I came to England, and shall not without occasion.

JOS. SYMES."

#### Notes on the Foregoing.

Joseph Symes's discovery that the Romish priests dominate Australia, is a further proof that I was right in rebuking the folly of those who thought that the Catholic Church was done for in France because of its loss of property, revenues and place under the Separation Act. There is no Established Church in Australia; all the Churches are voluntary. And if the Catholic Church is so powerful there, it proves that establishment is not essential to the prosperity and influence of that wonderful institution.

Charles Bradlaugh always used to say that it was the Catholic Church with which Freethought would have to fight its final battles. On that point I agree with him. The Catholic Church is Christianity—and Christianity is the Catholic Church. What Protestants call the "Papacy" is Christianity itself—Christianity carried to the last development of doctrine, ritual and organisation.

Seeing the enormous power of the Catholic Church, and its enormous mischief, Joseph Symes felt that he could "welcome any and every force that tends to weaken or destroy the monster." But I am sure he



would have modified these expressions; for, nakedly as they stand, they include persecution, robbery, murder, and extermination. He must have drawn the line somewhere, and I think he would have drawn it in the end where I did. Moreover, I am sure that he would have recognised the futility of force before our "exchange of sentiments" concluded. Catholicism, like every other system, is founded upon ideas; false ideas, but still ideas. And you cannot fight ideas with material weapons. The only successful war against Catholicism must be carried on in the human brain. This dissatisfies those who are all for quick results; but such people and their methods count for nothing in the history of evolution. Joseph Symes was not one of these, but he was human, and the best of men have their moments of impatience.

Joseph Symes, in this very letter, admits the futility of force. He saw in 1873 that the Falck Laws would fail in Germany. Bismarck was the strongest statesman in Europe; he declared war against the Catholic Church; yet he failed—and he failed in a Protestant country. What greater chance of success have smaller statesmen, and in a Catholic country? No wonder my old comrade feared that the French Government had "entered upon a task too formidable for their strength." It is too formidable for the strength of any Government. The State should enforce absolute religious equality. That is all. The rest of the war against priestcraft has to be carried on by other agencies.

Perhaps the most important point in Joseph Symes's letter is contained in the third paragraph. He would have agreed with me absolutely if the Catholic Church "were a Church pure and simple." But it aims at universal sovereignty; and therefore, I presume, it must be dealt with otherwise. But suppose you cannot so deal with it; might not the "otherwise" recoil upon you? If you try to crush the Catholic Church by political power, and fail, how on earth can you complain if the Catholic Church tries to crush you in the same way? Freethinkers only get into a quagmire when they forsake their own principles.

I agree that Governments should dethrone priests, and bring them under the same law as the laity. That has been my contention all the time. Governments should make religion a private and personal matter. That is real Separation. But there should be no Government crusade against any Church or any religion. Such crusades are wrong—and they must fail; for ideas are ideas, and the silliest idea in the world is as invulnerable to physical force as the ghost of Hamlet's father is invulnerable to the swords of Hamlet's friends.

The Catholic Church is a Church pure and simple. It was not always so. It once wielded temporal power in the Papal States. But that is a thing of the past. The temporal power of the Pope is now a fiction. It does not extend beyond the walls of the Vatican. Let us face the facts of the case, and not be misled by words.

You say the Catholic Church wants to subdue the world. Let it if it can. Our business is to oppose it—with the proper weapons. Every Christian Church wants to subdue the world. Catholic priests never ruled any country more despotically than Puritan ministers ruled New England or Presbyterian ministers ruled Scotland. And after the long, infamous, and unparalleled Protestant tyranny over Catholics in Ireland, it is absurd to draw distinctions between Christian Churches at all. Give them power, and they would all tyrannise. We must see that they do not have the power. And beyond that we must slay them with "the sword of the spirit." All we require to do that is a free field. "Let truth and falsehood grapple: who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?"

With that ringing sentence from the great John Milton, I close these Notes—only regretting that my old comrade cannot read them.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Acid Drops.

The one great fault of Freethinkers, the fault for which they are persecuted, is that they are in advance of their time. That was the crime of Voltaire in France, and Paine in England; and for that crime their names have been covered with infamy, although they were the noblest of men. Ingersoll in America, and Bradlaugh on this side of the Atlantic, were the objects of measureless slander. And the whole Freethought movement in this country—the history of which has yet to be written—has been carried on amidst villainous persecution and incredible hardships. But it has triumphed. That is the point. It has won all along the line. And on the safe ground won by its decisive victory there stand a number of dapper gentlemen, clad in the garb of the Churches, taking the Churches' pay, and posing as the apostles of truths that had no apostles when they were unpopular except the heroic pioneer spirits of the real army of human liberation. On the rugged ground softened by their blood and tears the dapper theologian now postures with his unction and grimaces.

One of these dapper gentlemen of the Black Army is the Rev. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple. He is acting as the champion of a "re-stated theology." Freethought criticism has made the old theology impossible. Mr. Campbell, and a few ministers like him, see this; they only do what is necessitated and inevitable; but they do it a little in front of the slower clergy, and they give themselves the airs of discoverers—when all that they have discovered is that Freethought propaganda has extinguished the old lights of religion.

Mr. Campbell has been confiding to the *Daily Mail*, of all papers, his ideas as to the "New Theology." He recognises, though he doesn't say so, that the Bible is fatally discredited; so he asserts that *revelation* is all around us—that the seat of authority in religion is not in a book, a church, or anything outside, but in the human soul—that Jesus Christ is not to be revered because of the wonders of the Gospels, but because he was "the perfect example of what humanity ought to be"—and that God is not a person apart from man, but that God and man both exist in "essential oneness." This, of course, is sheer Pantheism. Still, it is less dangerous than the old dogmatic faith; and for that reason we hope Mr. Campbell will go on with his present work. It isn't original, it requires no heroism, and it will not cost him a penny; but it is a work that somebody has to do *inside* Christianity, and it may as well be done by Mr. Campbell as by another. And while Mr. Campbell is doing it the real Freethinkers will carry their conquests still further. They have practically settled one half of theology—the "revelation" part; and they will proceed to settle the other half—the ideas of God and Immortality.

What the *Daily Mail* has to say about Mr. Campbell's "New Theology" is hardly worth serious attention. But we make note of one sentence. "There could be no greater tragedy," our contemporary says, "than a world which believed no longer in a moral God." Well, the God of the Bible is an immoral God; bloody and hateful in the Old Testament—partial and vindictive in the New Testament. That immoral God was worshiped in Christian countries for a vast period of time, and the result was the infinite tragedy of oppression, and spoliation, and suffering which is recorded on the pages of Christian history. In any true sense of the word, Christian nations are only just *beginning* to be civilised.

One joke must not be missed. Mr. Campbell says he has the Socialists with him in his "New Theology." He instances Mr. Keir Hardie—the gentleman who libelled his own parents because they were Secularists. Well, we are quite agreeable to Mr. Campbell's having Mr. Keir Hardie. But he hasn't got Hyndman, Quelch, Blatchford, or Bernard Shaw. And we don't think he will.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton told a *Tribune* interviewer that he was "perfectly willing to talk about anything in earth or in hell." We can't understand why his modesty spared heaven.

Rev. Frank Ballard has been having some lively meetings at Leeds. He has been lecturing principally against Determinism, with special reference to Mr. Robert Blatchford's exposition. In the course of his remarks Mr. Ballard said that he ran over another person while cycling recently, but could that be characterised as a crime? "We must first know at what speed you were riding," said a man in the meeting—and there was much laughter.



In another discourse on the Mystery of Pain—which, of course, is only a mystery to theologians—Mr. Ballard took the position that pain served a useful purpose. But one of his auditors asked him, "If pain is a good thing why do Christians struggle against it?" There was more laughter at this—and Mr. Ballard's answer was extremely feeble.

The religious mind is peculiarly constituted. The Glasgow Presbytery of the Free Church of Scotland has passed a resolution of "deep sympathy with Mr. Archd. MacNeillage in the injuries he received in connection with the recent lamentable railway accident near Arbroath, and their profound thankfulness to Almighty God that his life had been so providentially preserved." According to this resolution, God Almighty did what he could for Mr. MacNeillage, and saved his life, though it was impossible to save him from a bad banging. It also follows that this inefficient God Almighty was so occupied in attending to Mr. MacNeillage, and the others who were "providentially preserved" with him, that it was impossible to render any assistance to those who perished. What a God! And what worshipers!

Denouncing the Sunday rabbit coursing at Hounslow, the *Daily Graphic* said: "It was an aggravating circumstance that Sunday, of all days, should have been dedicated to this exhibition of torture to dumb animals." But why is cruelty worse on Sunday than on other days? We were not aware that rabbits were more sensitive to pain on the Lord's Day.

Rev. A. J. Moore, an Exeter curate, has just got himself publicly dipped at a local Baptist chapel. The reverend gentleman has discovered that infant baptism is superstitious. If he lives long enough he may discover that adult baptism is liable to the same reproach. Both performances are survivals of ancient magic.

Rev. S. R. N. Rees, vicar of St. Jude's Moorfields, Sheffield, fixed up a box for funds to help the poor of the parish. During the whole of last month the only coin dropped in was a penny, but there were plenty of matches, nails, and trouser buttons. Why will Christians waste buttons in that way?

Some weeks ago we objected to the French government usurping the functions of the judiciary. We said that its interpretation of the law was no more authoritative than other people's, and that the attempt to enforce it, without the corroboration of a legal judgment in the courts, was mere tyranny. M. Briand declared that all priests who performed religious functions, without making a public declaration under the law of 1881, would be treated as law-breakers, and would not only be prosecuted but also lose all the pecuniary privileges they were entitled to under the Separation Act. From the very nature of the case, it was not at all certain on the face of it that a law passed in 1881 was intended for a situation created in 1906. Legal experts in Paris whispered a caution, but French governments are always more or less arbitrary, and the policy shadowed forth by M. Briand was adhered to, until the comic papers got hold of one or two extremely ridiculous cases and covered the government with ridicule. Then it was deemed advisable to pause, and the prosecuting orders to the Prefects were suspended.

Some prosecutions, however, had already been instituted. One of these was at Toulon, where the Abbé Venel was proceeded against for having celebrated Mass in the Cathedral on December 16 without having given the necessary notice. The case came on for trial on January 10, and the Abbé was acquitted, the Court holding that neither the law of 1905 nor that of 1881 was applicable to the case. This is so far a justification of our criticism of the government policy.

When the Church scores against the Government in the courts of justice there is reason for believing that a serious mistake has been made. And when the mistake is made by the friends of Separation in France it should be deplored by the true friends of Separation in England; for the progressive world looks to France to show a fine example to other nations; and if the game of progress is played badly in France the results are sure to be injurious beyond her borders.

The newspapers report that in expelling the professors and students from the large seminary of Versailles the government agents found what is called "a nest egg." It consisted of State bonds, shares, and other securities, worth £48,000. This was confiscated to the State, and is to be divided up amongst charitable institutions. The proceeding seems to

us sheer robbery; and it does not cease to be so because it is done under the forms of law. Socrates was put to death legally enough.

What surprises us is that there are professed Freethinkers who look upon such a proceeding favorably—although they protest against the sequestration of the property belonging to Senor Ferrer's Secular Schools in Spain. We protest against both as mere acts of pillage. It appears to us that the Catholic seminary at Versailles had exactly the same moral right to the funds it had raised for its own purposes as Senor Ferrer had to the funds he had raised for his excellent schools.

Our old friend, Mr. William Heaford, deserves the highest credit for the zeal he has displayed in the Ferrer case. He has done a brave work in helping to arouse English public opinion against the infamous treatment of Senor Ferrer by the Spanish authorities, at the instigation of the Spanish priesthood. But is not our old friend just a little tainted with the bigotry of some of the unwiser friends of Freethought across the Channel? In his speech at the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner the other night, he referred to the great Church of the Sacred Heart, built on the heights of Montmartre, as a "desecration" of the city of Paris. If a Catholic had spoken in that way of a Freethought Institute one could have understood it. But when a Freethinker talks in that way of a Catholic church it is not so intelligible. The truth is that Catholics have the same right as Freethinkers to build their meeting-places on the best sites they can secure. No more, and no less.

If the Church of the Sacred Heart is a desecration of the city of Paris, from a Freethinkers' point of view, it is hard to find fault with the Catholic Archbishop of Malta who objects to Protestant meetings as a desecration of the island.

William Andrew Parsons, formerly a curate at Finchley, stole a bottle of scent from a Southsea hairdresser, and was sentenced to a month's imprisonment and three years' detention in a home for inebriates. There is no moral. There would have been one if the delinquent had been a Secular lecturer.

Walter Dick, defaulting treasurer of the Associated Iron-moulders in Scotland, was a deacon in a Glasgow church, and had a good-character testimonial from the minister. There is no moral to this either—though there would have been if the defaulter had been an official in a Secular society.

Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan, preaching at Glasgow on "One thing thou lackest," assured his business hearers that it was no duty of *theirs* to sell all they had and give the proceeds to the poor. Christ's command only applied to the young man who received it. So *that* was all right—and the congregation breathed freely again. We are not surprised that Dr. Campbell Morgan's sermon was much enjoyed.

"It is the duty of the Christian and the good citizen," the *Daily Mail* says, "to accede to the appeal of the Churches, and to refrain from causing Sunday labor to others." We have not heard that our contemporary is arranging to practise what it preaches. Monday's *Daily Mail* is mainly produced by Sunday labor.

Rev. Robert More White, of the Vicarage, Church Stoke, Montgomery, left estate valued at £20,002 gross, and at £19,823 net. We wonder how he squeezed through the needle's eye. It must have been very fine threading.

King Edward has probably never invested much time in reading Keats and Shelley. Still, he "views with approval and sympathy" the attempt which is made to "do honor to the memory of the great poets" by purchasing the house in which Keats died and turning it into a Keats-and-Shelley museum. Perhaps our British monarch doesn't know that Keats was a Freethinker, and that Shelley wrote such lines as—

"Where kings first leagued against the rights of men,  
And priests first traded with the name of God."

President Roosevelt, who joins King Edward in favoring this attempt, very likely knows just as much about the writings of the two poets. He has called Thomas Paine "a dirty little Atheist," though Paine was not dirty, nor little, nor an Atheist either; but Shelley *was* an Atheist.

Sunday Closing will be pressed forward by all the Churches. It is about the one thing on which they are agreed. They



differ as to what should be done in the religious shops on Sunday, but they are unanimous that all other shops should be shut up while *they* are transacting business.

"One of the most effective means," the *British Weekly* says, "towards a reverent observance of Sunday would be a law for the closing of public-houses, and we hope that the Government will include this much-needed reform in this year's Licensing Bill." Note the plain avowal of the object of Sunday Closing—simply a "reverent observance of Sunday"; in other words, driving people into places of worship by depriving them of other means of spending their time.

We venture to prophesy that Sunday Closing would be impossible in London. Any government that attempted it would meet its fate, as far as London was concerned, at the next elections. London with all its licensed refreshment places closed on Sunday would be so disgusting to the majority of its inhabitants that they would have that matter settled before they attended to anything else. For cafés and restaurants would have to be closed as well as public-houses; and what that means to Londoners who move about on Sunday can easily be imagined.

*Saint Andrew*, a Scottish weekly religious journal, is dead. Eight years ago it started in the interests of the Church of Scotland, with a good backing; about a year ago it came into the hands of the legal Free Church; and now it bows "farewell!" and accepts extinction. It confesses that there is little hope left for semi-religious journals in Scotland, two having ceased publication during the past year. The two principal reasons of this unhappy state of things are "the apathy of Church members and the rapid growth of Secularism among the people during the past few years." The second reason should be noted by the Glasgow Secularists as a testimony to the success of their propaganda. It should also be noted by the preachers who are always talking about "the decay of Secularism."

Poets are perfectly free to write fiction, but they must not tamper with history. There is a poem in the *New Ireland Review* by Mr. Thomas Bodkin called "Le Penseur de Notre Dame," in which a carved stone figure on the tower of the great Paris cathedral is represented as watching, century after century, all that goes on below. One verse is as follows:—

"There Kings and Popes had knelt, the Third Crusade  
Was preached; there, too, Robespierre had led  
The mad mock Reason riot, unafraid,  
A harlot at their head."

Poor Robespierre! His sins were many, but he did not commit this one. He had nothing to do with the Goddess of Reason affair; indeed, he did not worship Reason, or anything like it; he worshiped a pinchbeck "Supreme Being," and he induced the Convention to decree that the belief in God and Immortality was necessary to human society. On the festival of his "Supreme Being" he delivered a pious discourse, and publicly set fire to a big image of "Atheism" which had been made up by the painter David—one of Robespierre's most fervent admirers. We beg Mr. Thomas Bodkin to be accurate. He should not treat Robespierre like the dog in the proverb, who had a bad name given him and was choked with a rope in consequence. Besides, unbelievers in Deity, who still reverence Reason, are not at all anxious to have Robespierre fathered upon them. The hero of the Terror and the Guillotine was not exactly an orthodox Christian, but he belonged to the general household of faith.

More "Providence." The roof of the Cathedral of Villabate, near Palermo, Sicily, fell in recently during the celebration of Mass. Fourteen persons were buried under the ruins, and many others were injured. "He doeth all things well."

"Have you never been the worse for drink since you were ordained?" This question was put to the Rev. Holmes Micklethwaite, rector of Little Casterton, Stamford, during the investigation of charges of drunkenness against him at the Consistory Court, Peterborough. "I don't think I have," was the reverend gentleman's answer. He wasn't sure.

*Wayside India*, by Maud Power, says that the beggars form the chief native Christian population of Madras. "Two poor Indian workmen," she says, "meeting in the street, one said to the other, 'What religion are you?' 'A Catholic, and I get seven rupees a week.' 'Seven rupees! I am a Protestant, and I only get six. Certainly I shall become a Catholic.'"

Dr. Clifford says that the House of Lords is a hypocritical farce. We don't dispute it. He is a judge of hypocritical farces.

What would the late Joseph Symes think of the chances of success of a project which is just reported from Melbourne? The idea is entertained of bringing the Anglicans and Presbyterians together in a United Free Church of Australia. There has been a good deal of "conferring," but the only agreement yet arrived at by the joint-committee is the adoption of the following creed:—

"We hold the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary to salvation, to be the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

We accept the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed as expressing the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, and as an adequate basis for any further formulated statement of Christian truth which may be needed.

We agree that there are two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—baptism and the Supper of the Lord—which must be ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the element ordained by Him.

That the act of ordination, when regularly administered, involves prayer and the imposition of hands.

With regard to ordination, this conference affirms the following to be essential conditions:—1. Full membership of the church. 2. The inward and personal call of the Holy Spirit. 3. The recognition by the church of this call, after due inquiry into intellectual and spiritual fitness.

The laying on of hands in ordination we understand to be a visible symbol of the bestowal, in answer to the prayer of faith, of authority and grace by the Holy Spirit for the work of the ministry.

The authority to perform an act of ordination comes from God the Father, through Christ the Mediator, by the Holy Spirit as the living agent in the church, and is exercised by the appointed officers of the church."

Superstitious absurdity from beginning to end! Naturally it winds up with the declaration that the men of God have the gift of the Holy Ghost. That is an essential point in their business.

#### A FRENCH DRINK.

"It seems to me," said Mrs. Oldcastle, "that Dr. Fourthly indulges a good deal in hyperbole."

"I've been thinkin' that same thing," replied her hostess. "Land sakes! I should think a man with as much sense as him would leave these French drinks alone."

#### A NOTABLE CAPTURE.

Bobby: "Is God everywhere?"

Mother (patiently): "Yes, Bobby."

Bobby: "Is he in the teapot?"

Mother (embarrassed): "Why—why, yes."

Bobby: "Is he in the sugar bowl?"

Mother (frantically): "Yes! I told you God was everywhere."

Bobby (triumphantly, placing his hand over the top of the sugar bowl): "Hurrah! I've got him!"

#### TECHNICALLY INEXACT.

A minister of the Gospel one Sabbath announced to his flock that he would have to leave them as he was called to another field. "How much more salary do you expect to get there than here?" asked one of the deacons.

"Three hundred dollars," remarked the minister, with some hesitation.

"I don't blame you for goin'," remarked the deacon, who had been a worldly man in his time, "but you should be more exact in your language. That isn't a 'call,' it's a 'raise.'"

The following is a quotation from the Church Missionary Society's Medical Mission at Zezd (Persia), which might, perhaps, have been put a little differently:—"The hospitals are now, thanks to God's blessing on our work, so crowded as to be very insanitary."

#### MANY TO KEEP.

A poor woman was asked by a clergyman how many commandments there were. "Truly, sir," said she, "I cannot tell." "Why, ten," he said. "A fine company," said she; "God bless you and them together." "Well, but neighbor," said he, "do you keep these commandments?" "Ah! the Lord in heaven bless you, sir, I am a poor woman and can hardly keep myself, and so how can I bear the charge of keeping so many?"



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, January 20, Secular Hall, New Church-road, Camberwell-road, S.E., at 7.30, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?"

January 27, Manchester.  
February 3, Glasgow.

**To Correspondents.**

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

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 27, Glasgow. February 3 and 10, Forest Gate; 24, Camberwell. March 10, Birmingham.

G. LUNN.—Joseph Symes deserved all your eulogy, and that adds to the natural regret at his loss.

THE JOSEPH SYMES FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £45 1s. 0d. Since received: G. Lunn, 2s. 6d.; E. Smith, 1s.; J. Kelsey, 2s.; W. C. Schweizer, £1; D. D. D., £1 1s.; Major G. O. Warren, 5s.; G. Davey, 2s.; A. Rushton, £1; J. Livingstone Anderson, 10s. 6d.; S. Holmes, 10s. 6d.; Mrs. S. Holmes, 2s. 6d.; George Payne, £5 5s.; P. W. Madden, £1; James Moffat, £1; G. Gompertz, 2s. 6d.; W. P. Kernot, 10s.; A. H. Smith, 4s.; G. Thwaites, 10s.; J. V. Caunter, 10s.; H. J. H., 5s.; J. M. Day, 1s.; Blackheath, 2s. 6d.; Rubber Stamps (Manchester) £1; Rix, 2s. 6d.; R. J. Henderson, 5s.; J. Lazzarick, 5s.; M. Barnard, 2s. 6d.; R. B. Fowler, 2s. 6d.; Elizabeth Lechmere, 2s. 6d.; Athelstone Cornforth, £1 1s.; W. Mumby, £1; W. H. Harrop, 2s. 6d.; Robert Gibbon, 10s.; J. Barry, 15s.; A. G. Lye, 2s.; W. T. Goodhall, 3s.; C. J. Peacock, £2 2s.; J. G. W. and C. Dobson, 7s. 6d.; R. C. Himmel, 5s.; F. C. Berkeley, 5s.; M. J. Charter, 10s.; C. Wray, 2s.; J. Easton, 1s.; M. Weatherburn, 2s. 6d.; J. Richardson, 1s.; R. Mitchell, 2s.; T. H. Elstob, 5s.; Mrs. Hutty, 1s.; W. K. Hutty, 1s.; A. L. Coates, 2s. 6d.; W. Wright 2s. 6d.; W. C. Spedding 2s.; D. R. Bow 5s.; T. P. Stewart 2s.; Carel 2s.; Richmond 3s.; W. P. Adamson 3s. 6d.; Hugh Thomson 7s. 6d.; Peter Bridger 10s.; J. D. Stephens 10s.; R. Daniel 2s. 6d.; A. Rowley 5s.; G. B. 5s.; G. Newman 5s.; W. T. Middleton 5s.; R. B. Middleton 5s.; Miss Middleton 5s.; M. Duncan 2s. 6d.; J. Seddon 2s. 6d.; H. Tucker 10s.; R. Morris 1s.; A. G. Scopes 10s.; F. Whatcott 5s.; D. E. B. 10s.; W. L. Brown 5s.; L. E. Mabbett 2s. 6d.; A. B. Moss 10s.; J. E. 1s.; R. A. 6d.; J. Cameron 5s.; F. Allison 2s.; J. W. (Nelson) 10s.; L. Devereux 5s.; W. R. Jules 2s. 6d.; Rank and File 1s.; A. L. and W. W. 5s.; W. Dodd £1; Mrs. R. B. Middleton 5s.; Mrs. Stevens 5s.; W. H. S. 2s. 6d.; E. N. 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Edwards 2s. 6d.; E. Kirton 5s.; Sympathiser 1s.; H. Osbourn 2s.; W. Wade 1s.; W. Overall 1s.; W. Palmer 1s.; Sympathiser 1s.; W. Game 1s.; W. P. Murray 2s.; Allan Bates 2s. 6d.; J. S. G. 1s.; C. H. P. 1s.; Two Old Villains 4s.; F. W. Hicks 2s.; A. W. Dairs 5s.; Mrs. J. Pollitt, 2s. 6d.; Hannah Walsh, 10s.; Porth Branch, 4s. 8d.; W. Powis, 1s.; F. Wood, 2s. 6d.; John Henson, 5s.; J. and H. Scholey, 5s.; J. A. Jackson, 10s.; R. Taylor, 2s. 6d.; F. Scarle, 1s.; R. W., 1s. *Per Miss Vance*: Collected at Mr. Foote's Lecture, West Ham Branch, £3 4s. 8d.; Major John C. Harris, £5; Ed. Oliver, £2 2s.; Frank Smith, £2 2s.; J. Vickery, £1; E. M. Vance, 10s.; Fred. Wood, 10s.; H. C. B., 5s.; D. McIntyre, 2s.; W. Bean, £1; C. James, 1s.; F. W. Wood, 1s.; G. Wood, 1s.; A. E. George, 2s. 6d.; C. G. Quinton, £1; C. Shepherd, 2s. 6d.; Victor Roger, 2s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. Touzeau Parris, £2 2s.; W. Davey, 10s.; W. Gregory, 2s.; H. M. Dymond, 5s.; W. R. D. £1; C. Heaton, 2s. 6d.; M. Christopher, 10s.; Richd. Carroll, 20s.; R. Morrow, 5s.; Alice M. Baker, £2 10s. *[Correction.—Two subscriptions—J. Sanderson 2s., and S. M. Peacock 2s.—in last week's list, belonged to the Cohen Pamphlet Fund.]*

THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £12 3s. 0d. Since received: W. Laity, 3s.; J. Sanderson, 2s.; S. M. Peacock, 2s.; J. Lazarick, 2s. 6d.; A. E. Worley, 1s.; A. E. Allnutt, 2s. 6d.; E. H. Tippet, 1s.; R. A., 2s.; F. Allison, 2s.; L. Devereux, 2s. 6d.

G. NEWMAN thinks it "must be balm to the grief of Joseph Symes's widow and orphan daughter" to read the correspondence columns of last week's *Freethinker*.

T. MAY.—Your suggestion that we are "bribed to write what we have written on the Separation question in France is—well, we are afraid it is worthy of you.

MAJOR G. O. WARREN writes: "Pray allow me to express my unqualified approval of, and agreement with, your condemnation of the most unfair persecution of the French Roman Catholics by the French Government. He who refuses to others the freedom of thought which he claims for himself is not worthy of the name of a Freethinker." Major Warren, who has known the *Freethinker* so long, and been himself so honorably associated with journalism, will be one of the first to smile at the suggestion referred to in our answer to another correspondent.

J. GIBBS.—Your good wishes are reciprocated.

EDITH J. HALL.—Pleased to receive your birthday good wishes.

A. RUSHTON, sending subscription, says: "In the death of Joseph Symes we lose a man of heroic mould, clear thought, strong expression, and with a passion for truth."

S. HOLMES.—Not surprised to hear that although you never had the pleasure of seeing or hearing Joseph Symes you are "convinced that he was a splendid fellow."

D. D. D. says: "I regret I cannot offer more, but it would be a cowardly thing to have read Mr. Symes's articles in your journal and not to contribute anything."

R. CHAPMAN.—Mistakes will happen. Considering what we have to do with one pair of hands, it is astonishing that so few occur. See rectification.

W. MUMBY.—We agree with what you say of the death of Joseph Symes—namely, that "We can ill afford to lose so strenuous a fighter in these flaccid days."

P. W. MADDEN.—Glad to hear you enjoyed being present at the Annual Dinner. Such functions do, as you say, make for the solidarity of the movement. Thanks for the cuttings and your hearty good wishes.

JAMES MOFFAT.—Pleased to hear from you after so many years, and particularly glad to have your most honorable account of Joseph Symes as you knew him.

A. H. SMITH, an East Anglian, who wields a clever pen of his own as a Freethought volunteer in the local press, writes: "Your notice of the death of Mr. Symes is one of the most sympathetic notices I have read, and it is easy to understand that the misfortune touched you very much." We hope it will also touch the bulk of our readers—to the point of subscribing to the Memorial Fund.

G. THWAITES.—All who wish they could give more should at least send what they can—as you do.

A. O. WORLEY writes: "I think the *Freethinker* excels all other papers I have ever seen, and I hope you will live long to keep it up to its present standard. My brother says the same, and looks forwards each week for it."

J. BARRY.—Your suggestion has been in our mind already. We shall not forget it. Meanwhile we note your hope that "an amount sufficient to be of real service will be subscribed."

H. O. W.—Sorry we cannot find room for another long, letter, this time extending to columns.

A. G. LYE.—Pleased to hear that the Coventry Branch has resolved to send a copy of Mr. Cohen's "Salvation Army" pamphlet to each member of the City Council and the Board of Guardians.

F. C. BERKELEY.—Truly, as you say, a "very great calamity." Our compliments to your wife, who remembers Joseph Symes before he went to Australia.

T. W. ELSTOB.—See list of acknowledgments. We have to let all go into one list indiscriminately.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

HUGH THOMSON.—The full amount goes under your name. We printed the facts about Victoria some time ago, but cannot hunt up the reference just now. Too busy.

J. A. E. BATES.—Will try to deal with it next week.

J. D. STEPHENS "regrets very deeply the great loss sustained by the world in the removal of such a gifted man as the late Mr. Symes."

R. DANIEL.—All you say of Joseph Symes is below the truth. Thanks for your good wishes.

A. ROWLEY "cannot imagine a Freethinker failing to respond" to our appeal for the widow of Joseph Symes.

C. W. STYNING.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

R. J. HENDERSON.—You are not the only case of a warm heart and a lean purse.

R. B. MIDDLETON.—We wish our "eloquent appeal," as you are good enough to call it, would move a thousand other women. That your sex should think, and take an interest in true ideas and advanced causes, has always been one of our dearest wishes.

W. PALMER.—Yes, it would be a good thing if others would call upon the "saints" they know, and get something from them for the Symes Memorial Fund.

ECCLETS.—Glad you think the Dinner was "splendid." We know the Shelley book you refer to.

GEORGE BARBER.—Postal orders can be crossed for safety; open orders should be payable to G. W. Foote.

A. J. HOPKINS.—In our next.

F. SHORT.—Glad to hear from one who so appreciates the *Freethinker*, and regrets he did not know of its existence until he heard Mr. Foote at the Stratford Town Hall last September. Bryant was an American poet; his works are easily obtainable.

H. TUCKER.—As you give us the choice, we have printed your name, to encourage others. We note your good wish that the subscription should be "speedy and substantial."

D. E. B.—"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die" is an apt quotation. Thanks for the "united good wishes."

R. T. NICHOLS.—We note that the West Ham Branch's collection went to the Symes Fund without any deduction for the meeting's expenses.

A. B. MOSS writes that he was prevented by official duties from attending the funeral of Joseph Symes. "Your admirable article on his character and work," Mr. Moss adds, "I agree with entirely—and the language of it is almost of Shakespearian force and felicity. Undoubtedly the world is the loser by the death of such a fine heroic character as Joseph Symes."

RUSSELL SMART.—Pleased to hear the recipient of the specimen *Freethinkers* has become a regular subscriber.

J. W.—Not surprised to learn that Joseph Symes was "immensely liked by all" at Nelson.

A. C. REXCLIFFE.—Truly, a hard fight; but our cause is winning, and will win.



R. B. FOWLER.—Honest good wishes are always welcome. Glad to hear you refer to "what your lectures and writings have been to me, in a somewhat long journey from Orthodoxy to complete Freethought."

SOME correspondence stands over till next week, being crowded out for want of space.

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

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

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## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote is due to lecture this evening (Jan. 20) at the Camberwell Secular Hall. We fear that his lecture has not been adequately advertised, and someone has taken a liberty with his title on the posters. It is to be hoped that the South London "saints" will make a point, therefore, of doing their utmost to give publicity to the lecture, and thus help to crowd the hall as it should be.

On the following Sunday (Jan. 27) Mr. Foote opens the new year's special lecturing season at Manchester, and on the Sunday after that (Feb. 3) he opens the new season at Glasgow.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, was a great success. In spite of absences through sickness, in consequence of the weather, and through some deaths, including that of Joseph Symes, there was a record attendance; the diners numbering a hundred and twenty, the highest point yet reached. The dinner itself was, of course, excellent; brief speeches were made by the Chairman, Mr. G. W. Foote, and Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Snell, and Heaford; a capital musical entertainment had been arranged by Miss Vance, including songs by Miss Jennie Atkinson and the ever-fresh Mr. Will Edwards; and from first to last everything went off without a hitch. Naturally many of the faces were those of new-comers, and it was pleasant to hear, amidst the farewell handshaking, that they had all had "a good time" and would be looking forward to next year's dinner.

Someone, apparently not present at the dinner, remembered two things—first, that January 11 was Mr. Foote's birthday; second, that he had an intense admiration and love for Shelley. Accordingly this unknown friend, who cannot be thanked by name, had a birthday present sent in to Mr. Foote in the course of the evening. It was a handsomely framed, beautiful portrait of Shelley, published some forty years ago, and still in a fine state of preservation. The donor is assured that the picture will have an honored place in Mr. Foote's home.

Mr. Foote has had a nasty cold—now happily clearing off—and the death of Joseph Symes has in several ways added to the burden of his work. At ordinary times he is quite unable to keep up with his postal correspondence, and any extra demand upon his time and energy only throws that correspondence into worse arrears. He must therefore beg the indulgence of those who do not get replies as soon as he can attend to their requests. He has more than one man's work to do. And if he ever breaks down again some of the grumblers would probably wish they had not worried him.

We do not intend to keep on writing appeals for the Symes Memorial Fund. We have said all that needs to be said; and, instead of adding to it *ad nauseam*, we prefer to let the "Answers to Correspondents" columns carry on the tale. Every word in those columns has to be written with our own pen, so the reader can see that we don't exactly lie on a bed of roses. All we wish to say further is this. We repeat that this subscription cannot be allowed to drag along interminably; let it be short and sharp; and let us be able to consider that it is practically over by the last day in January. Of course there will be later donations—there always are; but the great bulk of them should be in hand by Thursday, January 31.

## Providence and Earthquakes.

"Nature is an unconscious mechanism; she is indifferent to the phenomena which take place within her domain and to the creatures which live there; and man is neither more or less than other animals."—DR. PAUL TOPINARD, *Science and Faith*, p. 312.

"Next to the greatness of these cosmic forces, the quality which most forcibly strikes everyone who does not avert his eyes from it is their perfect and absolute recklessness. They go straight to their end, without regarding what or whom they crush on the road."—JOHN STUART MILL, *Three Essays on Religion* (1874), p. 28.

"Come behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth."—Ps. xlvii. 8.

NOTHING marks more conspicuously the progress of Freethought than the way in which earthquakes and volcanoes are regarded by the religious world of to-day and the religious world of Wesley's day, and later than that.

It is by comparing one generation with another that we get a good measure of the way in which Freethought is rationalising the religious conceptions of our times. The qualities of God most gloried in by one generation are apologised for by the generation following, and considered infamous by the generation following that.

Under the pressure of sceptical criticism, the religious world has altered the character of their God out of all recognition by their brethren of an earlier generation. The late Mr. Spurgeon complained, "I do not know this new God that has lately come up, who they say is all tenderness and has none of the stern attributes of righteousness and wrath. The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, is the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and in him my soul delights."\* Spurgeon could not recognise in the emasculated nonentity evolved by modern divinity the linaments of the old Jehovah who led the Israelitish horde to exterminate the inhabitants of Canaan, the God who

"plants his footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm."

John Wesley taught that earthquakes were caused by sin; they were a sign that God was very angry. In his sermon on the *Cause and Cure of Earthquakes*, he declares that "sin is the moral cause of earthquakes, whatever their natural cause may be." In another sermon, on *God's Approbation of His Works*, he says that before the sin of Adam there were "no earthquakes," and "There were no such things as eruptions of fires; no volcanoes or burning mountains"; and that these things are "God's strange works of judgment, the proper effect and punishment of sin." The celebrated hymn writer, Dr. Watts, rejoices in the murderous qualities of his Deity as follows:—

"Almighty vengeance, how it burns,  
How bright his fury glows!  
Vast magazines of plagues and storms  
Lie treasured for his foes."

Dr. Watts's God is quite undistinguishable from the Devil. So terrible was his presence that—

"At his approach the mountains flee,  
And seek a watery grave;  
The frighted sea makes haste away  
And shrinks up every wave."

Yet the pious Doctor looks forward to spending all eternity in the company of this ferocious monster!

Such was the belief of Christendom down to recent times;† such is still the belief of multitudes of believers of the calibre of the Salvation Army. But the spirit of the age will have nothing to do with such a God. Such things are to the intellectual a stumbling-block, to the humanitarian an atrocity. How can they be reconciled with the character of a God who numbers the hairs of our head and notes the fall of a sparrow? or with a God who causes a

\* Sermon No. 1,763; *Knowledge, Worship, Gratitude*.

† Even Archdeacon Farrar, in his *Witness of History to Christ*, regards the volcanic destruction of Herculaneum and Pompei as a judgment of God upon the inhabitants for their wickedness! The Archdeacon was the most popular writer of the Church of England; his *Life of Christ* has had an enormous circulation.



man to lose a train which is smashed up in a collision, or to miss a ship which afterwards founders on the voyage, and yet permits thousands of people to be destroyed by an earthquake or a volcano?

Voltaire was a Deist, but his belief was rudely shaken by the terrible earthquake of Lisbon. What, he asks—in his "Poem on the Disaster of Lisbon," had the inhabitants done more than the populations of London and Paris to merit such a visitation? Will it console the wretched inhabitants of the desolated city to be told that they suffer for the good of the world? Can we conceive a beneficent God intent upon his children's happiness and yet heaping sorrows upon them? If he is All-perfect, how account for this evil?

"His power to mend, the sophist loud denies.  
He wanted but the will, another cries:  
And while the disputants their views proclaim  
Lisbon is perishing in gulfs of flame,  
And thirty towns with ashes strew the lea  
From Tagus' ravaged borders to the sea."\*

Voltaire confesses that he can find no solution to these obstinate questions. He says: Nature is mute; we question her in vain; we cannot pierce the veil that wraps us round, and he leaves the problem unanswered.

Last year witnessed the destruction of two cities by earthquake—San Francisco in April and Valparaiso in August; and the religious world stands confronted with the same problem propounded by Voltaire. But the times have changed. The belief that earthquakes are sent by God to punish wicked people is now confined to the ignorant and illiterate. Witness the following comment from the daily press:—

"No one to-day believes that the guilt of San Francisco or Santiago has called to heaven for vengeance and received answer. But the scientific progress which has destroyed the ancient belief in Divine anger as a cause of these miseries has provided no intelligible substitute. And to-day we confront these scenes of ruin and suffering in silent wonder—what the meaning of it all can be, or whether it has any meaning at all."

And this is not the voice of the *Times*, the organ of the upper classes, or of the worldly papers which cater for the masses. It is the voice of the *Daily News*, the organ of the celebrated Nonconformist Conscience; the paper controlled by Mr. Cadbury, of piety and cocoa fame. Indeed the world does move. The writer is as much staggered by "these scenes of ruin and suffering" as was Voltaire by the Lisbon earthquake; and is quite as unable to suggest any method of reconciling these things with the idea of a Heavenly Father, at once all-good and all-powerful, doing the best for his children.

When the pietist is confronted with one of these contradictions between the facts of nature and the supposed perfection of God's character he does not say, "Well, God is not all-good," or "God does not care for man," or "There cannot be a God"; he says, "It is a mystery." But to the natural philosopher there is nothing more mysterious in an earthquake than in a shower of rain; the one is as much an operation of natural laws as the other. In the one case the sun draws the water from the sea in the shape of vapor; the wind drives it along until, by parting with its heat in the upper regions of the air, it is condensed into water again, and falls, perhaps on some place suffering from drought, perhaps back again into the ocean, perhaps on a land already suffering from floods. So with the earthquake. Our world was once in a molten condition; it still contains a large central core of heated matter. As this heated matter cools it also contracts, causing dislocations, cracks, and rents in the solid crust upon which we live. The shower and the earthquake are therefore due to the same cause—a loss of heat. These fractures may occur in an uninhabitable desert or they may overthrow or swallow up a city, and whether it occurs in one place or another, is governed by purely physical laws. As Lester Ward observes, nature must be regarded as unconscious:—

"As the winds blindly obey the physical laws of the earth's especial character, due to its motions, its proximity

to the sun, its orbital inclination, and its methodless land and water distribution; as the clouds gather, break, and pour their contents back upon the earth, and then vanish or go flying across the sky, impelled by wild, senseless, and reckless forces; as the cataract plunges and the volcano belches in obedience to stern physical impulses to which no one thinks, except metaphorically, of attributing motive or intelligence—so all the great secular processes of nature, including the development of organic forms and of man, have been impelled by blind and mindless energies guided by no intelligence or conscious power either from within or from without."\*

That is the view of the natural philosopher who dispenses with God—like La Place, who, when Napoleon called his attention to the fact that he had omitted to mention God in his great work, *Celestial Mechanics*, replied, "Sire, I have no need of the hypothesis"; or Caro, who, in his *The Idea of God*, declared that "Science conducts God with honor to its frontiers, thanking him for his provisional services."

Many solutions have been advanced by the pious to account for these calamities and reconcile them with God's goodness; indeed, one of the old-fashioned theological geologists, Professor Hitchcock, derived an argument for the divine benevolence from the existence of volcanoes. He observes: "If we can only rise to these higher views, and not suffer our judgment to be warped by the immediate terrors of the earthquake and the volcano, we shall see the smile of infinite benevolence where most men see only the wrath of an offended Deity."† The Professor argues that volcanoes—of which he says there are more than two hundred scattered over the earth's surface—are safety-valves, forming vent-holes into the heated interior: "Most of them, indeed, have the valves loaded, and the effort of the confined gases and vapors to lift the load produces the terrific phenomena of earthquakes and volcanoes." But for these safety-valves, he asks, "what would prevent the pent-up gases from accumulating till they had gained strength enough to rend a whole continent, and perhaps the whole globe, into fragments?"

It is deplorable to see a man of such undoubted talents arguing like a Philadelphia lawyer in the attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable. Why did not God place his safety-valves in the uninhabitable parts of the earth, of which he has been so liberal, where they could vent their fury without the sacrifice of human life? Or, again, why did he load the valves so that the effort to lift the load gives rise to such disastrous explosions? If an engineer loaded the safety-valve of a steam boiler in such a dangerous manner, he would be severely censured. If he did it wilfully, causing loss of life, he would be tried for murder. How much more guilty, then, must be an omnipotent Being, to whom all things are possible.

A greater than Professor Hitchcock has endeavored to "justify the ways of God to man" in this connection. Sir John Herschel, the great astronomer, makes the attempt in his *Familiar Lectures on Scientific Subjects*. Sir John will have nothing to do with the idea that they are sent as a judgment by God. He says:—

"Perhaps some may have been tempted to ask why and how it is that God has permitted this fair earth to be visited with such destruction. It can hardly be for the sins of men: for when these things occur they involve alike the innocent and the guilty; and besides, the volcano and the earthquake were raging on this earth with as much, nay greater violence, thousands and thousands of years before man ever set his foot upon it."

Like Professor Hitchcock, he declares that these things are absolutely necessary to our existence upon the earth. "There is mighty and rough work to be accomplished," says Sir John, "and it cannot be accomplished by gentle means." But if God created or designed the world, why did he not design it so that these things could be accomplished by gentle means? If God designed the world, he is entirely

\* *Dynamic Sociology*, vol. ii., p. 5.

† *The Religion of Geology*, p. 138. The section dealing with this subject is headed, "My sixth geological argument for the divine benevolence is derived from the existence of volcanoes."

\* Voltaire. General Hamley, 1898, p. 171.



responsible for all that takes place upon it. If he could not design it to avoid these evils, then he is not all-mighty, or else he is not all-good. If he is good, but not all-mighty, then we are at liberty to conjure up the vision of a good God wringing his hands over his own helplessness, or of an all-mighty God who cares nothing for the welfare of the children he created.

But the most extraordinary part of Sir John's apology runs as follows:—

"It seems, no doubt, terrible, awful, perhaps harsh, that twenty or thirty thousand lives should be swept away in a moment by a sudden and unforeseen calamity; but we must remember that sooner or later every one of those lives must be called for, and it is by no means the most sudden end that is the most afflictive. It is well too that we should contemplate occasionally, if it were only to teach us humility and submission, the immense energies which are everywhere at work in maintaining the system of nature we see going on so smoothly and tranquilly around us."<sup>\*</sup>

It may be well to contemplate these things; but what about the people who are destroyed by these convulsions? Surely their consent should have been obtained before being made such a terrible example for the benefit of others! Perhaps if Sir John had been involved in one of these catastrophes himself, his home levelled with the ground, those nearest and dearest to him, buried beneath the ruins, he would not have taken such a philosophic view of the matter.

Or consider: Supposing, upon the occurrence of a railway collision, the directors were to tell the relatives of those killed that their relations would have had to die some day; that their end was very sudden, and therefore painless; and that their death emphasised the great energy with which the company's engines are driven. What a torrent of execration such an apology would rightly meet with from the public. Yet the pious clutch at the flimsiest excuses to save the character of their God idol.

As to the consolation derived from the thought that "it is by no means the most sudden end that is the most afflictive," it would not prove very consoling to a man awaiting execution. He would probably reply, "That may be; but I think I would rather chance it." In fact, it sounds very like the remark of the arch-pessimist Schopenhauer, that "the brevity of life, which is so constantly lamented, may be the best quality it possesses."<sup>†</sup> What a lurid light is cast on the character of "our Father in heaven" when we are told that it is better to die a violent death than to live to endure more terrible suffering later on! Such are the dilemmas in which the pious involve themselves in their attempts to whitewash their God.

We began this article with the intention of describing some of these terrific catastrophes, but will reserve this for a further contribution.

W. MANN.

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

(Concluded from p. 28.)

THE trouble is that the spirit of the Old Testament, its disposition, its temperament, is bad, selfish and cruel. The most fiendish things are commanded, commended and applauded.

The stories that are told of Joseph, of Elisha, of Daniel and Gideon, and of many others, are hideous; hellish.

On the whole, the Old Testament cannot be considered a moral guide.

Jehovah was not a moral God. He had all the vices, and he lacked all the virtues. He generally carried out his threats, but he never faithfully kept a promise.

At the same time, we must remember that the Old Testament is a natural production, that it was

written by savages who were slowly crawling toward the light. We must give them credit for the noble things they said, and we must be charitable enough to excuse their faults and even their crimes.

I know that many Christians regard the Old Testament as the foundation, and the New as the superstructure; and while many admit that there are faults and mistakes in the Old Testament, they insist that the New is the flower and perfect fruit.

I admit that there are many good things in the New Testament, and if we take from that book the dogmas of eternal pain, of infinite revenge, of the atonement, of human sacrifice, of the necessity of shedding blood; if we throw away the doctrine of non-resistance, of loving enemies, the idea that prosperity is the result of wickedness, that poverty is a preparation for Paradise—if we throw all these away and take the good, sensible passages, applicable to conduct, then we can make a fairly good moral guide—narrow, but moral.

Of course, many important things would be left out. You would have nothing about human rights, nothing in favor of the family, nothing for education, nothing for investigation, for thought and reason, but still you would have a fairly good moral guide.

On the other hand, if you would take the foolish passages, the extreme ones, you could make a creed that would satisfy an insane asylum.

If you take the cruel passages, the verses that inculcate eternal hatred, verses that writhe and hiss like serpents, you can make a creed that would shock the heart of a hyena.

It may be that no book contains better passages than the New Testament, but certainly no book contains worse.

Below the blossom of love you find the thorn of hatred; on the lips that kiss, you find the poison of the cobra.

The Bible is not a moral guide.

Any man who follows faithfully all its teachings is an enemy of society and will probably end his days in a prison or an asylum.

What is morality?

In this world we need certain things. We have many wants. We are exposed to many dangers. We need food, fuel, raiment and shelter, and besides these wants, there is what may be called the hunger of the mind.

We are conditioned beings, and our happiness depends upon conditions. There are certain things that diminish, certain things that increase, well-being. There are certain things that destroy and there are others that preserve.

Happiness, including its highest forms, is after all the only good, and everything, the result of which is to produce or secure happiness, is good, that is to say, moral. Everything that destroys or diminishes well-being is bad, that is to say, immoral. In other words, all that is good is moral, and all that is bad is immoral.

What then is, or can be called, a moral guide? The shortest possible answer is one word: Intelligence.

We want the experience of mankind, the true history of the race. We want the history of intellectual development, of the growth of the ethical, of the idea of justice, of conscience, of charity, of self-denial. We want to know the paths and roads that have been travelled by the human mind.

These facts in general, these histories in outline, the results reached, the conclusions formed, the principles evolved, taken together, would form the best conceivable moral guide.

We cannot depend on what are called "inspired books," or the religions of the world. These religions are based on the supernatural, and according to them we are under obligation to worship and obey some supernatural being, or beings. All these religions are inconsistent with intellectual liberty. They are the enemies of thought, of investigation, of mental honesty. They destroy the manliness of man. They promise eternal rewards for belief, for credulity, for what they call faith.

<sup>\*</sup> *Familiar Lectures on Scientific Subjects* (1867), p. 19.

<sup>†</sup> *The World as Will and Idea*, vol. i., p. 19.



This is not only absurd, but it is immoral.

These religions teach the slave virtues. They make inanimate things holy, and falsehoods sacred. They create artificial crimes. To eat meat on Friday, to enjoy yourself on Sunday, to eat on fast-days, to be happy in Lent, to dispute a priest, to ask for evidence, to deny a creed, to express your sincere thought, all these acts are sins, crimes against some god. To give your honest opinion about Jehovah, Mohammed or Christ, is far worse than to maliciously slander your neighbor. To question or doubt miracles, is far worse than to deny known facts. Only the obedient, the credulous, the cringers, the kneelers, the meek, the unquestioning, the true believers, are regarded as moral, as virtuous. It is not enough to be honest, generous and useful; not enough to be governed by evidence, by facts. In addition to this, you must believe. These things are the foes of morality. They subvert all natural conceptions of virtue.

All "inspired books," teaching that what the supernatural commands is right, and right because commanded, and that what the supernatural prohibits is wrong, and wrong because prohibited, are absurdly unphilosophic.

And all "inspired books," teaching that only those who obey the commands of the supernatural are, or can be, truly virtuous, and that unquestioning faith will be rewarded with eternal joy, are grossly immoral.

Again I say: Intelligence is the only moral guide.

Correspondence.

THE LATE MR. JOSEPH SYMES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—My previous letter to you, in which I referred to the death of Mr. Joseph Symes, was written before I had read your issue of January 6. I would be glad to be allowed to make one or two further remarks testifying to the appreciation I hold respecting the services Mr. Symes has rendered to Freethought. There is something very inspiring in this courageous man's career, particularly the concluding portion of it. If he had studied his own (relative) case he would have spent the closing years of his life on his farm in Australia. He decided to return to help his former colleagues to combat prejudice and superstition. In doing so, he probably shortened his life; but there are doubtless many of the younger generation who are all the better for having come in contact with the veteran Freethinker. It is painful to reflect that his widow and daughter are left practically penniless. As I previously said, I wish we had some wealthy Freethinkers who would assist to provide for the widows of men who give their life to the cause. I wish that with all my heart. Some of us give our energies and time to the movement, being proud to be associated with the handful of courageous men who are creating a new world for the benefit of posterity, in which shams and superstition will be things of the past. Joseph Symes is dead, but his inspiring influence will not be readily forgotten. It could be felt by those who never met him. His effective satire, "Cynicus and God," which our dear Christian friends will doubtless regard as wicked blasphemy, should materially assist to kill the God idea, which is only doing harm now.

I note that you are organising a fund for the benefit of Mrs. Symes. I have been wondering whether anything could be done to organise a bazaar for the same object. There may be objections to this form of raising money; but the sects obtain considerable sums in this way. Many of your readers are probably artizans. Perhaps they could be induced to contribute specimens of their handiwork. The bazaar might be made very interesting. A literature stall would be one of the features. There may be insuperable difficulties in the way of effecting this bazaar idea. It might be difficult to select a suitable place for the purpose. I believe the indefatigable Mr. F. J. Gould is organising a bazaar at Leicester this year. Perhaps something could be done in co-operation with him. It might be possible to arrange a Joseph Symes stall. He fought well, and his influence will be permanently felt. He seems to have given practically everything to the cause of Freethought. I wish with all my heart that something of a practical nature will be done for Mrs. Symes.

J. A. REID.

WHAT IS ATHEISM?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of January 6th, "South Devon" suggests that the name "Atheist" should be abandoned, as

it is apt to be confusing; also that it does not "indicate the nature of the bearer." But why change our designation? Surely our title is a comprehensive one. Of course, to most people most things are obscure which they do not understand.

Personally, I do not think that it is possible to find any other two words than "Atheist" or "Agnostic" to so aptly describe the nature of unbelievers who come within the range of the two terms above mentioned.

Of course, you might describe a spade as a farming implement; and, as simple as the term is, you would be sure to discover someone who would be ignorant of the nature of the article in question.

You describe politicians by their party designation, theologians by their particular sect; and their nature stands forth unobscured to most people.

Everyone is not a judicial functionary who will persist in demanding definitions of such simple terms as "copper," when they must know that police constable is meant. Besides, after all, What's in a name?—as Shakespeare has it.

W. SWANSBORO.

THE FUTURE OF SECULARISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am a great admirer of Mr. Gould, and seldom disagree with what he writes; but I really think he is mistaken *this* time. His article of last week, intended to support his prediction that the Secular Societies, etc., "are all destined to a not very distant extinction," does not, to my mind, show even a *probability* of anything of the sort. It merely points out that their work in the future will not be exactly the same as it has been in the past, or as it is in the present. Neither do I admit the correctness of his grand premiss that "the forms [of Secular Societies] a generation ago are extinct," and I think he would have great difficulty in proving it.

Any way, I am not such a stickler for mere forms of organisation as to care very much whether the present forms become extinct or not, so long as organisations continue which do for their day the necessary destructive work which has been and is being done by Secular and cognate Societies in the past and at the present for their own periods.

I am entirely with Mr. Gould in his aspiration for closer union among the forces of progress, but I fear that little is practicable in this direction. Each organisation appeals to, and meets the ideas of, a certain class of supporters, and we must be content and thankful that they are united as to the threefold aims specified by Mr. Gould, though they may differ in detail as to the best methods of conducting the attack. That they should each and all vary their points of attack according to the special requirements of different times is only natural and reasonable, but it rather implies the possession of vitality than forebodes an early extinction.

GEORGE PAYNE.

CONDITIONALLY.

A certain minister tells of an Irishman to whose bedside he was once called. The man was very ill and his recovery was doubted.

"Have you forgiven all your enemies, Pat?" the minister asked.

"Sure an' Oi have; all excipt Dan O'Hagan," Pat replied.

"But you must forgive all if you hope to reach paradise," the minister continued.

"Well, all right thin," said Pat, after reflecting for some time, "but if Oi get well, Oi'll break his head!"

SUPPOSED HE WAS IN TROUBLE.

The pastor of a fashionable church, on being advised by his physician to take a vacation not long ago, wrote the agent of a South American steamship line as follows:

"As I am thinking of taking a trip to South America, please advise me immediately with particulars relative to rates, accommodations and so on, to and from the various ports usually visited by tourists at this season of the year."

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"One of our steamers will sail for Valparaiso next Wednesday. Shortest and quickest way out of the country."

The recent earthquakes bring to mind similar disasters in Charleston twenty years ago, when among other supplications for Divine succour, that of a negro preacher bears recording. With his eyes turned towards heaven, and hands clasped reverently, he made the following petition: "Oh Gawd! you hab seen fit to visit us with dis affliction, and now we ask you to come an' help us; come you'self, an' doan't sen' you Son, for dis ain't no child's play."



**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.**

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

**LONDON.**

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 7.30, G. W. Footo, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, 27 Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Some Barbarisms of Civilisation."

**COUNTRY.**

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Masonic Hall, 11 Melbourne-place): 6.30, a Lecture.

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Willie Dyson, "The Conditions of Modern Industry, or the Decentralisation of Industry."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon. Discussion Class; 6.30, Social Meeting in Commemoration of Burns and Paine.

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Jan. 24, at 8, F. W. Walker, "Temperance Reform of the Near Future." Collection in aid of the Symes Memorial Fund.

PLYMOUTH RATIONALIST SOCIETY (Foresters' Hall, Octagon): 7, a Meeting.

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

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