

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

I expect neither profit nor general fame by my writings; and I consider myself as being amply repaid without either. Poetry has been to me its own "exceedingly great reward": it has soothed my afflictions; it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments; and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the Good and the Beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me.

—COLERIDGE.

"Providence."

HEINE remarked that if you talked to an Englishman on business or politics you might hear something sensible, but if you talked to him on religion you were almost sure to hear nonsense. Whether the first half of this statement be true or not we will not discuss; but we are certain that the second half is true. In no other country in the world, we believe, is so much absurdity uttered in the name of religion; unless it be in the United States of America, which contains twice as many people as Great Britain, who are, if possible, twice as silly as Britishers on this particular subject.

There is something childlike and touching about the superstition of the Catholic. He tells his favorite saint that he wants a miracle very badly, and hopes to get it, but is not insolent if he is disappointed. Or he kneels to the Blessed Virgin—the sweet goddess with the divine child in her arms—and asks her to give him the sun, moon, or stars, or something just as possible; and if he does not get what he begs for, he feels that he has eased his mind on the matter. But your Protestant, who scorns the "idolatry" and "credulity" of his Catholic brethren, goes through superstitious forms with the stolid face of a soldier doing shot-drill. He prays by the yard or the hour, although he does not expect to obtain anything; he screws up his face and makes long communications to Omniscience; and, while he would not give sixpence for any answer to his own or other men's supplications, and is ready to smile at the idea of any actual interference with the natural course of things, he persists in talking silliness about "Providence," and affects to see the hand of the "One Above" in the common occurrences of everyday life.

An extraordinary number of references to "Providence" have appeared in the English newspapers in connection with the wreck of the *Berlin*. One would think that the wreck itself was a clear proof that there is no "Providence." But your British Protestant never looks at anything fairly and squarely. He leaves that to the wicked Atheist. For his own part, he prefers intellectual muddle and emotional mist. His notion of a shipwreck, for instance, seems to be something like this. God does not prevent a ship from running on the rocks, no matter who is on

board her; that would be too great an interference with the order of nature; but as soon as the worst part of the mischief is done, he takes the trouble to do a little incidental good. Perhaps he lets all the crew and passengers drown, and saves the ship's dog or the billy-goat; or he lets all the human beings on board perish except two or three, whom he saves in a more or less dramatic manner. One man jumps overboard, knocks his head on a floating spar, and sinks into a watery grave; another man jumps overboard, gets a floating spar between his hands, and holds on to it until he is pulled out of the water into the lifeboat. The first man dies a natural death, and the second man is "providentially" saved. Such is the jargon of religionists. Yet everything in both instances happens in the regular course of nature.

"Providence" allowed the *Berlin* to be blown out of her course. "Providence" allowed her to be thrown upon the sea-covered pier as upon a sunken reef. "Providence" allowed her to be broken in two. "Providence" allowed the front part of her to drop off into deep water, with a large part of the crew and passengers, who all went to their doom. "Providence" allowed the stern part of her to be buffeted by fierce waves, that swept her decks through, and carried off victim after victim. "Providence" allowed the storm to last day after day, so that help could not be rendered to the poor creatures—starved, drenched, and frozen—who still clung to the one bit of semi-shelter that was left them. Then, according to the pietists and the newspapers, "Providence" saw that the stage was ready for its own performance. Fourteen poor creatures were to be rescued alive from the wreck; but before they were rescued they were to be brought, through awful suffering, to the very gates of death, in order to demonstrate the hand of God in their preservation. What they passed through was so terrible that life could hardly be the same thing to any of them again. Some of them will bear the scars of that unspeakable fight for life to their very graves. But what does that matter? They are branded witnesses to the world that "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." So mysterious, indeed, that reason is staggered and conscience aghast.

The lifeboat took off the eleven who could assist in their own rescue. Three helpless women were left; left to the last dregs of their cup of misery—to the hunger, the thirst, the cold, the incessant howling of the wind and crashing of the waves, and the vast loneliness that was like the infinite, irresistible arms of death closing inch by inch around them. Thus the hours, the minutes, the seconds crept by with their agony.

And now the curtain is rung up for the last act of this world-staged drama. "Providence"—we have the word of the *Daily Express* for it—"Providence" watched over them in their helplessness and sent a

gallant rescuer in the person of Captain Sperling." Providence watched over them! What a ghastly mockery! The worst man on earth would have shortened those poor women's sufferings if he could. "Providence" simply waited till Captain Sperling came along.

To the Captain himself we render our sincere homage. It is so often the strong man who has the tender heart. He could not sleep for thinking of those three helpless, abandoned, dying women. He made up his mind to save them if he could. No heroics—just a steady resolution. The hour had struck, and the man had arrived. Yes, that is the great thing—the man. "Men are nothing," Napoleon said; "a man is everything." And he knew what he was talking about.

How the brave, strong rescuer crawled and swam and climbed to the place where the women were; how, backed by his four good sailor friends, he brought them away, and made millions of hearts easier; this is one of the great stories that quicken the pulse, and brighten the eyes, and make one think the better of human nature ever afterwards.

The share of "Providence" in rescuing those three women cannot be discerned by human eyes or through honest spectacles. The *Express* says that "Providence" watched over them during the hours they were left alone. Well, this is easily said, but where is the proof? That "Providence" sent Captain Sperling to save them is an equally arbitrary assertion. What does our pious contemporary know about the matter? Nothing—just nothing. What it says is Words, words, words. Try to realise their meaning, and "Providence" becomes a monstrous power, with the intelligence of a madman and the recklessness of a criminal. It is really better not to believe in such a power. One feels safer, and the world seems brighter.

G. W. FOOTE.

Freethought and Slavery.

FOUR weeks ago (*Freethinker*, Feb. 3) I wrote an article *apropos* of a couple of volumes of Elizur Wright's *Anti-Slavery Magazine*, published in 1837. In the course of the article, I referred to Elizur Wright as a "staunch Freethinker," my authority to hand being Mr. J. M. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*. Those who know how careful Mr. Wheeler was, will admit that I might have followed a worse guide. A little while after the article was written, I received a letter from a gentleman named Mr. W. H. H. Nash, challenging the accuracy of the description on the strength of a letter of Wright's to William Lloyd Garrison, containing "an express avowal of belief in God," and a recognition of the Gospel teaching in such expressions as "God's free grace to sinners who, believing in Christ, desire to be saved from sin," and the "marvellous change" effected by the "blessing of God upon those who accept the Gospel truth." Mr. Nash also adds, "The Abolitionists were, almost to a man, religious. It would be difficult for Mr. Cohen to name three Atheists who were identified with the emancipation, or even the initial stages that led to it, of the American slaves. On the other hand, the Freethinkers (Atheists) of America were, almost without exception, pro-slavery men."

I should have dealt with Mr. Nash's letter earlier, but when it was received I was writing on Bruno, and so had to finish that subject. Besides, Mr. Nash is really doing more than asking a question. The last sentence quoted from his letter shows that he is defending one position and attacking another. I do not, of course, blame him for this, nor have I any fault to find with the tone of his letter; but this being the case, more than a simple reply, such as might have been given in a "Letter to the Editor," is needed.

The difficulty concerning Elizur Wright is easily removed. Wright was born in 1804 and died in 1885.

For many years before his death he was a contributor to the *Boston Investigator*, the *Freethinker's Magazine*, and similar journals. His funeral oration was delivered by Colonel Ingersoll. The letter from which Mr. Nash quotes refers to a period when Wright was still in the religious or semi-religious state of mind—he was then thirty-three years of age—and it has, obviously, reference to that period only. Moreover, the very letter from which Mr. Nash quotes was written to Garrison in answer to one impeaching his (Wright's) Christianity; and if Mr. Nash again consults it he will find it full of nascent freethought, concluding with the statement, "I am sick unto death of the selfish, luxurious, good-for-nothing, sort of religion, which is eternally enquiring: What will become of *Me!*" and the advice to get about the work of bettering human beings here and leave "our salvation to God."

Before dealing with Mr. Nash's other point, let me point out that his question concerning *Atheists* and the Abolition movement is lacking in historical perspective and so confuses the issue. For the present purpose, Christianity and Atheism may be taken as the beginning and end of a phase of mental development. Ignoring this fact, Mr. Nash has also overlooked the simple truth that the last stage of any process comes at the end. Historically, definite Atheism, organised or aggressive, is a very recent phenomenon, and during the early portion of the nineteenth century advanced, Freethought was not so much represented by Atheism—although there were, of course, Atheists then—but by various phases of Deism. The real issue is, consequently, not between Christianity and Atheism, but between Christianity and all phases of Freethought, including even heretical interpretations of Christian doctrines.

Mr. Nash's assumption that all the people who fought for Abolition were religious, and that, therefore, religion is entitled to the credit of their action, leads one to ask: What class of people does he imagine these religious ones were opposed by? Surely he does not believe that non-religionists were then so numerous as to alone create the obstacles that Abolitionists were confronted with! No one will seriously question that the people who opposed Abolition were Christians; and this being so, with Christians on both sides, one fails to see what particular credit Christianity can claim in the matter. I do not dwell upon the further point that slavery in America was introduced by Christian settlers and maintained by Christians for generations before any serious protest was raised against it; although the fact is at least worth noting, and Mr. Nash would do well to ponder on it.

Now for Mr. Nash's challenge. I decline, as I have said, to admit that with respect to the Abolition movement, the issue is between Atheism and Christianity, although I think I shall manage to give him the three names he requires. One thing clear at the outset is, that the majority of Anti-Slavery advocates were more or less tinctured with Freethought. Mr. Nash may be surprised to learn that the first man to issue a public pronouncement in America in favor of liberation, was no less a person than Thomas Paine. His article on *Justice and Humanity*, as Mr. Moncre D. Conway points out, leading to the formation of the first Anti-Slavery Society. The mention of Mr. Conway reminds me that a portion of his heritage from his father, consisting of slaves, were given their freedom; while Mr. Conway, an Abolitionist from his early years, will certainly not be claimed as a Christian. Paine represents one end of a movement that has its other end in President Lincoln. If Mr. Nash will turn to Lamon's *Life of Lincoln* (Boston, 1872), he will find it stated that Lincoln was reared among a community of Freethinkers, that he denied the Divine authority of the Bible, the divinity of Jesus, and wrote in defence of both positions. Pages 487-500 of Lamon's work contain letters from his associates asserting that his infidelity "bordered on Atheism"; his law partner declares he was "An Infidel—an Atheist"; his wife said he had "no hope and no faith in the

usual acceptance of these terms"; while Lincoln, himself, accused during an election contest of being an infidel, declared he would "die first" rather than deny the charge. Evidently *his* Christianity was not of the purest water. To take a few other names at random: Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Russell Lowell, W. E. Channing, J. H. Noyes, J. G. Whittier and E. C. Stanton, are persons who have not usually been regarded as shining examples of orthodoxy. Even Garrison, himself, was accused of "Atheism" and of associating with "Infidels," while his counter charge was that the churches, "Unitarian or Orthodox, Baptist or Methodist, Universalist or Episcopal, Roman Catholic or Christian," were full of slaveholders.

I may also remind Mr. Nash that when, in 1830, Lloyd Garrison could not find a single church, chapel, or meeting-place to be put at his disposal for anti-slavery lectures, it was, says his children, "left for a society of avowed infidels" to lend him a hall, free of cost, for the purpose of preaching abolition. This society, it may be noted, was led by Abner Kneeland, one of the founders of the *Boston Investigator*, and who had only just completed a term of imprisonment for "blasphemy."

Among the early workers in the Abolitionist Movement are the names of four women—not by any means all the heretical ladies that might be named—well worthy of note, and which alone will supply Mr. Nash with an answer—and a little more—to his request for names.

Lucretia Mott was born of a Quaker family, and was among the earliest members of the American Anti-Slavery Society. She separated from the elder body of Quakers, and joined the Hicksites. The sketch of her life in Mrs. E. C. Stanton's *History of Woman Suffrage*, shows her to have been a woman of uncommon power, and one whose attachment to the Hicksites was always more of a moral, than of a religious, kind. What her view of religion in general was may be gathered from her remark to a friend: "No one knows any more of what lies beyond our sphere of action than thou and I—and we know nothing." Lucretia Mott was preaching against slavery as early as 1829, and was one of the delegates to the London Convention held in 1840. From this Convention she was excluded, ostensibly on the grounds of her being a woman, but according to William Howitt because of her heretical opinions.

Frances Wright, the brilliant authoress of *A Few Days in Athens*, and other works, was born in Dundee in 1797. In 1820 she went on a lecturing tour advocating Freethought and the abolition of slavery. Her attempt to found a community in Shelly, Tennessee, was, says the authors of *Garrison's Life*, "a notable early anti-slavery enterprise. In 1828, she published the *Free Enquirer*, the first Freethought periodical in America. She also assisted in founding the *Boston Investigator*. Her Freethought was unmistakable and avowed, as witness the following expression of opinion taken from her lecture on "Religion": "I would urge (my fellow creatures) to turn their churches into halls of science, and exchange their teachers of faith for expounders of nature.....The true Bible is the book of nature, the wisest teacher he who most plainly expounds it, the best priest our own conscience, and the most orthodox church a hall of science." Frances Wright's views on religion and life would have been sufficiently advanced in a man; in a woman, facing the increased hostility aroused by her sex, they were more remarkable still.

Ernestine Rose, a Polish Jewess by birth, was born in 1810. Brilliant in mind and courageous in character, she became an associate of Robert Owen and other prominent men and women. In 1836 she went to America and became naturalised. She lectured in no less than twenty-three states of the Union in favor of Abolition, free speech, and the equality of the sexes. In connection with the latter question it may be noted that she was the first to present a memorial on the subject to the New York

Legislature. Of Mrs. Rose's Atheism there can be question. Her published lecture, "A Defence of Atheism," will remove any doubts Mr. Nash has on that head.

I have space but for one more name—that of Susan Anthony. She, too, came of a Quaker family; born in 1820. For years she was a well-known lecturer on Abolition, Woman's Rights, and various reform subjects. She is also editor, in connection with Mrs. M. J. Gage and Mrs. E. C. Stanton—two more Freethinkers—of a voluminous *History of Woman's Suffrage*. She has avowed herself an Agnostic.

Much more might be said, but I think I have fairly answered Mr. Nash's letter without further additions.

C. COHEN.

"The Destruction of Morality."

THE Rev. Frank Ballard, M.A., B.D., B.Sc., F.R.M.S., etc., has performed many mighty miracles during the last three or four years. His one mission in life is to smash up Infidels. First of all he demolished Mr. Blatchford. His *Clarion Fallacies* killed *God and My Neighbor* and laid its philosophy in the dust. Having successfully disposed of "Nunquam," he grew self-confident and resolved to have a wrestling-match with Professor Haeckel; and to-day he prides himself upon having fairly thrown that great giant. We have his own account of the encounter in *Haeckel's Monism False*. Elated with the glory of victory, he once more measured strength with Mr. Blatchford and easily came out the better man; and this last contest is immortalised in *Guilty: A Tribute to the Bottom Man*. Such is a brief record of Mr. Ballard's recent triumphs, in consequence of which, he is declared to be in the front rank of Christian apologists.

With this last book, in so far as it is a criticism of Mr. Blatchford's Determinism, I am not in the least concerned. All Mr. Ballard's well-known characteristics as a reasoner are more prominent than ever. Mr. Blatchford's *Not Guilty* is addressed to the unthinking masses, and there is not one sound argument in it; but Mr. Ballard's *Guilty* is "Dedicated to all men and women who are open to reason," as only such people are capable of appreciating the full force and beauty of its irresistible logic. A perusal of this notable document is expected to produce the conviction that all who differ from Mr. Ballard are fools. But it is only with one chapter, entitled "The Destruction of Morality," that I wish to deal. Mr. Ballard asserts that, as to the creed of Determinism itself, "nothing is more manifest than that, whenever and wherever it is maintained, there must be an utter end of all morality." Determinists indignantly repudiate such a charge, but their repudiation, however indignant, counts for nothing. Mr. Ballard says so, and that settles the matter. But let us see.

Mr. Ballard speaks with authority. He says: "Whatever any dictionary may say, the true and only valid definition of morality is the doing of right, as against the doing of wrong, which is immorality." But what does the great apologist mean by right and wrong, good and evil? What is the nature of the distinction between those opposite terms? How does he determine the moral quality of actions? Is not *right* or *good* that which promotes the public welfare, and is not *wrong* or *evil* that which injures the social body? But *why* does one man do right and another wrong? Is it not because the one is morally *healthy* and the other morally *diseased*? Carlyle told the Edinburgh University students that *holiness* and *health* are really the same word and have fundamentally but one meaning. If that be so, does it not necessarily follow that right action issues from a sound nature, and wrong action from a diseased nature? Consequently, if the character of men's actions is determined by their constitution, we must conclude that the terms "good" and

"evil," in their theological signification, are wholly inappropriate and frightfully misleading. Does Mr. Ballard deny that we all act in harmony with our nature, whether it be healthy or diseased? Does he maintain that a good man does evil, and that continually, or that an evil man persistently performs good deeds? If not, then he must admit that the theological distinction between good and evil is not valid. The truth is, that one man does right because he is morally healthy and another wrong because he is morally diseased. Indeed, it was one of the greatest theologians and one of the subtlest metaphysicians that did most to establish the soundness of this argument. Surely even Mr. Ballard must grant that Jonathan Edwards was not a fool, and yet that distinguished thinker wrote an elaborate treatise to prove that the strongest motives always rule in human conduct, and that without destroying morality.

Now if a man invariably obeys his strongest motive, are not his actions determined; and if his actions are all determined, on what ground can he be said to be a free-agent? A man says, "Had I only known how different my action yesterday would have been." True; but to-day's knowledge and experience were not at his disposal yesterday. The point of importance is that he could not have acted otherwise than he did yesterday *under yesterday's conditions*; and the same is true of all human actions. But how does this involve the destruction of morality? The effect of individual conduct on society is the same whether it is free or determined conduct; and it is the effect of conduct on society that makes it moral or immoral. Mr. Ballard refers to Ahab's crime in getting Naboth murdered that he might enjoy the latter's vineyard; but is it not clear that the moral quality of the deed was determined by its effects and not by the question whether Ahab could have acted otherwise or not? An immoral man is a man who is a source of harm to his fellow-beings. He is the perpetrator of deeds which injure the community, and the immorality of his deeds is independent of the question whether he is free or bound. According to Mr. Ballard's own definition, "morality is the doing of right, as against the doing of wrong, which is immorality."

We sometimes say of a man that he is a born coward, and we naturally despise him for it. But can a born coward help running away from danger? Were he a hero he might save a hundred lives; but being a coward he runs away, and the awful disaster occurs. He is an immoral man whether he can help himself or not. The morality of his conduct is not affected by his ability or inability to help himself. Our denunciation of the coward, therefore, has no reference whatever to the freedom or the necessity of his conduct. Mr. Ballard is entirely wrong when he charges Determinists with distinguishing between the actors and their acts. It is not fair to judge Determinism by the utterances of a single advocate, as Mr. Ballard repeatedly does in his book.

It is incontrovertible that Determinism does not destroy morality, and to assert that it does is to be guilty of deliberate misrepresentation. But if all actions are controlled by the law of cause and effect, if a man cannot help acting as he does in every case, is it just to punish wrongdoers? In answering this question we must take a comprehensive view of the whole subject. It is a law of evolution that the fit only shall survive. The unfit must disappear, sooner or later. The morally diseased members of society do not deserve to survive; and in some way society is bound to deal with them. They are not responsible for their actions; but inasmuch as the actions are inseparable from the actors it follows that the irresponsible must often be treated as if responsible. That is to say, society must do something to protect itself. At the same time, if we appeal to history we shall learn that punishment has never succeeded in diminishing crime. Indeed, there is much reason to fear that, on the whole, its tendency has been to increase it. Generally speaking, punishment is productive of more harm than good, as prison records

abundantly show. If men are free agents and can do in every case just exactly as they please, how do you account for the failure of punishment to deter from crime? It is very easy to scold an offender, saying, "You ought to have known better"; but the fact remains that he did not know better at the requisite time. A man may be largely responsible for what he is; but being what he is, he cannot alter his conduct.

Punishment has been a dismal failure, from whatever point of view we consider it. No judge and no magistrate can stand up and say that it has ever accomplished any radical good; and it must be frankly acknowledged that the world teems with moral wrecks. Their nature has lost all its resiliency; and to inflict any form or degree of punishment upon them would be a criminal act.

We are all in bondage to our nature. The only freedom we can claim is the freedom to be true to ourselves, to be what we are and act accordingly; and even this freedom is a species of slavery. The wonder is that a theologian can even pretend to be anything but a Determinist. According to Christian teaching there is no such thing as liberty of action. All men are slaves. The unconverted are under the cruel dominion of the Devil, while the converted bear the yoke of allegiance to God in Christ. There is no intermediate state; and the transition from the one slavery to the other can be accomplished only by a supernatural act of interference. And yet Mr. Ballard makes hilarious game of Determinism when taught in conjunction with Atheism! As held by Secularists, Determinism deserves nothing but unqualified condemnation. "Man is not a machine," the preachers thunder out, when attacking Secularism, although according to their own philosophy man is a machine always run either by the Devil or by God. As Dr. Campbell Morgan says, to be a Christian is to be under the absolute authority of Christ. Indeed, the great Christian motto is, "Thy will, not mine, be done." Jesus himself alleged that he was at the complete bidding of his Father.

Mr. Ballard ignores this Christian doctrine when attacking unbelief; and he forgets his manners at the same time. He shockingly misrepresents the author whom he criticises, and in consequence, attributes to him two contradictory statements which he never made, and then adds: "The two together, in the same book, show the working of a mind which charity forbids to characterise." In the last sentence of the chapter under discussion, he sums up his condemnation of Determinism by saying that the man who is not free, and so answerable for his own acts, must be a lunatic, or a brute, or a thing. "In no such case is morality even thinkable." Then there is no such thing as Christian morality, and to charge the unregenerate with immorality would be a mockery, for the regenerate and the unregenerate are alike bond-servants.

J. T. LLOYD.

An Indictment of the "Fourth Estate."

THERE is no profession in Britain which comes more into contact with the public than journalism; and though it may seem curious, it is nevertheless the case, that the public knows next to nothing about the inner workings of the press. All phases of life, in its many and varied aspects, are considered the legitimate prey of the journalist, and no doubt the public receives a more or less representative account of such. But did we say all? Then we withdraw. There exists between the brethren of the pen a bond of union worthier of a better cause, the secrets of which are secrets indeed. They are never passed from lip to lip; they are implied; and there is no pressman living who would consider it worth his while to give them away—it would mean as much as his job was worth, and on the whole his labor would end in abortion; no editor would even dream of publishing his stuff. So that for some time at least the readers of our glorious *Free Press* must remain in

profound ignorance of the internal mechanism, the secret machinations, the real opinions which actuate journalism.

The writer, being a journalist, has no hesitation in stating that if this article were to appear in one of the big London dailies it would create something of a sensation; and as we are prepared to vouch for the truth of our assertions, the fact of its probable exclusion will only serve to confirm what this journal has all along contended—that the much-vaunted freedom and liberty of the press is more or less a farce. Most journalists of the present day are considered as intellectuals; and as very few intellectual people believe implicitly in Christianity, it stands to reason that the pressman is placed at a disadvantage. So far as the writer's knowledge of newspapers goes, only twenty per cent. of our journalists are Christians, but of a weak and sceptical character; the remainder being composed of Materialists, Agnostics, Free-thinkers and Egoists. By far the largest number of them accept the tenets of Egoism; the reason for this being that the exigencies of their calling make such a creed most acceptable. The newspaper egoist is a neutral, and can therefore write upon any subject from any point of view without disturbing his conscience—if he has any; but if the writer be of a certain creed, and he is called upon to write professedly from a point of view which is diametrically opposed to his own, he cannot be supposed to close down his own hatches with perfect equanimity. Journalism as it stands at present is dominated by an unhealthy egoism; but as to whether it exists outside newspaperdom, or not, it is very hard to say. The disadvantage at which our newspaper men are placed lies in the fact that about eighty per cent. of them are unbelievers, and that they are called upon to cater for a Christian public.

Sometimes one or other of them take to novel writing, and as this entails a free and unhampered use of their pen, we frequently find them giving vent to their own opinions. Most of our sceptical novels are written by journalists. In *The Hypocrite*, by C. Ranger Gull, which we believe is the pen-name of Clement Shorter, we have an account of two egoists who ingratiate themselves while at college with the clergymen of the High Church party. After gulling the poor old Bishop, they come up to London and adopt journalism as a profession. One of them writes a trenchant article against the High Church party for a journal which is owned by a libidinous man of the world, while the other sets up a defence for the High Church organ. The picture is undoubtedly true, only most of our journalists are called upon to defend Christianity. They read the "Infidel" weekly publications and the works of "Infidels" such as Ingersoll; yet, though they recognise the truth and wisdom contained in those writings, their primary object is to find flaws and opportunities for slander, so that when the time comes they are prepared to make a refutation of them in order to bolster up Christianity. Such arguments, though base and insidious, are more subtle than those from the pens of true Christians, and we would not be surprised if it were admitted that the ablest arguments for Christianity which have appeared in the newspapers within the past few years were the work of unbelievers. What, we wonder, would be the effect if the man in the street were to see Christianity going to the Devil to get a little touching up? It would surely not be calculated to improve his opinion of it. When Satan manifests that he is about time to ring down the curtain. Christianity, like the liberty of the press, is a farce; but about the former there is an atmosphere of ignorance and misconception which can be forgiven. That bond of union which permeates our mercenary press exists for the sole purpose of deluding the common people, and amidst the tragedy and pathos of it all there is an element of unconscious humor. The British press holds up before the eyes of the British public as fit objects for compassion the poor, ignorant, maltreated peasantry of Holy Russia. When

it has quite finished doing so may we suggest that it make a beginning nearer home? Charity should begin at home, anyway.

But it is not only the "sacred" name of Religion that is prostituted by the hirelings of the press. The pirates have been abroad, and as a result, the grand old ship of Literature has met with disaster. Her backbone has been damaged—rather seriously, we think—and she is in great danger of foundering. The demons have boarded her astern, and up to the moment of writing, have had a demoralising effect on the crew; in fact, everything points to impending destruction. The pirates advertise themselves as "The Great Literary Papers"—they are invariably published at a penny—which accounts for their greatness. Their readers have the "aesthetic taste"—or think they have—which is much the same thing, and of course they must be catered for. They cannot assimilate the *Quarterly*, the *Monthly*, or the *Fortnightly*, so they take "out" *T. P.'s Weekly*, and then follows the taking "in."

In an "Unconventional Interview" in the *Treasury* with "Mr. Smith," a representative of a firm of silversmiths, a young man with a gentlemanly appearance, who read the *Daily Mirror*, we have some characteristic views on reading.

"I like something smart and up to date, not sermons and dry piffle. What's the good of that sort of thing? It doesn't touch the needs of the day. I can't stand dull books. I like a novel that's got something in it. There's a first-rate library at an institute I belong to. I've gone through most of Ouida's works; she's a fine writer. Marie Corelli's another. Her books are deep. No, I don't care for Dickens. Too old-fashioned. Kipling? I haven't read much of him. I like some of Hall Caine's. Rider Haggard's my favorite author. Splendid writer, I call him. He goes in a lot for ancient Egypt."

This is an ideal picture of the young man with the "artistic temperament" who indulges his taste in "literature."

Our modern system of education is undoubtedly much to blame for this deplorable state of affairs. It teaches men to read, but not to "mark, learn and inwardly digest." Such education is grossly immoral and should be discouraged. Give them a little knowledge by all means, but a little learning—never—for, as events have proved, it is truly a dangerous thing.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor is one of those gentlemen of the press who have helped to ruin the good old ship of "Literature." *T. P.'s Weekly* is a journal with no convictions; it potters along by pandering to a public with a vitiated literary taste. Good literature cannot be compressed within the 500 to 2,000 words limit. About a score of the articles in the current issue of *T. P.'s Weekly* range from 100 to 700 words. A great deal of the "matter" has been taken from journals of a higher literary tone and price; but it is of the very lightest quality, and it is treated in such a sentimental manner that it loses all the little gravity it originally possessed. T. P. O'Connor writes on Bismarck—or we should say on Sir Spencer Walpole's *Bismarck*—and he sums up with the sentiment that "Bismarck was human after all." We hope his readers feel pleased; he has judged their intellects to a nicety.

There are two publishers in this country who amassed the £4,000,000 of newspapers which they now control by writing professedly, which means "gulling the public," although they prefer to say this in the more flowery phrase, "catering for the public taste." Between them they own over a hundred of what are called in the vernacular "enormous circulations." These embrace journals of all shades, trades, creeds and political opinions. And amongst this heap of gullibility there is a great quantity of rubbish of the common or garden Christian weekly type. Of these journals we have long since ceased to take serious notice—their very abjectness defies criticism. They pander to a weak-brained public—illiterate cockneys—maudlin Scotsmen—and creatures generally who sum up man's whole duty "Heaven, Hell and Number 1." As we refuse to lend ourselves to their unscrupulous string of men-

dacities, we will quote from our contemporary, *John Bull*, which recently condescended to award one of its unpalatable (or should we say opprobrious?) "Biscuits" to *Good Words* for publishing the story of how "the inhabitants of a quiet little village were awakened in the small hours of the morning by the ringing of the church bell. Investigations followed, and it was found that somebody's godless cow had made her way into the church with such dreadful consequence." This is the word-spinning, the unmitigated rubbish that appeals to the "literary" palates of the submerged minds of Britain. And Britain recognises the panderers, the heartless mercenaries, by conferring upon them knighthoods and earldoms, while the real noblemen, the heroic self-sacrificing "unbelievers," go down to their graves nameless and unknown, save to those whom they had helped to place on the broad path that leads to Truth, Liberty and Fraternity. But we hesitate to write more lest this article should meet the eye of those whose intentions are not of the best. There are already far too many swindlers astride the back of Christianity, and a feeling of compassion causes us to refrain from publishing the reasons for their success. To illustrate the depths to which these publishers of "religious fare" would sink in order to gain money, we may state that if the *Freethinker* returned a profit commensurate with the care and energy expended upon it, and were owned by less scrupulous owners, it would only be a question of days until it was within their clutches.

J. H.

Acid Drops.

It is difficult to conceive of a more shocking tragedy than the wreck of the *Berlin* off the Hook of Holland. The sudden stranding of the ship, her breaking in two; the quick doom of all on the front half; the fight for dear life on the part of those left on the other half; the howling icy north wind, blowing at the rate of a hundred miles an hour; the huge seas sweeping over the wreck and carrying away victim after victim; the cries of the passengers huddled in the deck smoke-room; the passionate, but fruitless, efforts of brave men in the life-boat to render help; the one man picked out of the roaring waters by the life-boat crew—all they could then succeed in saving; this makes one of those terrible pictures that burn themselves into the memory of those who can realise it in thought. Yet the clergy tell us that "Providence" looked down, with practical approval, upon the whole proceeding; and some of them quote Browning's lines:—

"God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world."

Yes, all right to one half of the world; but the case of the other half is somewhat different.

Talking about "Providence," what peculiar minds some of those must possess who did not take, or failed to take, their berths on the *Berlin* that fatal night, and ascribe their own safety to "providential interposition." It does not occur to them that "Providence" might just as well have saved the others too. Suppose a human being knew that a certain ship was going to its doom; suppose he gave a private warning to a few of the passengers (and none of the crew), and let all the other passengers embark and go to their inevitable death: would not such a human being be a cruel devil? And why should not the same judgment be applied to that same "Providence"?

"The glorious bravery of the Dutch lifeboatmen" was duly praised in a *Daily Express* leader. But, like the people who sneeze and say "God bless me," our contemporary thought it necessary to say something pious; so it expressed "gratitude to the Deity for having permitted the lives of those eleven wrecked persons to be saved." This implies that the Deity refused to permit any more to be saved—except the three women who were so gallantly brought off the next day. "God's" share in this affair seems rather dark—some would say *dirty*. For the rest, one doesn't expect logic in newspaper religion. It has to be sentimental to pay.

Before starting off on his fresh trip round the world General Booth had something to say to a *Tribune* interviewer about "Self-Denial Week." "Oh," he said, "I was

away last self-denial week. That will make no difference. Indeed, I am fully expecting that we shall beat last year's record, £63,000. Yes, it is really a revival of the old Lenten self-denials, only we do not hold festivals after it." And as he said this there was a "merry twinkle" in the old man's eye. Yes, and well there might be, at the thought of how he was bamboozling the British public.

"Self-Denial Week" at the outset was *real* self-denial week. The Salvationists all over the country were invited to deny themselves *something*, and give the value of it to the Army. One old woman went without tea, and another without sugar or butter; one man tramped, however tired, and gave the Army his 'bus money; children were persuaded to do without jam, and the General got the price of their average week's consumption. Thus it went on all round, and a few thousand pounds were netted. But in the course of time the astute financiers who run the General's headquarters, just as they would run any other show, pointed out a means whereby the few thousand pounds could be immensely increased. Instead of merely denying themselves, for what *that* was worth, the Boothites were incited to cadge indiscriminately from the general public. And as you can do almost anything in the name of religion, weedy-looking male officers, and livelier and more enterprising female officers, were to be seen at railway stations and other places where crowds do congregate, shaking their collection boxes and pestering the people as if it were Hospital Saturday. That brought them in many thousands more, and as more beggars and boxes were put on the job every year the total went on increasing, until it was enough to make an Archbishop's mouth water.

But "self-denial" did not end there. The clever gentlemen at the Army headquarters invented a scheme of house-to-house begging. And now the male and female Blood-and-Fire-ists call systematically at people's houses, leave envelopes in which people may put their contributions, and call again to receive them duly loaded with grist for the Salvation mill. The people may be Jews or Infidels, but that doesn't matter; there are spoilt papers in every ballot. The cadging must be done comprehensively. Nobody must be missed. And the result is—especially now the General has dined with the King and is quite respectable at last—that the Self-Denial Week Fund is steadily advancing towards six figures. But it is no longer the result of self-denial. The name is an imposture. The Salvation Army gets a big catch, not by fishing in its own private waters, but by throwing its nets into the open sea.

General Booth had something to say also about the problem opened up in Mr. G. R. Sims's articles on "The Cry of the Children." He said he hoped the Government would carry Sunday Closing, so that religion might have a chance with bad mothers one day in the week; which is about the stupidest utterance we have heard on the subject. With regard to drunken mothers, Booth said that nobody but the Salvation Army believed in the possibility of reclaiming them. But the Salvation Army, of course, believes it can do anything—though its opinion of itself is not borne out by the facts. Booth went to the length of censuring the London County Council because it would not give him money for his work of reclamation. We dare say, however, that the County Council knows what it is doing as well as he does. It seems to be Booth's belief that if he had all the money in the country he would be able to do some good with it. He appears to be suffering very badly from swelled-head lately.

The end of the world has been prophesied so many times that one is apt to attach little importance to fresh predictions. Old Prophet Baxter has been working the prophetic business for a couple of generations, and we believe he still makes a very good thing out of it; but he has long ceased to produce any grave tremblings even amongst the ignorant and credulous classes who supply him with customers. According to the newspaper reports, however, there is serious cause for apprehension. They inform us that Professor Matteucci, an Italian astronomer, predicts that the earth will (or may) come to grief towards the end of March by crossing the nucleus of a certain comet. Well, we have heard that sort of thing before, and still the old earth sails easily along through space. If the flare-up does take place, according to program, we wish all our readers good-bye in advance. But we hope to see the first of April again—and we suggest that it should be permanently dedicated to the noble army of prophets. They ought to have a day of their own.

Benjamin William Smith, at a meeting in the Ilford Salvation Army Barracks, had his stomach distended by a lot of undigested currant pudding. He was speaking to a friend

on the uncertainty of life, and said he hoped when his call came it would be in God's house, when he suddenly fell dead. The currant pudding had done it. But what a prosaic exit! Heart failure through flatulence!

Lena Wells believed in Christian Science. We don't know whether she believes in it now. She was thirty years of age, and was staying at a farmhouse at Wombwell, between Sheffield and Barnsley. On the approach of a Great Central Railway train she said to a boy, "I will stop this train." Then she stood in the four-foot way, threw up her hands, and faced the engine. But she didn't stop the train. The train stopped her. And the coroner's jury brought in the usual verdict of suicide during temporary insanity.

Wasn't that verdict rather rough on Jesus? He taught that those who had faith should shift mountains. Perhaps the jury would be ready to find him insane too if he lived now and practised his own teaching.

"New Theology" Campbell told some truths at Bodmin. "For a generation," he said, "there had been a steady drifting away from organised religion as represented by the churches. The question was being asked whether Christianity could long hold its own. For the moment Christianity had lost its hold upon the thinking portion of mankind. It was quite true that there were many social activities in connection with the churches, and they were increasing, and if it were not for these the churches would have to shut up." We have said this in the *Freethinker* for more years than we care to count.

The "New Theology" has brought a new Christian paper into the field—in opposition. The name of it is the *Vanguard*, and it swears by the great and good Henry Varley, whom it calls a "man of God"—which we dare say he is. Of course it combines piety with business. While thanking its numerous friends for their valued help in making it known, it does not forget to announce: "We pray to our God to lead and guide us that we may truly express His mind and holy will." *Our God!* The *Vanguard* seems to have a God of its own.

Here is a sample of the *Vanguard's* wit. "We hear," it says, "that the oracle from the City Temple has gone to rusticate in Cornwall for some weeks, and is actually giving a month to preparing a volume on the Atonement." To which announcement it adds "Comment is unnecessary." There is something both original and profound about that witticism.

Henry Varley's contribution to this "Christian and Protestant" weekly opens, as might be expected, with a sweet reference to the Piccadilly "flesh market," with which this gentleman appears to be wonderfully familiar. And he adds that "all men naturally, everywhere, find pleasure in committing sin." Now we doubt this gentleman's right to speak for "all men," but we cheerfully allow his right to speak for himself; and that he finds pleasure in committing sin is a proposition which we shall not venture to dispute. It would be putting ourselves in conflict with the highest authority.

"There is a neck to neck race to hell," Varley says. Probably he is in that too, and shapes well for a good place in the handicap.

In a recent number of *Justice* a writer pointed out the gross discrepancy between the total income of the Church of England, as stated in a return made to the House of Commons in 1835, and the total income which it was well-known to enjoy. The real income was three times as much as what was admitted. It is well to remember this. It is also well to remember a good story of one parson who figured in the return as having £150 a year. He was known to hold two fat livings worth £1,200 a year, and he was asked to explain his discrepancy. He replied that his two livings were some distance apart, and that this necessitated his keeping a horse to ride to and fro; that his wife was in delicate health and needed a carriage to ride in; that he had four sons all requiring an expensive education; that he had to keep up a rather costly household; and that when all these things were paid for he had only £150 a year left for himself. In other words, the reverend gentleman made a return, not of his income, but of his pin-money. No wonder the general return was ridiculously inaccurate.

The death of Colonel Olcott—or "the Transition of Colonel Olcott," as a Spiritualist contemporary calls it—removes one

of Madame Blavatsky's "flapdoodle" dupes. That remarkably able, but utterly unscrupulous, woman—with the great tiger bar across her forehead, so common to human beasts of prey—was more than a match for a thousand Olcotts. Mrs. Besant, too, a much superior person to Colonel Olcott, was as putty in the Blavatsky's hands. These clever people had no defence against the primitive forces incarnated in the Theosophical adventuress. They were born to be her victims—and she was born to swallow them.

Mrs. Edersheim has obtained a decree nisi in the Divorce Court against her husband, the Rev. Alfred Edersheim, formerly rector of Blaisdon, Gloucestershire, who has gone off with another lady. There is no particular moral, except that parsons are very much like other men who have not been inoculated with the Holy Ghost—sometimes more so.

Father O'Neill, rector of the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, Hindsford, committed suicide by cutting his throat. The jury brought in the usual verdict of temporary insanity. There is no particular moral to this either, except that priests are no more favored than other men by "Providence."

Mr. William Walker, the absconding treasurer of the New Britain (Connecticut) Savings Bank, was a "model citizen" and a "pillar of the local church." Of course. He *would* be.

The godly were always persecuted. A lady called Hatherly, of Wimbledon, who conducted a Bible class and a mission for local railway servants, was fined 20s. and 44s. costs for travelling on the London and South Western line without a ticket and with intention to defraud. The prosecution said it was a bad case; she had been warned before. The godly woman said she did not know what prompted her to do it. But she knew why she had written the Company a letter "full of pious protestations."

Artistes engaged at the various places of amusement in Liverpool have held their annual gala in support of the local charities. On the other hand, there are fifty churches and chapels in the district that contribute nothing, although they send patients to the hospitals. Yet the men of God are always sneering at theatres and music-halls as the Devil's houses.

"Carados," of the *Referee*, had a slap last week at "a couple of blatantly anti-Christian prints" that had said something about the music-hall dispute in London. We don't know whether we are included. We hope so. For a snarl and a snap from the *Referee* nowadays are generally a good compliment. It was different many years ago. But the *Referee* has repented all the enthusiasms of its youth. And the great "Dagonet" himself, after exploiting his mother-in-law and his liver, now settles down to a mixture of the Jeremiah and the Old Fogey. But he isn't a Christian, after all; he only makes out to be.

A notorious American pickpocket, Fred Monaghan, has got into trouble in Paris, where he reaped a rich harvest disguised as a priest. Many a priest has been a pickpocket without any disguise at all.

Rev. Haskett Smith, in his *Patrollers of Palestine*, says a dragoon took him to a grotto at Bethlehem, and pointing to a silver star on the floor, stated that it was the one the Wise Men saw in the East! Well, why not? We don't read that the star went back to the East. It may be at Bethlehem still—if it was ever there.

We have received a letter from the Rev. R. C. Fillingham concerning the "Acid Drop" in which we pointed out that the Bishop of London has no control over Westminster Abbey. Mr. Fillingham says he is perfectly aware of that. With regard to the Bishop himself, the reverend gentleman says: "The Corporation of London gauged him in his true capacity—and impertinent meddler, and the greatest fool who ever disgraced the episcopal bench." There does not seem much love lost between some of the clergy.

Rev. Canon Woolmore Wigram, of St. Albans, left £39,809. "Blessed be ye poor"—"Wee unto you rich." What jokers the clergy are! Some of them must laugh till they ache when they look into their bank pass-books.

Another good man gone wrong. We mean the wrong way. Rev. Richard Harvey, of Southampton, left £42,307. "And in hell he lifted up his eyes." So says the text. But perhaps it isn't true.

More of 'em! Rev. Canon Henry Bailey, of Canterbury, left £15,669—and the Rev. Daniel Shaw, of Alsager, Cheshire, £15,441. That was a close race. No doubt the two rich soul-savers sit very near each other in the wrong place.

Dr. Clifford's testimonial has been presented to him at Whitefield's Tabernacle. £4,000 has been expended on an annuity of £400 jointly upon the lives of himself and Mrs. Clifford; £1,000 has been invested in his name, and at his disposal; and something over another £1,000 has been presented to him by cheque. Altogether the reverend gentleman may feel quite comfortable. Blow winds! Spout cataracts! *He's* all right. And we suppose his full salary goes on at the Chapel as long as he chooses to fill the pulpit. It pays better to be a Christian apostle now than it did in New Testament times. But the trade is decaying for all that; for Christianity itself is dying—dying of the one disease that kills all religions in time—being found out.

Rev. C. M. Sheldon, author of *In His Steps*, perhaps the trashiest book ever published, has got six months' leave of absence from his church at Topeka, Kansas, and is coming over to England to conduct a two months' lecturing campaign for the United Kingdom Alliance. Will it make much difference to the licensed victuallers?

One of the pictures rescued from the fire at the country mansion of Mr. John Wanamaker, the "Universal Provider" of Philadelphia, was Munkacsy's "Christ before Pilate." This picture was exhibited in England before it became the property of the American millionaire, and it was certainly well worth seeing. The two principal characters were painted with unusual frankness. Jesus was represented as a Jewish enthusiast, with mingled fanaticism and apprehension on his face and in his attitude; while Pilate was represented as a fine type of the Roman governor, full of intellect and character. Another picture of Munkacsy's in Mr. Wanamaker's collection was "The Crucifixion," but we never had the privilege of seeing it.

We congratulate M. Briand on his more conciliatory policy with the Catholic Church—for, after all, as we have pointed out again and again, French Catholics are not foreigners but Frenchmen. We also congratulate the Chamber of Deputies on its endorsement of the new policy by an overwhelming majority. We believe it will be found, in the end, that the only thing to do with the churches is to hand them over to the Catholic Church. That is what we have said all along. The churches are of no use for any other purpose than religious worship. Moreover, as long as the "sacred edifices" belong to the State, while used by the Church, there is no complete separation. A door is left open for possible trouble in the future.

At Salem Chapel, Hunslet-lane, Leeds, a gramophone has been doing duty instead of a soloist, and with "great acceptance," as they say in religious circles. What would the old Puritans have thought of this? Probably that the end of the world is approaching. But it doesn't mean as much as that. It only means that the end of Christianity is approaching.

Mr. George Nicholls, M.P., addressing a Salford P.S.A. meeting, said that "He had tried the Gospel at the plough, in the stone pit, and as a navy, also on the platform, in the pulpit, and in parliament, and after all this experience he was prepared to say he had found nothing more sustaining or satisfying." It reads like a Cocoa or Bovril testimonial.

Sir Oliver Lodge, the Balaam of English Religion, who is brought out to curse Haeckelism and unbelief generally, says some odd things now and then. This is what he said at a recent lecture in Manchester:—"Our animal ancestry explains many things which would otherwise be dark mysteries and sad, despairing and disquieting." Well might the good Christians lay their hands on the Bible and ask Sir Oliver Lodge "call you that backing of your friends?"

Bishop Thornton emitted a bad wail at Preston. There was a certain Lancashire town which could raise £1,400 at one football match, yet could only send £212 last year to foreign missions. The only conclusion we can draw from these facts is that football and common sense seem to go together.

Rev. A. J. Waldron has been orating at Brixton on "What is God?" Of course, if anybody knows, it is Waldron. He is a friend of God's. Some people say he looks it. Anyhow,

he announces that God is a loving father. Which is a pretty text—and we suppose the preacher's attack in the street on a poor little man who was giving away back numbers of the *Freethinker* may be taken as the commentary.

One other thing Mr. Waldron said—that "there was no atheist of standing left in England," and only one in Germany. The reverend gentleman ought to write for the *Daily Mail*.

Just a Fly.

HAVE you ever watched a fly "wash" itself, and been so close to it that you could see every little detail of its doings and every expression of its miniature body, and almost look right down into the states of its tiny soul as if it were a human being? I watched one a few days ago making its toilet on my hat, which was lying on the grass beside me in the park.

It was a dog fly, with its glossy, black "bill" sticking straight out in front of it. How interesting and dainty and real it all was. Not a part of its beautiful little body that it did not visit in turn with those wonderful brushes and combs.

First its face and neck, using its front pair of limbs, "scrubbing" so quickly and with such exquisite skill and daintiness time after time, each time pausing to clean its invisible brushes by drawing them back and forth over each other as they were held out in front of it. Then its wings, those wonderful films, using its hindmost limbs—first the under surfaces, then the upper, then along the back and sides of its glistening little body, always cleaning its brushes after each effort in that amazingly dexterous way. Finally its abdomen, which it held high in the air, "scrubbing" and massaging until every atom of dust, it would seem, were cast from its unseen setæ. How elegant and refined and intentional it all seemed.

The little creature stood in the sun scarcely more than a foot from my eyes, and I could see every attitude and expression with perfect distinctness. It was always alert, watchful and conscious. Once another fly lit on the hat, and as quickly as a wink away they both darted for a second or two circling somewhere in the sunny airs. Once it stopped, braced itself for instant flight, and stood as if transfixed, holding its front feet free in the air, while an event went by which I suppose seemed to it to have danger in it—like a boy standing with half-open mouth and bated breath gazing inanimately at something that has suddenly fixed his attention.

Poor little hexapod! With your wee ways, your exquisite little body and your toy-like soul! I wish I was acquainted with you and understood you. I wonder what you thought of me stretching out there on the landscape; and I wonder what you think of the other big masses of inhospitality like me which you see moving about in the world. I suppose it seems to you very "small" for us to grudge you the little drink of sweet red wine you ask, when we are so full of it and your poor, little, aching stomach is so empty. How I would like to go with you through the days and nights of your little summer life and learn all the secrets of your marvellous circlings. I wonder if you are often hungry. And I wonder if you are as lonely as I am in this world, poor, little, living, overlooked one. But you are not overlooked by yourself, are you?—nor by the other flies that wheel with you in your mazy circlings? I know how precious you are to yourself, though you cannot tell me in words, by the interest you take in yourself and the anxiety you have for your life. I know you are the most real and prized being in the world—the centre of this universe, where we are all, like you, pulling and hauling for importance.

—*To-Morrow* (Chicago).

J. HOWARD MOORE.

A Pugilistic Parson.

As we are going to press a case is being tried in the Wandsworth (Lavender-hill) Police Court. The Rev. A. J. Waldron is being proceeded against for assaulting Mr. John Wharmby, a man sent out to distribute copies of the *Freethinker*. Full particulars of this case will appear in our next issue. We have just time to add that, although the summons has been dismissed by the magistrate, the Court had to read Mr. Waldron a lesson, which it is to be hoped he will profit by, unless he wishes to get into further (and worse) trouble in future.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, March 3, Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow; at 12 noon, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?"—at 6.30, "The History of the God Idea."

March 17, Manchester.
May 6, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 10, Forest Gate. April 14, Glasgow.
- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 10, Birmingham; 24, West Stanley.
- THE JOSEPH SYMES FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £296 1s. 5d. Since received: Anna Lamont, 2s. 6d.; Ambrose Hurcum, 5s.; O. C. J., 2s. 6d.; E. Barbone, 2s. 6d.
- Correction.—M. Tempest 2s. 6d., in the Feb. 17 list, should have been 6d.
- THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £15 0s. 6d. Since received: Watson Walker, 2s.; A. Cayford, 6d.
- A. R. BROWN.—See paragraph. Thanks.
- D. W.—We have passed your order on to our shop manager. Such things should not be sent to us direct. With regard to your letter, we do not expect and do not wish, to make converts in the rapid manner boasted of by revivalists. The appeal to reason is necessarily a slower process, if it is to be really efficacious.
- C. W. STYRING.—Cuttings received with thanks.
- E. A. H. suggests that the Rev. T. Cutts (mentioned in last week's "Acid Drops") finds Infidelity so "chilling" because "he has been used to the climate of orthodoxy warmed by a good hot hell." This may be true too.
- E. LECHMERE.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- E. MOORCROFT.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- E. BROOKS.—We wrote a paragraph on the Endless Prayer business some months ago. It is hardly worth another.
- J. BROUGH.—Cuttings are useful.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—See "Acid Drops."
- A. LAMONT writes: "In 1904 the *Freethinker* was sent to me for six weeks, and I have got a copy every week since, and enjoy it immensely, particularly the 'Acid Drops.'" This should encourage our friends to send us more addresses of persons to whom we might send this journal free for six consecutive weeks with probable advantage.
- G. ROLETT asks how Bishop Wilkinson knows that "an unbeliever" lies in that Hanover grave referred to in last week's "Acid Drops." Our correspondent, who has often seen the gravestone in question, says that the inscription upon it is simply "Let no man remove this stone until the resurrection." Evidently we were right in our surmise as to the Bishop's accuracy. Thanks for cuttings.
- E. R. W.—Glad to hear that the *Freethinker* has again made its appearance at the Camberwell Library, and hope it will continue to do so.
- ALPINE.—Not of late years, and the effort of many years ago led to nothing.
- H. R. CLIFTON.—Pleased to hear you brought your daughter to the George Meredith lecture, and that you both "greatly enjoyed it." We will think over the suggestion and let you know. Thanks for the Salceby article.
- J. PATERIDGE.—Glad to know that Mr. Cohen had "a good audience" at the Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday evening.
- A. THOMAS.—We have not had time to deal with Father Tyrrell's book yet, but we have not forgotten it. Mr. J. T. Lloyd's *From Christian Pulpit to Secular Platform* can be obtained at our publishing office in two editions, at sixpence and twopence.
- J. GRIFFITHS.—The writer in the *Merthyr Express* had no right whatever to quote that passage in Joseph Symes's article referring to Robert Blatchford and father it upon the *Freethinker*. The views and opinions in signed articles are those of the writers, not those of the Editor or of the staff collectively.
- R. BROUGHTON.—Shall have attention. We will write you as soon as possible.
- A. J. NOTLEY.—A blunder will happen now and then. The wonder is we make so few, considering the rate at which we have to move.
- O. C. J.—The Symes Fund, as we said, is practically closed, but we do not return any subscriptions that dribble in. Copies of leaflet forwarded. Always pleased to hear from you.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

A month ago Mr. Foote could not fulfil his engagement at Glasgow. He lectures there to-day, however, in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street; not on the subjects he was billed for on February 3, but on two fresh ones, which are announced in another column.

The trying weather has been much against the last series of Queen's Hall lectures which Mr. Foote brought to a close on Sunday evening. In the circumstances, however, the meetings have been gratifyingly large; and sanguine hopes may be entertained of the other course which will be organised a little later on in the season, when the weather is likely to be more favorable. The peculiarity of Sunday evening's lecture on George Meredith was that, while it did not bring a crowd of regular "saints," it brought a number of outsiders, who appeared to enjoy what they heard. The applause at the end was markedly enthusiastic.

This suggests a reflection. Mr. Foote could probably work up a fresh audience altogether at Queen's Hall—and he may have to do it, although he would rather not. The truth cannot be blinked that Freethinkers do not support these efforts, in a general way, as they might. It would not be difficult to advertise the lectures by word of mouth amongst their friends and acquaintances, and a little missionary spirit on their part would enable them to bring some of their more orthodox friends along to the meetings. The Queen's Hall lectures are expensive, the rent is naturally heavy, and newspaper advertising is well-known to be costly. It follows, therefore, that if the "saints" will not co-operate as they should, something else will have to be done to make the meetings successful; that is to say, to involve no loss, but to leave a balance on the right side.

A gentleman residing at Worthing writes to Mr. Foote asking whether it is possible to get a full report of his Sunday evening lecture on George Meredith. "You would not have been troubled," he says, "but for the fact that an eager scrutiny of the major part of to-day's London journals has failed to discover even the slightest allusion to such an interesting theme. I think I divine the reason for so glaring an omission." The reason is the old press boycott of Freethought in general and Mr. Foote in particular.

In answer to several inquiries about Mr. Foote's health, we beg to say that, although he has had a bad time for the last six or seven weeks, he has stuck to his work and done it all, with the exception of two provincial lecturing engagements, and he is now gradually improving with the gradual improvement in the weather. The worst of it was that his old enemy insomnia, spying its advantage, leapt upon him again, and uncomfortable days were followed by wretched nights, a two hours' sleep at a stretch being quite a luxury. Fortunately there is a little improvement in this respect too, and the immense weariness of long want of sleep is beginning to lift. As soon as possible Mr. Foote will try to get away from the harder part of his work for a week or so, and enjoy a change of air and scene at the same time.

Joseph Symes brought a number of books—the relics of his old library—from Australia with him; and an effort will be made to sell these to the Freethought party, in the first instance through the agency of this journal. Miss Vance has undertaken the matter on Mrs. Symes's behalf. She is having a few lists of the books (with prices and cost of conveyance) prepared, and she will send these to applicants who really mean to purchase if they find anything suitable. When a selection is made, and an order placed, the list should be returned. Address.—Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

A very able and well-written letter by "W. G. C.," on "The Fall of Man," in reply to a sermon by the Rev. J. P. Watts, appeared recently in the *Thetford Times*. It is pleasant to see such excellent Freethought letters in the local press. We wish we could see more of them. Freethinkers who can write a good letter should try to serve the cause in this way.

Unfortunately we have had to make many complaints to the Post Office of late about the loss of copies of the *Freethinker* in transit. The matter has become quite serious, and we have suggested to the higher officials that some bigot may be responsible for the mischief. We hope these officials will try to get to the bottom of this new form of boycott, and shall be glad to hear from them when they do. Meanwhile we must beg subscribers and others who may be disappointed to recollect that we have done, and are doing, all that is possible to put an end to this nuisance.

The *Freethinker* has been going up again lately. Our last week's supply was inadequate to the demand. A good number who ordered copies must have been disappointed; but those who still want copies of last week's issue will probably be able to obtain them (out of the returns) by ordering again. We have arranged for a larger supply of the present number, and we hope to have to go on increasing the supply during the rest of the winter.

Authentic Epitaphs.

UNDER this yew
Lies Jonathan Blue.
(His name was Black,
But that wouldn't do.)

Beneath this sod
And under these trees
Lie the bod-
Y of Solomon Pease.
Pease is not here,
But only his pod;
He shelled out his soul
And it went up to God.

Here lies Thomas Bly,
Killed by a sky
Rocket
In the eye
Socket.

Viewing this gravestone with all gravity,
Dentist Jones is filling his last cavity.

Here lies, returned to clay,
Miss Arabella Young,
Who, on the 1st of May,
Began to hold her tongue.

It was a coughin' that carried me off,
It was a coffin they carried me off in.

This corpse
Is Peter Thorpe's.
Thorpe's
Corpse.

Here lies me any my three daughters,
Died of drinking Seltzer waters.
If we'd a stuck to Epsom salts,
We wouldn't have been in these here vaults.

Abe Dodd stood on the railroad track:
He did not hear the bell—
Toot, toot!
Farowell!

Here lies the body of Thomas Lee,
This is him. This is he.
A, B, C, D, E, F, G.

Here lies the body of Robert Gordin,
Mouth almighty and teeth accordin';
Stranger, tread lightly over this wonder;
If he open his mouth you're gone, by thunder!

—*Truthseeker* (New York.)

Tacitus and the Neronian Persecution.

ROME had been more than half destroyed by a frightful conflagration, and it was rumored that Nero was the incendiary of his own capital. Absurd as the rumor was, it is said that Nero was alarmed, and that he looked about for a victim to offer as a sacrifice to the angry multitude. What followed is related in the famous passage in Tacitus:—

"With this view he inflicted the most exquisite tortures on those men who, under the vulgar appellation of Christians, were already branded with deserved infamy. They derived their name and origin from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, had suffered death by the sentence of the procurator, Pontius Pilate. For a while this dire superstition was checked, but it again burst forth: and not only spread itself over Judaea, the first seat of this mischievous sect, but was even introduced into Rome, the common asylum which receives and protects whatever is impure, whatever is atrocious. The confessions of those who were seized discovered a great multitude of their accomplices, and they were all convicted, not so much for the crime of setting fire to the city as for their hatred of human kind. They died in torments and their torments were embittered by insult and derision. Some were nailed on crosses; others sewn up in the skins of wild beasts and exposed to the fury of dogs; others again, smeared over with combustible materials, were used as torches to illuminate the darkness of the night. The gardens of Nero were destined for the melancholy spectacle, which was accompanied by a horse-race, and honored with the presence of the emperor, who mingled with the populace in the dress and attitude of a charioteer. The guilt of the Christians, indeed, deserved the most exemplary punishment, but the public abhorrence was changed into commiseration, from the opinion that those unhappy wretches were sacrificed, not so much to the public welfare as to the cruelty of a jealous tyrant."

This passage occurs in the *Annals* (xv. 44) of Tacitus. Gibbon regards it as genuine; but let us look at the facts.

The *Annals* of Tacitus was first printed at Venice between 1468 and 1470. There is not a trace of the existence of this work prior to the fifteenth century. Mr. W. R. Ross has written a learned book to prove that it was forged by Bracciolini. He shows, by a wide appeal to Christian and Pagan authors, that the *History* of Tacitus was well known, but that there is not a single reference to the *Annals* during thirteen hundred years. He says that this long, unbroken silence is inexplicable, except on the ground that the work was not in existence; and he then gives a variety of reasons, personal, historical and philological, for concluding that the writer was not Tacitus, but Bracciolini.

I do not desire to take a side in this controversy; I do not know that I am entitled to. But in the circumstances, I do question the authenticity of the particular passage which relates the persecution of the Christians by Nero. It contains a reference to Jesus Christ, which would have been invaluable to the apologists of Christianity; but not one of them, from Tertullian downwards, until fourteen hundred years after the death of Christ, ever lighted upon it, or caught a glimpse of it, or even heard of its existence. And knowing what we do of the forgery practised in all ages on behalf of the Christian faith, I say that this particular passage—whatever may be the case with respect to the entire *Annals*—lies under very grave suspicion.

It is not generally known how very recent is the Christian appeal to Tacitus. Mr. Ross says that the *Annals*, though printed in the fifteenth century, was "not generally known till the sixteenth and seventeenth." A singular corroboration of this statement may be found in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*—as it is commonly (though incorrectly) called. This work was first published in 1563, and I find that Foxe knows nothing whatever of this (since) famous passage in Tacitus. He does relate that Nero slaughtered the Christians, but his authorities are Eusebius, Hegesippus, Sulpicius Severus and Orosius. He refers in a footnote to Suetonius, and the reference to

Tacitus is supplied, within brackets, by the modern editor.

This suspicious passage in Tacitus was probably based upon a very similar passage in Sulpicius Severus, a Christian writer who flourished about A.D. 400. I give the latter in full, so that the reader may, if possible, judge for himself:—

"In the meantime, when the number of the Christians was greatly increased, there happened a fire at Rome while Nero was at Antium. Nevertheless, the general opinion of all men cast the blame of the fire upon the emperor. And it was supposed that his aim therein was that he might have the glory of raising the city again in greater splendor. Nor could he by any means suppress the common rumor that the fire was owing to his orders. He therefore endeavored to cast the reproach of it upon the Christians. And exquisite tortures were inflicted upon innocent men; and, moreover, new kinds of death were invented. Some were tied up in the skins of wild beasts, that they might be worried to death by dogs. Many were crucified. Others were burnt to death; and they were set up as lights in the night-time. This was the beginning of the persecution of the Christians."

Lardner supposes that Sulpicius Severus had read Tacitus, but it is first necessary to prove that the *Annals*, or the special passage in it, existed *to be read*. Lardner also supposes that Sulpicius Severus had "other authorities," but who they were is left in obscurity. As a matter of fact, the farther back we go *beyond* this writer (A.D. 400) the less precise does the information become concerning the Neronian persecution of the Christians. The earliest Christian writers were ignorant of details with which later Christian writers were so familiar. And it is curious that, although the later Martyrologies are so circumstantial, not a single name was preserved by the Church of any Christian who perished in Nero's massacre. Paul is said to have been beheaded at Rome at some time, and Peter is said to have been crucified (upside down) there; but every student knows that these are mere traditions, which abound in supernatural incidents that deprive them of all historical value.

Supposing, however, that the Tacitus passage be genuine, still it lends no countenance to the common statement that Nero persecuted the Christians *as* Christians, or slew them for conspiring against his throne and life. Nero's action, as Lardner remarks, was "not owing to their having different principles in religion from the Romans, but proceeded from a desire he had to throw off from himself the odium of a vile action—namely, setting fire to the city." "The religious tenets of the Galileans or Christians," says Gibbon, "were never made a subject of punishment, or even of inquiry." Mosheim states that "Nero first enacted laws for the extermination of Christians," but later on he admits that "the Christians were condemned rather as incendiaries than on religious grounds"; and his English editor, Murdock, is obliged to point out that Nero did not enact *public laws* against them. It is impossible to refute the conclusion of Gibbon, that there were "no general laws or decrees of the senate in force against the Christians," when Pliny, in the beginning of the second century, wrote to the Emperor Trajan for instructions with respect to those who were accused at his tribunal of being worshipers of Christ. "Trajan's rescript," says Long, "is the first legislative act of the head of the Roman state with reference to Christianity, which is known to us." Pliny's translator, the elegant and learned Melmoth, remarks that his author's letter to Trajan "is esteemed as almost the only genuine monument of antiquity relating to the times immediately succeeding the Apostles"—which is rather severe on the other "monuments." Melmoth adds that the Christians came under the Roman law against unlicensed assemblies, and that, as they met just before the dawn, the very unusualness of the hour laid them open to the suspicion that they indulged in Bacchanalian practices. But it is not my purpose to write a disquisition on the reasons why the Christians of the second century were persecuted by a government

renowned for its religious toleration. My object is to demonstrate the truth that the Christians were not molested by Nero on account of their religion, and in this I think I have fully succeeded.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Few Words about the So-Called "New Theology."

THE most curious religious movement of the present day is that which has taken the watchword of "The New Theology." To one whose mind has been more or less occupied with questions connected with the history of dogma for half a century, this movement has a comic, as well as a tragic, side. Certainly it has a tragic side, for there is so much involved in it both for the clergy and the laity. The comic side is to be found in the epithet "new." What is there that is new in the utterances of these "new" theologians? In the face of history—of Christian history, beginning with the Palestinian and Alexandrian theories of the Logos, going on through the gorgeous grotesqueries of Gnosticism, the metaphysico-theologico-ecclesiastical and political controversies of subsequent centuries, even without taking any account of post-Reformation theological hair-splittings—in the face of all this, is it possible to devise a new scheme of "Christian" dogma, or even to arrive at a single new theological conception? The name "New Theology" might be given to a code of belief composed of a selection of articles from different creeds: this would be new, not as to its component parts, but only as an eclectic scheme. Is it possible that some men, whose thinking outruns their courage, use the phrase "New Theology" as a euphemism for "agnosticism"? It is possible that some preachers who adopt the phrase think only of the theology—perhaps have little intimate acquaintance with any other—to which they have subscribed, or which they find in their trust-deeds, or in which they have been educated. It would, of course, be a libel to apply this remark to the leaders of the movement, who have not ignorantly, but only as a matter of expediency, accepted or adopted the title of "New Theologians."

It would be interesting to discover just what the leaders themselves mean by their new name. The utterances that have reached the public eye or ear are of the vaguest kind, and are not seldom unintelligible. From Mr. Campbell's utterances—so far as they have reached me, and I have seen his article in the *Hibbert Journal*—I can certainly discover what he feels: I long ago passed through a similar experience. But I can discover little else of a definite character. Nor is there much that is definite offered us by the opponents. Even Dr. Clifford, when he explains why he patronises Mr. Campbell though he differs from him, utters only words. Another preacher—whose name need not be advertised—is reported to have drawn tears from his hearers by his rhapsodical defence of the old faith; but those who wept must have left their intellect at home. So far, the movement has not called forth any remarkable exhibition of mental vigor or erudition on either side. If it has, I have not discovered it.

Before we enquire further what the "New Theology" means, it will be well to consider a question of ethics—a question, indifference to which has already threatened to exert, if it has not exerted, a demoralising influence upon the pulpit. Those of the "New Theologians" who are preachers obtained an entry into the pulpit—in most cases, at any rate—by subscribing in some way to a doctrinal standard of some kind. Now what is—to use the language of the economists—what is the preachers' wages-fund? Is it an endowment of theological research? Or is it merely a fund for the purpose of securing the efficient exposition of a system of doctrines already tabulated? In either case, those who enjoy the use

of the fund have entered into a definite contract. If they observe the terms of the contract, well and good; if they do not, then we know how a court of law would treat the breach of such a contract in secular affairs; and is a contract less legally binding because it has reference to the performance of the most sacred duty a man can undertake?

This may seem to be a rather brutal way of stating the case, but the only honest way of getting out of the difficulty is to discover some method of giving the recipients of the preachers' wages-fund a legal right of independent research as well as the duties of exposition and pastorship.

To pass on now to a consideration of the "New Theology" itself. I am looking at the subject purely from the standpoint of those whose case I am considering, and not at all from my own personal standpoint, which may be kept entirely out of view. In the first place, it seems clear that those who have called themselves "New Theologians" have not only adopted a misnomer, but have done themselves an injustice, unless they wish to disown the Christian past altogether, which they evidently do not. But by adopting the epithet "New," besides cutting themselves off from their "Articles" and "Trust Deeds," which was inevitable, they have cut themselves off from more or less distinguished schools of past Christian belief. They do not stand so utterly alone; they are not such innovators as their designation suggests. In the tangled skein of past dogmatics they will find threads to which they can attach all the threads of their present belief.

Despite the vagueness of their utterances, it is impossible not to discover that in one direction or another they have drifted away from the hard-and-fast metaphysical definition of the Trinity, and many of their difficulties cluster round the Christology of orthodoxy. Here, least of all, is the epithet "New" applicable. From the time when the New Testament Christians were content to use terms which were absolutely undefined, but which suggested all that they needed to believe in, through the centuries of increasingly metaphysical terminology right on to the present day, there have been thinkers and schools of thought who have recognised similar difficulties. Even the hierarchical domination of Rome could not secure anything like a real conformity of belief within her pale. Again and again have her leading spirits, more or less unconsciously, reasoned themselves into what, in the eyes of the Church, was virtual heterodoxy. The "New" theologians are not new; they are in the "succession" of men at whose feet no one who still cares to call himself a Christian, need be ashamed to sit.

The same may be said of the question of "inspiration." It was not left to these days of science to devise what many still regard as unorthodox views on this matter. In fact, it was only in the age immediately subsequent to Luther's that some Protestants distinctly and dogmatically laid down the hard-and-fast rule of verbal inspiration, making the Biblical writers mere pens of the Deity ("*Dei auctoris calami*"). This view, which it is true had been approached before, had never been officially recognised by the Catholic Church; and it was not until a few years ago that a Pope, frightened by modern thought, was moved to issue a Bull which contained such strong language as—"Those who maintain that an error is possible in any genuine passage of the sacred writings either pervert the Catholic notion of inspiration, or make God the author of that error." Some readers will remember that this Bull, as interpreted by Cardinal Vaughan, broke the heart of the late eminent scientist and devout Catholic, Professor St. George Mivart. As to the Protestant "verbal inspiration" theory, that did not live—except in the minds of a part of Protestantism—into the century after that in which it was first promulgated.

The "New" theologians also find difficulties in the matter of miracles, though it would be premature to say that they reject the miraculous altogether. Revelation is "miraculous" in a strict sense,

whether subjective or objective. Do the "New Theologians" altogether reject the miraculous in some parts of the history of Christ? But they would doubtless eliminate the commoner physical miracles, and here they are neither "New" nor alone among those who claim the title "Christian."

The word "immanence" crops up again and again in their utterances. And here one is provoked once more to complain of vagueness. "Immanence" is a term which needs much qualifying if it is to convey any very definite meaning. The users of it, in the several cases, doubtless know what they mean, but what the hearers understand by it depends upon the knowledge of the hearers. In itself it may connote the purest Pantheism or the most ecstatic mysticism; nor is it incompatible with the most mechanical ritual, for no ritual can have any *raison d'être* except as a means by which some degree of "immanence" in the worshiper can be brought about.

If the "New Theology" is to mark a fresh era in Christian theological thought it must get another title, and its expositors must express themselves less vaguely. There are not a few onlookers who would explain the whole movement by saying that *the sublime modern spirit of ethical sincerity has grown powerful enough forcibly to invade the pulpit, where it is attempting to infuse its lofty vitality into the dry bones of a dead theology, but is finding that those bones cannot be fitted together into a living organism.*

ARTHUR RANSOM
(An Old Ex-Precacher).

Hugh O. Pentecost Dead.

MR. H. O. PENTECOST died Saturday evening, the 2nd instant, at about 10.30. The trouble was ulceration of the stomach, for which an unsuccessful operation was performed on the previous Thursday.

Mr. Pentecost was born in New Harmony, Ind., in 1847, and was graduated from Madison University in 1870. Two years later he was ordained a Baptist minister. While in charge of a church at Hartford he met and married Miss Ida Gatling, daughter of the gun-maker. He was at one time pastor of the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church in Brooklyn. He was the pastor, from 1886 to 1888, of the Bellevue Avenue Congregational Church, Newark, N. J., succeeding the Rev. Dr. George H. Hepworth. When he went to Newark he was regarded as an orthodox preacher, but his religious views were soon discovered to be extremely liberal. He startled some of his congregation by his radical views on many things. Finally he gave up the pulpit, renouncing all religious belief, and became an advocate of the Henry George single tax system. He disseminated his views through lectures and a magazine he published called the *Twentieth Century*. He took up the study of law and was admitted to the bar in 1892. He joined Tammany Hall, and a year later, was appointed an Assistant District Attorney by Col. John R. Fellows. Public protest against his appointment was so strong that he was prevailed upon to send a letter to Colonel Fellows declining the place. Mr. Pentecost leaves a widow and two married daughters.

The readers of *The Truthseeker* are better acquainted with Mr. Pentecost's social and religious ideas than any of the obituarists outside this office. While he lectured in the Masonic Temple he was classed with the philosophical Anarchists, as he was while conducting the *Twentieth Century*, and was a "workingman's advocate." When he resumed his public work, after some years' rest, he spoke along the same lines. Last spring he called himself a Socialist. His religious views were those of Atheism and Materialism.

Mr. Pentecost was a most lovable man personally, a fluent orator, simple in his methods, but attractive to his hearers. He was the best stirrer-up of thought we have had among the Liberals of this city. He was not the same man two consecutive weeks except in one thing—strict adherence to the principles of liberty—freedom of thought, speech and action. He changed his mind on short notice; one of his critics in *The Truthseeker*, as he confessed to us, turned him completely around on one subject. About one-half of those who wrote to us concerning him were opposed to his loose views, the other half thought the world of him. To us Mr. Pentecost seemed to be a man who knew the world thoroughly, saw the folly of the fools who are in it and laughed at them, but sympathised with the serious ones who are trying to mend it. He did not take himself nor any one

else seriously enough to get indignant over anything. One moment with him, things were all right, were as they must be, and the next they were all wrong. The first was his philosophical mood and the second the play of his large sympathies. He will be tremendously missed by the Free-thinkers and Radicals of this city, and the sense of loss will extend all over the country.

The funeral has not taken place at this writing, but is announced to be private.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Hicks, the Miner.

THE rescue of the miner, Lindsay B. Hicks, from under sixty feet of muck and rock at Kern River Camp, California, after more than fifteen days of hard work on the part of his comrades, has been variously commented on by the daily press, but it does not yet appear whether he drew his full pay or not, during the period that he was entombed.

The one fact that stands out above and beyond all others is—in a group of "rough miners" who, as a rule, do not value the life of a human being for more than a thirty-eight calibre cartridge, a fidelity and comradeship, purely voluntary, suddenly leaps to the fore, and with a heroism and faith that eclipses the zeal of martyrs, they toil night and day for half a month while the whole world takes a hand in their enthusiasm, and when at last the thousands of tons of rock that separate them from their comrade are finally removed, and the leader is enabled to reach between the wheels of the truck and grasp the hand of his comrade, the joyful news is spread immediately to other camps along the mountain side, down into other mines, and telegraphed to cities far and wide throughout the world.

Such is the power of voluntary aid and mutual brotherhood when not interfered with by the fetish of compulsion and authority, and this is the power which stands ever ready to hold mankind together as brothers in solidarity *whenever faith displaces fear in the hearts of men.*

No episode could more successfully establish the effectiveness of non-resistance than the enormous power and interest generated by this one imprisoned man as soon as he became utterly helpless and entirely dependent upon the efforts of others—only as we are completely undone are we immediately accorded the power that despots seek but never wield.

The personality of Hicks, the miner, pales to nothingness as we contemplate the stupendous force which arose out of his weakness. We are appalled as our vision turns from the miner to witness humanity's reaction for, with a raging cataract in view, whose eyes would dwell upon a single drop of water, even though it were a human tear.

It is strange that in the thousands of daily manifestations throughout the world, wherein nature constantly reassures us with unflinching persistence that the real controlling force in human society is naught but love, it is strange, I repeat, that hate and compulsion should still be employed as tools—weak, miserable, incompetent tools, when at every opportunity and under all circumstances that will permit her to do so, kind nature, with wondrous pity and unaccountable anxiety, urges us, indicates to us, and brings before our eyes in every fashion that a faithful dog might employ in trying to coax us to where a babe had fallen in the snow, that the one great implement for regulating the world is *Love* and her hand-maiden, *Mutual Aid.*

Hicks, the miner, felt this great force, he was moved by it, thrilled by it, and he knew at once that his previous living had not been in accordance with its power, and not having any other or better explanation, he thought it was the God of our ancestors, and became converted, and declared that henceforth he should pray, when in fact, not Hicks alone, but the whole race should take the cue and live in brotherhood—it is by the way they live their lives and not by their "prayer talk" that we know what men are.

—*To-Morrow* (Chicago).

CHURCH MODESTY.

At a time when eminent prelates of the Older Church were eulogising debauched princes like Louis XV., and using the unspeakably obscene casuistry of the Jesuit Sanchez in the education of the priesthood as to the relations of men and women, the modesty of the church authorities was so shocked by Linnæus' proofs of a sexual system in plants, that for many years his writings were prohibited in the Papal States and in various parts of Europe where clerical authority was strong enough to resist the new scientific current.—*Prof. Andrew D. White.*

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

Were not the Greeks a glorious people? What is there, as Job says of the Leviathan, like unto them? If the army of Nicias had not been defeated under the walls of Syracuse; if the Athenians had, acquiring Sicily, held the balance between Rome and Carthage, and sent garrisons to the Greek colonies in the South of Italy, Rome might have been all that its intellectual condition entitled it to be, a tributary, not the conqueror of Greece; the Macedonian power would never have attained to the dictatorship of the civilised states of the world. Who knows whether, under the steady progress which philosophy and social institutions would have made (for, in the age to which I refer progress was both rapid and secure) among a people of the most perfect organisation, whether the Christian religion would have arisen, or the barbarians have overwhelmed the wrecks of civilisation which had survived the conquest and tyranny of the Romans? What then should we have been? As it is, all of us who are worth anything, spend our manhood in unlearning the follies, or expiating the mistakes, of our youth. We are stuffed full of prejudices; and our natural passions are so managed, that if we restrain them we grow intolerant and precise, because we restrain them not according to reason, but according to error; and if we do not restrain them, we do all sorts of mischief to ourselves and others.—*Shelley, "Letter to John Gisborne."*

ALTRUISM AND EGOISM.

Altruism (other-love) is just as natural as egoism (self-love) is. There is not so much of it in the world as there is of egoism. But that is simply the misfortune of our place of existence. There is no reason why there might not have been as much, or even more, under different conditions. With the same antecedents, nothing can, of course, happen differently from what does happen. But with different antecedents, different causes, the results are bound to be different. Civilised men are not beings of altruism, because they are *not* the effects of that kind of causes. But there is no reason why there might not be a world—several of them, in fact, or even a universeful—where the inhabitants have never known or heard of such an indelicate thing as of beings preferring themselves to others—where it is as natural for them to act toward each other according to what we call the Golden Rule, as it is for us terrestrial heathens to violate it. It is possible to conceive of beings with even too much altruism. The ideal condition is one of balanced egoism and altruism—one in which each thinks as much of others as he does of himself, no more and no less.

—*J. Howard Moore, "The Universal Kinship."*

HOW MEN DIE.

I have careful records of about five hundred death-beds, studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. The latter alone concerns us here. Ninety suffered bodily pain or distress of one sort or another, eleven showed mental apprehension, two positive terror, one expressed spiritual exaltation, one bitter remorse. The great majority gave no signs one way or the other; like their birth, their death was a sleep and a forgetting.—*Dr. William Osler, "Science and Immortality."*

MIGHT AND RIGHT.

Some usurper of supernatural energy might subdue the whole globe to his power; he might possess new and unheard-of resources for enduring his punishments with the most terrible attributes of pain. The torments of his victims might be intense in their degree and protracted to an infinite duration. Still the "will of the lawgiver" would afford no surer criterion as to what actions were right or wrong. It would only increase the possible virtue of those who refuse to become the instruments of his tyranny.—*Shelley.*

THE "MORAL ORDER."

In the extraordinary development of commerce of the nineteenth century, the number of catastrophes and accidents has necessarily increased beyond all imagination; of that the journal is a daily witness. Thousands are killed every year by shipwreck, railway accidents, mine accidents, etc. Thousands slay each other every year in war, and the preparation for this wholesale massacre absorbs much the greater part of the revenue in the highest civilised nations, the chief professors of "Christian charity." And among these hundreds of thousands of annual victims of modern civilisation, strong, industrious, courageous workers prodigious. Yet the talk of a "moral order" goes on.—*Haeckel.*

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, Conversation for Members and Friends.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, 27 Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, E. Pack, "Peculiar Sects."

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Masonic Hall, 11 Melbourne-place): 6.30, J. H. Smith, "Theosophy and Socialism."

FALSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Half-yearly Meeting.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): G. W. Foote, 12 noon. "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" 6.30, "The History of the God Idea."

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S. (No. 9 Room, Trade and Friendly Hall): Tuesday, March 5, at 8, Important Meeting for Propaganda Work.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Opening of the Hall.

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

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, March 7, at 8, F. J. Shaw, "Socialism in the Working."

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

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MERTHYR ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Friends are informed that a new Course of Lectures will commence March 3.—For information please write the Hon. Sec., P. PHILLIPS, Grove House, Gwaelodygarth, Merthyr.

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