

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*If in the morning I hear of the right way, and in the evening die, I can be happy.—CONFUCIUS.*

## Blessed Be Ye Poor.

A LEADING London newspaper once opened its columns to a discussion of the question, "Is Christianity Played Out?" In a certain sense it is *not* played out. To use a common expression, "there's money in it." Despite the "poverty" of the "lower clergy," for whom so many appeals are made, the clerical business beats all others, if we compare the amount of investment with the size of the dividend. Relatively speaking, the profits are magnificent. There are some curates with only a workman's wages, and of course they merit our deepest sympathy. It is quite shocking to think that a disciple of the "poor Carpenter of Nazareth" has to subsist and support his dear children on such a miserable pittance. It is a calamity which calls for tears of blood. But, on the other hand, there are Archbishops with princely incomes, Bishops with lordly revenues, Deans and Canons with fine salaries and snug quarters; and between the two extremes of the fat bishop and the lean curate is a long line of gradations, in which, if we strike an average, the result is very far from despicable. It may be added that, while the leading Nonconformist ministers, at least in England, do not rival the great Church dignitaries in the matter of income, they often run up to a thousand a year and sometimes over it. Taking the average of their incomes, we have no hesitation in saying it is beyond what they would earn in the ordinary labor market.

Joseph Symes asked, "Who's to be Damned if Christianity is True?" Certainly, he said, the clergy stand a fine chance. They are more likely to go to Hades than the congregations they preach to. On an average they are better off. They preach, or *should* preach, the blessings of poverty and the curse, nay, the damnableness, of wealth. According to the teaching of Jesus, as we read it in the Sermon on the Mount, and as we find it illustrated in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, every pauper is pretty sure of a front seat in heaven; and every man of property or good income is equally sure of warm quarters in hell. But you do not meet parsons in workhouses, though some of them get a good deal of outdoor relief. Go into a country parish and look for the clergyman's house; you will not find it difficult to discover. The best residence is the squire's, the next best is the parson's. Everywhere the clericals appropriate as much as they can of the good things of this world. They find it quite easy to worship God and Mammon together. The curate has his eye on a vicarage; the vicar has his on a deanery; the dean has his on a bishopric. The Dissenting minister is open to improve his position. Sometimes he is invited to another church. He wrestles with the Lord and makes enquiries. If they prove satisfactory, he recognises "a call." Other people, in ordinary business, would honestly say they were accepting a better situation; but the man of God is above all that, so he obeys the Lord's voice and goes to a position of "greater service," though it would puzzle him to show an extra soul saved by the alteration.

Modern Christianity is simply an organised hypocrisy. The note of modern apologetics is the phrase of "Christ-like." In one respect the gentlemen who strike this note *are* Christ-like. They live on the gifts of the faithful, including those of "rich women." But the likeness ends there. In other respects they are dissimilar to their Master. He *died* upon the cross and they *live* upon the cross. Yes, and many of them get far more on the cross than they would ever get on the square.

Doubtless we shall be censured in vigorous biblical language for speaking so plainly. But we mean every word we say, and are prepared to make it good in discussion. Men should practise what they preach. Those who teach that poverty is a blessing should themselves be poor. Those who teach that God Almighty cried "Woe unto you rich!" should avoid the curse of wealth. If they do not, they are hypocrites. It is no use mincing the matter. Plain speech is best on such occasions. When the great Dr. Abernethy told a gouty, dyspeptic, rich patient to "live on sixpence a day and earn it," his advice was more wholesome than the most dexterous rigmarole.

"Blessed be ye poor" and "Woe unto you rich" are texts with which the Church has bamboozled the multitude in the interest of the privileged classes. The disinherited sons of earth were promised all sorts of fine compensations in Kingdom-Come; meanwhile, kings, aristocrats, priests and all the rest of the juggling and appropriating tribe, battered on the fruits of other men's labor. The poor were like the dog crossing the stream and seeing the big shadow of his piece of meat in the water. "Seize the shadow!" the priests cried. The poor did so. But the substance was not lost. It was snapped up and shared by those who gave the advice.

The people have been told that the gospel is a cheap thing—without money and without price. That is the prospectus. But the gospel is frightfully dear in reality. Religion costs more than education. England spends more in preparing her sons and daughters for the next world than in training them for this world. Yet the next world may be nothing but a dream, and certainly we *know* nothing about it; while this world is a solid and often a solemn fact, with its business as well as its pleasures, its work as well as its enjoyments, its duties as well as its privileges. To keep people out of hell and guide them to heaven (places that only exist in the map of faith), we spend over twenty millions a year. This is a sum which, if wisely devoted, would remedy the worst evils of human society in a single generation. It would found countless institutions of culture and innocent recreation; and, by means of experiments, it would solve a host of social problems. Instead of doing this, we keep up a huge army of black-coats to fight an imaginary Devil; yet we call ourselves a *practical* people. Christianity has its roots deep down in the *wealth* of England, and this is the secret of its power, allied of course with its usurped authority over the minds of little children. The churches and chapels are mostly social institutions, Sunday resorts of the "respectable" classes. For any purpose connected with the real welfare of the people Christianity might just as well be dead and buried—as it will be when the people see the truth.

G. W. FOOTE.

## The Ethics of Expurgation.

If there is one thing the people of this country are prone to, it is the work of looking after other people's morals—which is at once an easier and a pleasanter task than looking after one's own. The benefits of the inquisition are seldom very apparent, unless one reckons conscious hypocrisy on the one side and an unconscious hypocrisy on the other a moral gain. But the fact remains that the work is taken up with avidity and pursued with enthusiasm. Whether it be a movement for suppression of vice at home, or a mission to civilise savages abroad and bring them up to the standard of our almost unapproachable British morality, the fact is equally patent. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" was the old Jewish command; the average Christian loves his neighbor better than himself—at least he is trying to bring him up to a standard of excellence seldom exemplified in his own character. The neighbor retorts, of course, with the same policy. And thus, by a wise provision of Nature, everybody is provided with employment, without anybody being affected.

If this class of people merely wrote and talked, little need be said about them. Those who were not interested would neither listen nor read. But, unfortunately, these people get into positions of power or influence, and their opinions then become crystallised in practice. And at this point everybody is concerned. Circulating libraries and large news-agents decide, without any qualms as to the reliability of their judgment, what is not suitable for their subscribers or customers to read. And these latter submit with a tameness that is eloquently suggestive of the docility of disposition engendered by a long course of Mrs. Grundyism. Public libraries are governed by exactly the same principles. Instead of being places where good and representative literature is kept for the benefit of those who pay for their maintenance, they are ruled by a committee who are often as good judges of literature as a cow is of a landscape, and who decide what is fit and proper for the ratepayers to read; and, as all is done in the sacred name of morality, they dutifully submit. Boccaccio's Jew decided that the Catholic Church must have God at the back of it, since otherwise so wicked an institution could not maintain itself; and really one might put in a plea for British greatness on the ease with which we submit to stupid regulations.

An Education Committee has just distinguished itself by placing Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* on the list of prohibited books. Commenting on this, the *Tribune* remarks that there is much to be said for the practice of editing English classics for school use so as to "exclude anything to which the most scrupulous may take exception," and adds that the "firms who issue such English school texts are rendering a genuine service to education." With the wisdom of the Education Committee's decision I am not now concerned, but more with the general question of issuing expurgated editions of authors who have a standing in the history of literature. That this should be done at all is, I believe, bad enough, but that it should be done in the alleged interests of literature and morality is infinitely worse.

The practice, it must be noted, only affects classics—books, that is, that have by their general excellence established a claim to notice that is admitted by all. Poor books need not be expurgated, because they do not live. It may safely be said that no merely bad book will continue to exist. Books either live by their excellences or not at all. There may be bad things or distasteful things in the best of books; but, after all, it is the excellence of the book as a whole that secures its immortality.

Now, on what grounds is this practice of expurgation justified? In the first place, it is said, they are not suitable for young people to read. But, admitting this for the moment, is there any necessity for young people reading them? Shakespeare, Cervantes, Swift, Fielding, wrote for men and women, not children.

Young people would not be likely to select *Don Quixote*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Tom Jones*, or Shakespeare; or, if they did, their selection would be some little proof of ability to appreciate them. Any book that is a book may have a beneficial influence on the development of a boy or girl, but there is no one book that is absolutely indispensable to the proper education or development of anyone. We are, I think, very apt to overestimate the importance of certain books in the education of people, and, curiously enough, they are most prone to this whose knowledge of books is of the most superficial character. If it is not desirable that certain books should be read by young people, let them wait until they are old enough. But when they do have an author's work in their hands, let it be *his* work, and not the joint production of himself and someone else; the contribution of the someone else being made up of a villainous and unnecessary mutilation. As lief kill a man as a good book, said Milton; and I fancy this applies to mutilation as well as murder.

Is it quite certain, however, that every "young person" needs such scrupulous care-taking to keep them from contact with some of the world's best literature? The matter seems to me at least open to question, particularly as the inquiry cannot in the nature of the case be concerned with mere children. To force young people to read books of this class is one policy, and one that no sensible person would adopt. But to permit them access to good literature and allow them to select at their pleasure, is quite another and a reasonable policy. No one will accuse Ruskin of any desire to place within reach of young people either unclean or debasing books, yet here is his advice, deliberately given as to the choice of books for girls:—

"Whether novels, or poetry, or history be read, they should be chosen, not for their freedom from evil, but for their possession of good. The chance and scattered evil that may haunt, or hide itself in, a powerful book never does any harm to a noble girl; but the emptiness of an author depresses her, and his amiable folly degrades her. And if she can have access to a good library of old and classical books, there need be no choosing at all. Keep the modern magazine and novel out of your girl's way; turn her loose into the old library every wet day and let her alone. She will find what is good for her.....Let her loose in the library, I say, as you do a fawn in the field. It knows the bad weeds twenty times better than you; and the good ones too, and will eat some bitter and prickly ones, good for it, which you had not the slightest thought would have been so."

We are not, then, I think, called upon to expurgate good literature in the interests of the young; left alone, their instincts will be, on the whole, their safest guides; or, in cases where these instincts betray them—a catastrophe usually produced by wrong or vicious training—the remedy is to be found in a more effective education elsewhere rather than in the mutilation of a great man's work.

There is another aspect of the matter that affects both young and old. Who is it who is to sit in judgment on the world's masterpieces of literature and decide what is good for the people to read? Is it the publishers? These may be very excellent people in their way, but they are not usually possessed of the qualifications for dictating to either a Swift, a Sterne, or a Fielding. And what guide have the publishers in their selection? Their desire is to sell; their policy is to exclude anything that will hinder the sale; and thus, in the long run, it is not even the publishers, who at least have an acquaintance with books—in bulk—who are the judges, but the comparatively unthinking and comparatively illiterate general public. The prurient-minded puritan, the man whose taste for good literature has been degraded by copious courses of cheap sensationalism—religious and secular—is constituted an unofficial licenser of books by a policy that is both cowardly and dishonest. The host of "popular" novelists, who by cheap sensationalism, false emotion, unreal characterisation, and impossible ethics do really debase character, receive the stamp of approbation,

while the *great* writers are carefully scanned for the excision of all that bigotry and moral cowardice may take exception to.

The policy of expurgation does not stop with those passages which are not in conformity with the surface of drawing-room morality. It is extended to matters of taste and opinion. At one moment it is a question of the *moral* effect of certain passages, at another the effect of other passages on religious belief, at some other moment something else. The policy is one that inevitably grows, and its danger increases with its scope. Many of the great writers have suffered from it, and, what is even more important, generations of readers likewise. The only writer who is safe from attack is the one whose work might be buried "fathoms deep" without loss to anybody. It is a policy that places a premium upon mediocrity and a tax upon ability and courage. It is a policy that is both cowardly and dishonest; cowardly because it of necessity only attacks the dead, and dishonest because it puts into the hands of uninformed readers a book that is not the work of the person whose name it bears. If a book is worth possessing, let us have that or nothing. No one wants—or no one ought to want—Shakespeare filtered through the mind of a Bowdler, or some other classic doctored by a publisher anxious to please the more uncultured section of the public.

The injustice to the illustrious dead is great; the injury to the living is even greater. The former suffer by misrepresentation, the latter by the creation of a whole atmosphere that is essentially unhealthy. Young people cannot grow up morally strong because their true moral strength is seldom appealed to. They cannot grow up intellectually straightforward for the reason that the type of mind that sees no injustice in producing a mangled version of a dead man's work is incapable of imparting such a lesson. The one lesson insistently inculcated by practice and precept is, that if one possesses opinions, let him be careful in expressing them, and, if they are likely to militate against one's "getting on," suppress them altogether. The result is the creation of a social environment saturated with artificiality and insincerity; a generation dreading boldness of thought and faithfulness of speech more than anything else; and a public press that can look upon the publication of mutilated editions of classical authors as "a genuine service to education."

C. COHEN.

### Christian Science.

SUCH is the baptismal name of a Christian sect that first saw the light some forty years ago. The land which had the misfortune to give it birth was America, and most of its nurses, tutors, guardians, and champions have been American men and women. Its high-priestess is Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, of Lynn, Massachusetts, and its infallible text-book, its court of final appeal, is this lady's *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures*. A year after the publication of this strange book, a Christian Scientist Association was formed, and four years later Mrs. Eddy became the pastor of a "Church of Christ, Scientist," in Boston. Since then the sect has grown and prospered beyond its merits. There are now in London some three Christian Scientist Churches, with a membership of 3,000. One of these societies has its headquarters at Portman Rooms, Baker-street, where all its public services are held. To outsiders, these services are insufferably dull and uninteresting. On the platform there are two reading-desks, the one occupied by a lady and the other by a gentleman. The lady gives out the hymns and reads portions of Scripture, while later on the gentleman reads a long list of Bible passages, and the lady, a corresponding list of passages from Mrs. Eddy's book. These alternate readings from the two sources are said to "comprise our sermon."

Now, what is this Christian Science? It is evidently a Christian sect, and it claims to be a fair

deduction from the teaching of the Bible; but is it any more reasonable than Christianity as ordinarily understood? A few days ago, Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, rendered famous through the world-wide popularity of the late Henry Ward Beecher, pronounced a very unfavorable judgment upon it. The trustees, by a vote of six to two, decided to permit the building to be used on a given evening for a lecture on behalf of Christian Science. This action was taken, in all innocence, without the knowledge either of the minister, Dr. Hillis, or of the members. A violent storm arose at once. A numerous-attended meeting of protest was held by the members, at which the trustees were unanimously requested to rescind their resolution, which they immediately did. Now, Dr. Hillis, who is a remarkably strong man, justified his opposition, according to a cablegram to the *Tribune*, "upon the ground that Mrs. Eddy's followers do not believe in the Fatherhood of God, while the congregation is shocked at the idea of their church being considered by implication as being in sympathy with Eddyism, the founder of which is denounced as a money-making old woman." Is Plymouth Church right or wrong in its estimate of Christian Science? Let us inquire.

A month ago, the Albert Hall, London, was crowded in every part, when Mr. Bicknell Young, a member of the Board of Lectureship of the American Church, delivered an eloquent discourse on the subject of Christian Science. Mr. Young is looked upon as an authoritative exponent of the doctrines of this new denomination. Well, what is Christian Science, according to this official representative? Its fundamental doctrine seems to be "that God is Mind and that Mind is God"; and, strangely enough, it claims to find this doctrine in the Bible. Of course, the Bible is the most wonderfully comprehensive book in the world. It can be so explained as to give support to the most preposterous and absurd ideas ever invented. But in what chapter and verse is God declared to be Mind, or Mind God? Did Jesus ever address or speak of the Deity as Mind? Did he not invariably call him Father? And what is Mind? What is meant by infinite Intelligence? Mr. Young does not pretend to be able to tell us. He admits that "there are many contradictory opinions and beliefs concerning God, some of them unreasonable, unnatural, and even grotesque," and then affirms that "Christian Science gives definitions of God which are found to be universally acceptable and satisfying to the human reason." Of a certainty, Mr. Young is an audacious romancer. The assertion that the God of Christian Science is "universally acceptable and satisfying to the reason" is idiotic in the extreme. Why, all the Christian Scientists on the planet are but a merest handful, a fact of which Mr. Young cannot be ignorant.

The next Christian Scientist dogma is that there is nothing but God. "There is but one Mind, one God, one Christ, and nothing real but Mind. Matter and sickness are subjective states of error, delusions which can be dispelled by the mental process of a true knowledge of God and Christ, or Christian Science." Again and again Mr. Young contends that "there is only one power, God, Good, and that to admit any other is to break the first commandment." This is the truth of absolute science, he assures us; but, unfortunately, human experience is at deplorable variance with it. "Absolute science" says one thing, and daily experience the very opposite. Mr. Young frankly grants this. Here are his exact words as reported in the *Tribune* for April 24:—

"Christian Science is no system of superficial optimism. It declares the science of Life or Being, and shows its availability to man through right understanding and correct practice. It declares God is good and that in and of him is no evil at all, but it never declares that human experience is all good."

Mr. Young is not given to exact thinking and logical statement. Why is it that human experience is not all good? Why is it that "in human experience sin, sickness, and death abound"? If in the Universe there is but "one power, God, Good," how are we to

account for the presence of sin, sickness, and death in man's experience? If there is but "one power, God, Good," how did they come into existence? Mr. Young is discreetly silent on this point. And yet, in spite of this silence, he proudly maintains that "Christian Science does answer these questions satisfactorily, and that it provides a complete and perfectly satisfactory solution of all problems of human existence." It is the only system in the world which has ever done this." We declare, on the contrary, that with no doctrine of God as infinite Intelligence and absolute Good and the sole power, can the existence of sin, sickness, and death be even approximately harmonised—the very existence of these things in experience is a flat denial of the existence of an absolutely good God. Listen this:—

"Through progress and proof of his own understanding of Christian Science, one begins to comprehend the explanation made by it as to the nature of evil, wherein it is seen that sin, sickness, and death are no part of God, the Mind which is holiness, health, and life; that, therefore, sin, sickness, and death are without God or science or truth in the world, and are due to a false, finite, material, inadequate, unscientific, and untrue sense of being as existent in matter."

I challenge any reasonable person to detect in that passage anything like a satisfactory account or explanation of the nature and origin of sin, sickness, and death.

Mr. Young thinks he extricates himself from the dilemma by saying that sin, sickness, and death do not really exist. They are real only to our experience, and all we have to do to get rid of them is to think that God is without them. Here is a man suffering from pulmonary phthisis, a disease which we now know to be due to the presence of a parasite in the lungs. This minute creature lives by consuming the very substance of the breathing apparatus. The science of biology tells us that if the phagocytes in the system are not numerous and vigorous enough to eat up and so destroy the parasite, or if it cannot be poisoned by the application of drugs, the parasite will certainly kill the man. But Christian Science says the parasite exists only in your experience, as do also the lungs. Phthisis is without God or science or truth in the world, and is due to a false, finite, material, inadequate, unscientific, and untrue sense of being as existent in matter. The truth is, you are not the victim of consumption at all; there is no parasite feasting on your lungs; and if you allow this thought to permeate your whole being, you will speedily get well.

To call such teaching "science" is an insult to language and a calumny upon reason. Mr. Young asserts that "it is either science, or nothing," that "it operates by means of the law of Truth or God, or not at all," and that "its statements can be proven." It would not be possible to make a more foolish assertion. Science deals with facts, while this religion concerns itself with fancies. The existence of God or universal Mind is a gratuitous assumption, not a scientific discovery. The unreality of matter, and, consequently, of sin, sickness, and death, is a philosophical conception, or a speculative dream, not in any sense an object of knowledge. What Mr. Young calls Christian Science is nothing but Mr. Campbell's Monistic Idealism, or what used to be called Neo-Hegelianism, of which the late T. H. Green, of Oxford, was the great English expounder. Mr. Young says that its statements can be proven, but he prudently refrains from adducing any proofs.

Nothing is easier than to say that Christian Science "has healed many cases of disease, universally considered to be incurable by other systems of healing," or that "through the study of the Bible, in the light thrown upon it by the Christian Science text-book, many people have found themselves well when they had previously been ill." No doubt such results would be eminently practical, if only they were verified by competent and impartial judges, which as yet none of them are. It is a well-known fact that under

Christian Scientist treatment many sufferers from organic disease have died when, under a truly scientific or rational treatment, they would, in all probability, have recovered. Evidence to that effect has been repeatedly produced in courts of law. Now, according to Christian Science, death belongs to the same category as disease; but will Mr. Young inform us whether "through the study of the Bible, in the light thrown upon it by the Christian Science text-book," even one of their people has managed to escape death? This is a test most easily applied and thoroughly decisive. Mrs. Eddy herself has grown old and feeble, and is said to be suffering from an incurable disease—does Mr. Young imagine that she will cheat death and live forever? Two things have been conferred upon Mrs. Eddy by her spurious science—wealth and notoriety; but even Mr. Young cannot prove that it has done anything else for her. And in what respects are the Christian Scientists of Great Britain superior to their neighbors? When an epidemic breaks out, are they immune? Are their children free from the ordinary infantile complaints? Is the death-rate among them lower than among others?

Like all other "isms" Christian Science will have its day, because of the amazing gullibility of a large proportion of mankind; but at the bar of reason, which is the bar of genuine Science, it stands utterly discredited, an æsthetic superstition, a baseless philosophy, a hurtful fanaticism—anything but a science.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Some Real and Alleged Atheists.—II.

BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER,

Sub-Editor of the "Freethinker" and author of the "Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers," etc.

(Concluded from p. 315.)

SPINOZA, the God-intoxicated, as Novalis calls him, was generally termed an Atheist in his own time, and nothing could more strikingly illustrate the progress made in thought than the invariable respect with which this great thinker is now everywhere mentioned, and the pains which are taken to distinguish his opinions from absolute Atheism. Toland, like Spinoza, though sometimes classed with the English Deists and sometimes with the Atheists, is rather to be classed among the Pantheists. N. Saint Glain, the translator of Spinoza into French, must also be acquitted of the charge of Atheism along with his master.

It may be contested how far Averroes, Pomponatius, Cæsalpinus, and Telesio, with their various shades of Pantheism and Materialism, come strictly within the category. The same may be said of Claudius Berigardus, Nicolaus Taurellus, the first German philosopher, and John Gerard Rom. Campanella's *Atheismus Triumphatus* might be better entitled *Atheismus Triumphans*. But no doubt his twenty-seven years of imprisonment had not induced any desire for further martyrdom. Though termed Atheists by their adversaries, all these, no doubt, would have denied the hard impeachment.

Matthias Knutzen, of Holstein, it is said, openly professed Atheism, and had upwards of a thousand disciples in Germany about 1674. He travelled to make proselytes, and his followers were called Conscientiaries (*Gewissener*) because they held there is no other deity than conscience. Whether Knutzen escaped the penalty of his opinions is uncertain, and his sect, if indeed he formed one, does not appear to have lasted. His contemporaries, Friedrich Wilhelm Stosch, and Theodor Ludwig Lau, are also accused of Atheism.

It is not until the dawn of the age of reason in the eighteenth century that Atheism appears, openly and undisguised, in scientific garb. Lamettrie, La Grange, Holbach, Naigeon, and Diderot wrote as Atheists, yet their pronounced writings were published under assumed names. They had no desire for martyrdom.

*The System of Nature*, which appeared in 1770, attributed to Mirabaud, who died in 1760, helped to rear a school of acknowledged and unacknowledged Atheists. Its real author was Holbach, one of the most militant Atheists that ever lived, and he was assisted by the friends whom I have named. The influence of the work was profound. Priestly said that all the philosophers and men of letters he met with during a visit to France were Atheists. Rousseau declared he had only met three priests who believed in God.

The great French Revolution has often been called an Atheistic movement, yet some of the most noted actors were Deists rather than Atheists. Dr. James Buchanan, indeed, in his *Faith in God and Modern Atheism*, describes the first French Revolution as actuated by anti-Christian Deism and the second French Revolution by Atheism! Robespierre was a militant Deist, and paved the way for his own fall by pompously acting the Pontiff at the Feast of the Supreme Being. Billaud-Varenes said: "Avec ton Etre Supreme tu commences m'embêter." Marat, Couthon, Saint-Just, Fouquier-Tinville, and the Jacobins generally knew how to conjure with the name of God. Mirabeau, Danton, Brissot, Vergniaud, Gaudet, Cloutz, and Chaumette were Atheists. Miss Blind calls Madame Roland an Agnostic, yet she frequently spoke of God, the soul, and a future state, at a time when Mongez, a member of the Institute, could say he "had the honor to be an Atheist."

At the suggestion of his friend and fellow-Atheist, Lalande, Pierre Sylvain Maréchal compiled a Dictionary of Atheists, to which Lalande added a supplement, in which he states that he is prouder of his Atheism than of his scientific attainments, and that, although at the age of nineteen he thought with the rest of the world that the heavens prove the existence of God, he now sees in them nothing beyond matter and motion. The *Dictionnaire des Athées* has often been ridiculed for its debaptising so many Christians to insert them in its catalogue. Thus we find in it most of the Fathers—Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Sts. Chrysostom and Augustine! Luther, Melancthon, Pascal, Bossuet, Jurieu, and Fenelon! our own Locke, Newton, Berkeley, Clarke, Cudworth, Hail, and Sherlocke!—nay, even Paul of Tarsus, John the Evangelist, and Jesus Christ! The name of God the Father ought to have been added to complete the list of notorious Atheists!

It is only fair to Maréchal to note that one of the purposes of his collection was to point out how many even of the supporters of theology had rendered themselves liable to the charge, and allowed some glimpse of philosophy to stand out in contradiction to their superstition. Pascal is included for saying that we neither know the nature nor the existence of God, and that reason is unable to demonstrate the being of a God. Jesus Christ is included, apparently in joke, for saying, "Take eat; this is my body." The remark is appended that to make bread into God is going further in materialism than Spinoza. In short, the *Dictionnaire des Athées* is not to be taken too seriously. We find the word OR (*gold*) included for the purpose of introducing some lines declaring that most of the world treats gold as God.

Many of the names most unjustly entitled Atheists in Maréchal's work are copied from previous Atheographers. Father Hardouin, the Jesuit, had stigmatised Jansenius, Malebranche, Quesnal, Pascal, Nicole, and others as Atheists. The Protestant Reimann, in his *History of Atheism*, had enlarged his list with the names of many Catholics, as Bembo, Bellarmine, Malebranche, Leo X., Father Sanchez, etc. Buddeus enumerates a number whose Atheism is doubtful. Indeed, it may be said there is hardly a single philosopher of ancient or modern times who has shown any originality of thought who has not been accused of Atheism by one of the atheographers, Garasse, Mersenne, Voetius, Kortholt, Calver, Parker, Struve, and Jenkin Philipps.

In England, Shelley was one of the first to openly accept the name of Atheist. The Atheism of James

Mill, of Bentham and Grote, though often suspected, was scarcely known in their own lifetime. A proof of how slowly the *odium theologicum* passes away in England may be found in the fact that many of the most astute Atheistic productions have been published anonymously or under pseudonyms. I may mention the *Inquiry into the Influence of Natural Religion*, by Bentham and Grote; the examinations of Mr. Gillespie's argument *à priori* by "Antitheos," "Aliquis," and "T. S. B.,"; the astute examination of the Rev. B. Godwin's lectures on Atheism, published at Bradford; and the examination of Theism, by "Physicus." A hundred years after the death of Hume, an able lady writer thinks it necessary, in criticising the design argument, to call herself by the pseudonym of "H. Lawrenny." Of those who have followed Shelley in proclaiming their Atheism several have come to prefer some other designation. This was the case with Richard Carlile. Charles Southwell argued that it was absurd for anyone to call himself an Atheist, since it meant but the negation of nothing. Atheism was impossible because Theism was unthinkable. Mr. Holyoake, who has refuted Paley and written the *Trial of Theism*, prefers the designation of Secularist. Professor Huxley has coined for himself the name Agnostic, a term accepted by Leslie Stephen, Mrs. Lynn Linton, and other followers of Spencer and Darwin. John Stuart Mill, despite the dubious character of his posthumous essay on Theism, would probably have accepted the designation of Agnostic, and the same may be said of Lord Amberley and Professor Clifford, though we think the last would not have refused the more definite appellation of Atheist. The position expressed in the lines "I say not that there is no God, but that I know not," is the one adopted by almost all who profess and call themselves Atheists. Some there are who, looking upon the idea of God as the foundation of all superstition and slavery, say with Proudhon, "*Dieu c'est le mal.*" Men like Bakounine may rather be called anti-theists than Atheists. They do not so much question the existence as the authority of God. Many of the French Freethinkers frankly call themselves Atheists; nor is the term refused by scientists such as Hovelacque, Letourneau, and Lefevre. Caro considers Renan, Taine, and Vacherot as representing three types of opposition to Theism. Comte declared that the heavens declared only the glory of Kepler and of Newton, and it is not easy to see how the confinement of attention to phenomena can be reconciled with Theism. None the less, his Atheism has been questioned, and his followers—Littré, Lafitte, Bourdet, Wybouroff, Blignières, Bridges, Beesley, Kaines, Congreve, and Harrison—prefer the designation of Positivists.

In Italy, many are ready to recite their creed in the words of the poet Guerini: "Primo di tutto, dico, che non credo in Dio"—"First of all, I say I do not believe in God." In Germany, Buchner, Schlaeger, Specht, Vogt, Moleschott, and Czolbe, though properly called Materialists, do not object to a name which has been applied not only to Feuerbach, Strauss, and Schopenhauer, but to Fichte, Schelling, Krause, and Hegel.

As the odium attached to the term Atheist slowly dwindles, we may expect to find less heed given to its repudiation. A very large number who refuse the appellation only do so because they so cordially agree with M. Buzot when he refused an article on the existence of God sent to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on the ground that "the question lacked actuality."

## Correspondence.

"NATURE'S INSURGENT SON,"

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your able contributor, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, in his thoughtful article in the *Freethinker*, May 12, dealing with Professor Ray Lankester's recently-published book, *The Kingdom of Man*, touches upon an important question

which I would like to see further discussed. Let me repeat a paragraph quoted:—

"Nature's inexorable discipline of death to those who do not rise to her standard—survival and parentage for those alone who do—has been from the earliest times more and more definitely resisted by the will of man. If we may, for the purpose of analysis, as it were, extract man from the rest of Nature of which he is truly a product and part, then we may safely say that man is Nature's rebel. Where Nature says 'Die!' man says 'I will live!'"

Huxley's views are also given. Mr. Lloyd, I understand, demurs to both. He says: "The inevitable penalty of rebellion is death." Obedience to Nature is man's true attitude, he considers.

I wonder whether this is always true. Nature sometimes decrees that a man is to die, but man may determine to live, and, by sheer determination over physical pain, he may succeed in living—maimed perhaps, but still a thinking being. Shakespeare says "death, a necessary end, will come when it will come." But, by will and resource, man may defy Nature. I feel inclined to agree with both Professor Lankester and Huxley on this question. I am no special admirer of some of Nature's plans. Natural Selection is frequently cruel. Our parents probably met one another by accident. In fact, life is too much of a lottery to please some of us. Children differ greatly in capacity. The lunatic asylums are full—victims, I suppose, in many cases, of Natural Selection. Mr. Lloyd seems to think Nature is always beneficent. I don't think so. Why should man be such a credulous animal? He has been drugged, deluded, and hypnotised by the Church, and it may require a moral earthquake to get the majority to reflect and think for themselves.

I hope we will rise above the law of Natural Selection, and control Nature as far as it is humanly possible to do so.

J. A. REID.

### The Children.

ALL our hope is in the children—tiny toddlers, meek and mild;

Holy fables, told with fervor, never fail to please a child,  
Who, of course, as truth accepts them, being not by doubt defiled.

Bring to us the prattling infants—pages blank on which to write;

They alone, at hell's grim terrors, shrink and tremble in affright;

They alone are cheered by heaven, wings and harps and raiment white.

They must hear the tales veracious, of creation and the "fall";

Of that somewhat lengthy shower, swamping this terrestrial ball;

Tales of Samson, Balaam, Jonah—let the darlings' have them all!

Let us show to them with rev'rence, that *one* God is truly *three*;

That one-third of him left heaven and was nailed upon a "tree";

That he "rose again" and vanished in the clouds o'er Galilee.

Make the tiny toddlers Christians! tell them of the man-God's blood,

Shed for sinful folk to bathe in, that the dip may make them "good";

Tell them of his savage Father, lov'd of battle, fire and flood.

Ere they read and *think* and question, and a gleam of truth perceive,

Scare the darlings' with damnation, cheer with hope of God's reprieve;

Tell them life has but one duty—which is simply *to believe*.

Suffer now the little children all these blessed truths to learn.

Lest we preach to empty Bethels and no more a "stipend" earn,

Lest to some more arduous labor, we, perforce, must sadly turn.

JOHN YOUNG.

Emerson had little patience with "spiritualism," which he called "the rat-hole revelation."—*M. D. Conway.*

### Acid Drops.

There was a huge meeting in the Victoria Hall, Sunderland, lately, presided over by the Mayor, and attended by a lot of local celebrities. Church and Chapel were both represented. So was the Police Force. Freemasons, Sons of Temperance, Druids, Oddfellows, and fellows still odder, helped to make up an "impressive" gathering. And a "great" speech was made by the Bishop of Durham. Dr. Moule belongs to "the Great Lying Church." It was no wonder, therefore, that he lied about John Stuart Mill. The wonder would have been if he had told the truth about him. But the lie in question was a new lie—something original; the Bishop might have called it "out of my own head" as the darkie said of his wooden doll. According to the *Daily Echo* report, Dr. Moule declared that he "knew on private authority" that John Stuart Mill "died a Christian believer." Let us look into this.

John Stuart Mill died at Avignon on May 8, 1873. He had been brought up as a Freethinker, and he had been a Freethinker all his life. Professor Bain, his friend and biographer, says that "he absented himself during his whole life from religious services," and that "in everything characteristic of the creed of Christendom he was a thorough-going negationist. He admitted neither its truth nor its utility." John Morley spent a last day with Mill during his final visit to England, and says that he then looked forward to a general growth of the religion of Humanity. In 1871, Mill acted as one of the pall-bearers at Grote's funeral in Westminster Abbey. He accepted the office under great pressure, and on walking out of the Abbey he said to Bain: "In no very long time I shall be laid in the ground with a very different ceremonial from that." He was no Christian then. And that was only two years before he died. When his end did come he was buried at Avignon, where his wife's grave was, and the Protestant pastor offered a prayer on the occasion, and "thereby got himself into trouble," Bain says, "from Mill's known scepticism, and had to write an exculpation in the local newspaper." So that he did not consider that Mill died a Christian. When the *Democratic du Midi* reported that Mill had received the last succors of religion, M. Rey, the Protestant pastor, honorably denied the statement, and said: *Il n'y avait point de pasteur pris du lit de M. Mill*—"There was no clergyman at Mr. Mill's bedside."

When the news of Mill's death reached England one religious journal said that his soul was burning in hell, and expressed a hearty wish that his disciples would soon follow him. That was straightforward bigotry. Thirty-four years have elapsed, and the Bishop of Durham comes forward like a clerical serpent, slavers the great dead Freethinker all over with Christian spittle, and tries to swallow him. And he hangs up a notice, for any questioners, bearing the good old legend "from information received." He calls it "private" information. Yes, it *is* private. We believe that.

Mill's funeral was superintended by his devoted daughter-in-law, Miss Helen Taylor. That lady died some months ago. And it looks very much as though men like the Bishop of Durham feel it safe to spread fables about Mill now that Miss Taylor is no longer alive to contradict them. This simple bit of chronology is pregnant with meaning.

The *Northern Mail* gives an even worse report of Dr. Moule's reference to John Stuart Mill. Here is the whole paragraph:—

"Great unbelievers had conceded the greatness of Christ. John Stuart Mill, whom he knew on private authority died a Christian believer at the last, a long time before his death, and while he posed as an agnostic teacher, urged in his treatise on 'Liberty,' that the man needing moral guidance could make no better rule than this: 'Would my conduct approve itself to Christ?'"

If the Bishop said that, he must have been trusting to the ignorant credulity of his audience. Mill never called himself an Agnostic. He never "posed as an agnostic teacher." He never made any public profession of unbelief. It was only by reading between the lines that sagacious people could see how he stood. Nor did Mill say in his *Liberty* anything in the least resembling what the Bishop mentioned as being in it. On the contrary, he said some biting things about orthodox Christians and orthodox Christianity, and spoke of the grave defects of Christian morality. What the Bishop refers to appeared in the *Essay on Theism*, which was first published after Mill's death, and which, as Miss Taylor admitted, had not been revised by the author for publication. Even in that strained panegyric on Jesus

Christ, Mill treats him as only a great man, and says that he himself would have regarded any other claim as blasphemous. This is a distinct denial of the deity of Christ, which the Bishop of Durham knows is the root doctrine of Christianity. Yet this same Bishop of Durham has the effrontery to call Mill "a Christian believer."

The Bishop of Durham is paid £7,000 a year. No other religion in the world but Christianity pays its professional liars at such a rate. No wonder the profession flourishes.

The Bishop of Durham (the *Morning Post* says) authorised the publication of the following note on the subject:—

"The late Dr. Gurney, of Nice, a man eminently qualified by character to bear such witness, was called in to attend J. S. Mill in his last illness. Intimate friends of my family then resident there were told by him when Mill had passed away that, in his full conviction, Mill died a believer."

This is what the Bishop says in answer to newspaper challenges. Could anything be more ridiculous and contemptible? Dr. Moule said that he "knew" on "private authority" that Mill died a Christian. He *knew!* But he doesn't appear to understand the meaning of the word. Nameless members of his family were told by nameless friends of theirs that Dr. Gurney was convinced that Mill died a believer. And this, after the lapse of nearly forty years, when all the parties are probably dead, is what the Bishop calls *knowledge!*

Nameless persons told *Dr. Moule*, nameless persons told *them*, and they were told by *Dr. Gurney*—who is dead and cannot endorse or deny the statement. Fancy stuff like this being put forward as evidence in a court of law! But suppose *Dr. Gurney* did say that he was convinced that *Mill* had died a believer. What was his conviction worth? What *facts* was it grounded upon? Unless we know that we know nothing.

Unfortunately for the Bishop of Durham, *Dr. Gurney* wrote an account of *Mill's* last hours, and it was printed in the *Daily News* of May 12, 1873. He said that *Mill* learnt of the fatal nature of his illness "with calmness and resignation" and that "his great intellect remained clear to the last moment." Not a word was said about *Mill's* dying "a believer." That had to be revealed by the Bishop of Durham thirty-four years afterwards. Really this right reverend father in God ought to take lessons in elementary logic.

The motion against the Socialist Sunday-schools in London County Council school buildings appears to have been finally withdrawn. During the twice-adjourned debate on the Education Committee it was urged by *Mr. Sanders* that the Socialist Sunday-schools were not atheistic. But (we ask) what if they were? Has not Atheism the same public rights as Theism? Do not Atheists pay rates as well as Theists? *Mr. Sanders* was simply talking bigotry, however little he intended it. He also said that there was no connection whatever between Atheism and Socialism—and we quite agree with him. But he talked nonsense when he went on to say that all the great Agnostics, such as *Charles Bradlaugh* and *Herbert Spencer*, were strong individualists. This had nothing to do with the question at issue, and we repeat that it was nonsense. *Charles Bradlaugh* was *not* an Agnostic. He refused to use the word. He was a professed Atheist. He was also an Individualist. But was not *Karl Marx* an Atheist? And what are *Bernard Shaw*, *Hyndman*, and *Robert Blatchford*?

According to a Central News telegram from Rome (*we* don't vouch for it, mind) a peasant of *San Giovanni*, near *Foggia*, dreamt that in a certain wood he had encountered a pig carrying on its back the heart of the Savior. He related his dream to his fellow peasants, and a number of them went to the wood, where they discovered and captured a pig. The grunting porker was carried in procession to the church, where the entire population knelt in adoration before it. Very silly! Of course. But it didn't cost much. Superstition in England is less obviously gross, and immensely more costly. Better worship a pig than give an Archbishop a palace to live in and pay him £15,000 a year to preach "Blessed be ye poor."

*Rev. Benjamin Gregory* is a profound philosopher. He has been telling the *Carters' Association* at *Salford* that the creed of competition may be traced back to the influence of what is called Darwinism. Everybody knows, of course, that competition did not exist before Darwin perverted the world with his *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*. The reverend gentleman went on to say that every Church and

every Trade Union existed to silence the "competition" heresy. Nobody ever heard of parsons competing with each other for good jobs, and Trade Unions don't compete with the employers for a larger share of the wealth produced. Yes, the *Rev. Benjamin Gregory* is a profound philosopher.

Bury church has been struck by lightning. Many other churches ought to be struck with something. They want waking up badly.

There must be lunatics in Japan as well as in other countries. General *Booth* seems to have given them a bean-feast. Perhaps the *Mikado* thinks that it may keep them out of worse mischief. He is a long-headed man.

At the recent meeting of the English Presbyterian Synod, held in London, the financial secretary declared that the membership throughout the whole connection, shows a decided tendency to decrease; and he deeply mourned the fact that the rising generation is distinctly drifting away from religion. From this we learn that the Wesleyan Methodist Church has at least one companion in tribulation. Indeed, we are informed, in a report of the last meeting of the Lord's Day Observance Society, which appeared in the *Tribune* for May 15, that "the upper classes abstain more and more from attendance at church and chapel on Sundays, and give themselves up more and more to amusements," and that "the same thing is true of the lower classes" as well. And yet, in spite of all this slump in religion, Christ has triumphed!

*Mr. R. J. Campbell* does not set much store by sinlessness. "Sinlessness," he declared in a recent sermon, "means almost nothing. A stone is sinless; a fish is sinless; a dog is sinless until it begins to show the rudiments of a conscience; a child is sinless until he awakens to the fact that he ought not to try to grab and keep the best of everything for himself." Quite true; but is not *Mr. Campbell* fighting a mere shadow? Is he not pouring his new ethical wine into old theological wine-skins? Would it not be much better to drop the word *sin* in all its forms, and adopt a term that is not burdened with so many injurious associations?

To the *Rev. Dr. Whyte*, of *Edinburgh*, sin, original sin, is a living power in every human heart. This divine seems to think and talk of nothing else. Though now an old man, he still describes himself as the chief of sinners. "Paul had many bitter enemies, many deadly enemies," he says, "but he had no enemy so deadly to him as his own indwelling sin." Fancy what it must be to indulge in, or listen to, such talk every Sunday! The only thing that keeps preacher and hearers from raving madness is the saving fact that it is nothing but talk.

It is wonderful how even theological publishers seek to profit by the present heated controversy between the Old and the New Theology. In orthodox newspapers, orthodox works are thus advertised: "*True Theology v. New Theology. Ready to-morrow.*" Among the books thus announced is one which, in its day, was pronounced more or less heterodox, namely, *The Life of Christ*, by *Dean Farrar*. Just think of it. Yesterday, *Principal Fairbairn* was suspected of heresy, and *Dr. Forsyth* was the propounder of a new theology. To-day, these are the men who fling venomous brick-bats at *Mr. Campbell* for doing a similar work to the one they once did. Verily, the theological world moves in a circle, and so never makes any progress.

The *Rev. David Smith* still jogs along in the same old ruts. To correspondents who ask for his views on the words, "I create evil" (*Isaiah* xlv. 7), he says: "God is not the author of evil, but he over-rules it, brings good out of it, and compels it to serve his wise and beneficent purposes." Often have we heard that wild assertion, but never have we seen the slightest attempt made to prove it. The only good thing about evil is its destruction. As long as it remains it can do nothing but harm. Does not experience abundantly prove this?

*Mr. Smith* goes on to point out that, in the text cited, the antithesis to "evil" is not "righteousness" but "peace," and then observes: "The prophet is speaking not of moral evil but of calamity, and his doctrine is that disasters alike in national and individual life are God's appointments, and belong to his providential discipline." Is it on this ground that Christians have always so cruelly persecuted the Jews? It is scarcely fair to make God responsible for all the wickedness of men. "Shall evil befall a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Then they through whom the evil befall are innocent, and the blame is God's. A conve-

nient doctrine, no doubt; but history laughs it to scorn. Better no God at all than a malevolent one.

Mr. Smith's theology is modernised orthodoxy. He admits that there are many mistakes in the Bible. The theory of verbal infallibility, he maintains, is both unbiblical and begets unbelief. So far, so good. But in the very next sentence he falls from grace and speaks as a mere theologian: "The Bible is infallible in the sense that it performs infallibly what it undertakes. It brings men face to face with the Living Lord." That is sheer nonsense. Anyone who knows the world is aware how utterly false the assertion is. Why, there are millions in Christendom alone whom the Bible has never brought face to face with the Living Lord, and who, in spite of its infallible teaching, do not believe in the Living Lord. Why, then, does Mr. Smith affirm that which he must know is not true?

We were glad to see the following paragraph in the *Academy* :—

"The attitude of the Bishop of London towards the living sculpture turns at the music-halls is particularly vexatious. There is nothing in these performances of unwholesome or suggestive kind. The managers of the music-halls might well retort that a certain book recommended by the Bishop in a London pulpit was far more deleterious than any performance at any music-hall in London. It was a vulgar and blasphemous work, and to have praised it debarred the Bishop of London from expressing any opinion on literature or art, although these harmless exhibitions have only the remotest connection with such subjects."

The allusion, of course, is to that silly book *When it Was Dark*.

Mr. C. M. Alexander, the musical partner of Dr. Torrey, seems to be working "on his own" now. We see that he and his wife have had a big reception at the Melbourne Town Hall. It was from that platform, he reminded his audience, that he launched the "Glory Song," which has been translated (we suppose he means the words) into seventeen languages, and been sung day and night in the world ever since. Yes, and it is trash, for all that. The music is poor nigger minstrelsy, and the words are beneath contempt. Revivalism has put religion on the level of a low music-hall. What is now called saving souls is calculated and profitable vulgarity.

Being asked to speak for the Halifax Trades and Labor Council, Mr. Robert Blatchford replied that "England is full of orators, as Heaven is full of saints," but that he was "not of the band." We always understood that Heaven was rather empty; it was the other place that was crowded. England is certainly not full of orators. It has fewer to-day than it ever had—and it never had many.

Rev. David Dorrity, B.D., rector of St. Ann's, appealed through the *Manchester Courier* for "£800 to £1,000" for the restoration of the tower of his church. He sadly confesses in the same paper that all he got in response was £45 5s. And the scaffolding is up! The reverend gentleman thinks he will have to let it for advertising purposes. "Washed in the blood of the Lamb" will be sung down below, and up above will be "Have you used Pear's soap?"

Two Austrian archaeologists claim to have found the original city of Jericho that was taken by Joshua. We hope they have also found the sun and moon that stood still, and one of the rams' horns that blew down the walls.

A special meeting of the Newmilns Town Council was held recently to consider a requisition from the Kirk Sessions respecting the Sunday band programs. We give the precious document in its entirety :—

"TO THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE BURGH OF NEWMILNS AND GREENHOLM.

Gentlemen.—We, the Kirk Sessions of Loudoun Established Church, Loudoun United Free Church, and Newmilns United Free Church, hereby severally and unitedly beg respectfully to express our deep regret at your recent action in sanctioning recitals by the Burgh Band on Sunday afternoons, and our strong disapproval of the same, and we further beg respectfully to offer our strong protest against the continuance of band practice on Sunday, as opposed to the best judgment and the Christian feeling of the community, and calculated to exercise a demoralising influence upon young people.

Signed, in the name of the aforesaid Sessions, by  
Hamilton Moore, Moderator.  
James Pollock, Session Clerk.  
Graham Park, Moderator.  
John Grant, Session Clerk.  
J. W. Dalgleish, Moderator.  
Archibald Hood, Session Clerk."

All the Churches agree upon one thing—trade protection. They want the blessed Sabbath to themselves. No opposition business on the Lord's Day. The talk about demoralisation is simply *blague*. What these immoderate Moderators want to see is their Churches full. They are ready to say anything that seems necessary to that end.

It is refreshing to read what Provost Pollock had to say on the matter. In his opinion, the resolution of the Council was a wise one. "Regarding the letter from the various church sessions," he said, "I think they are very weak—simply an expression of pious opinion. There is no shred of reason or argument to back up the statements made, and to say that a Band performance on the Sabbath day, conducted as that performance was on the opening occasion, is calculated to have a demoralising effect upon the community, is, in my opinion, a perversion and gross abuse of the English language."

There is no civilising influence in the world like Christianity. A religious sect called the Cooneyites, after their founder, have been holding missions in Ulster. They practice baptism by immersion in the open air, and these performances attract great crowds of the more orthodox Christites. On a recent occasion, at a place known as the Bush, Dungannon, five men were baptised in a farm stream banked up to the depth of four feet. While this was going on the male Christites passed encouraging remarks, while the female Christites threw in cabbage-stalks, turnips, and other charitable observations. When the women dippers came out of the water and returned to the tent, the combined male and female Christites made a rush for it, no doubt with a view to further manifestations of Christian charity. Unfortunately, their amiable intentions were mistaken, and a free fight ensued. Subsequently the orthodox Christites showed their love for the Cooneyites by baptising a number of dogs in the same water. "Let brotherly love continue."

Wesleyanism is not more effective than other Christian "isms" in keeping men out of prison. It is cheerful to learn, though, as a Manchester paper says, that "Wesleyan Methodists who find their way into prisons will in future be cared for more effectively by ministers of their own denomination." The Rev. S. F. Collier's "Mission" is going to see to this. During the past year, the reverend gentleman states, 102 men and 39 women have come "under our care" at Strangeways. A hundred and forty-one in twelve months! Other denominations put in suitable contributions. Atheists seem left out. Perhaps there isn't room for them.

"Suffragettes" went to Mr. Haldane's meeting at the Alexandra Palace and created a terrible disturbance for three-quarters of an hour. The same day, Miss Adela Pankhurst, one of the most active "suffragettes," was mobbed at Cardiff. She had to abandon her meeting and to accept the protection of the police. It is all very sad, of course; but if the "suffragettes" elect to pursue a policy of disorder they must not be surprised if their opponents follow suit. Violence begets violence. That is the eternal law. And we venture to suggest to these ladies that they will be the worst sufferers in the end. Very little reflection should enable them to recognise that. We also beg to remind them (this is not a venture) that the right of public meeting is far more important than the suffrage. Despots have put up with votes. They have always hated public meetings. Why don't the ladies think a bit? It really wouldn't do them any harm. Why should they try to be bigger fools than the men? The game isn't worth the candle.

"The Free Churches hold the future in the hollow of their hands." So says Dr. Drysdale, President of the Northumberland and Durham Federation of Free Churches. There has never been anything like it since the three tailors of Tooley-street held their historic meeting.

Whitsuntide has been very cold and raw this year, and some people are wondering if summer will come along in 1907. It certainly seems as though the clerk of the weather were in a disagreeable mood. His temper may improve, though, in time for a lovely June—a delicious month with a delicious name, and only wanting a reasonable amount of sunshine to be near perfection. Yes, we will not despair. There have been cold Whitsuntides before. It must have been weather like this the first time it occurred. For we read that the Holy Ghost descended in the form of tongues of fire. Evidently the apostles wanted warming up.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Suspended during June, July, and August).

### To Correspondents.

**JAMES TULLIN.**—We have noticed the Bishop's address. It is easy to understand that the town you live in is "thoroughly Christian" and "thoroughly lying, drunken, and immoral." There is more lying, drunkenness, and immorality in the average Christian town in England than there is in the average Heathen town in any country in the world.

**E. GILL.**—Thanks for the cutting. You will see it has been useful. You hope we shall "remain for many years the champion of Freethought." We hope so too—and not the only one. We have good colleagues.

**JOSEPH BATES.**—It must have been lost in the post. Many things are so lost. You say "it is not the slightest use making complaints." That is our experience too. Those who call the Post Office a "model institution" can't know much about it. Glad you thought our Campbell articles "magnificent" and "the best criticism published." They couldn't very well, though, have deserved the first eulogy; they might very well have deserved the second; for most of the criticisms we have seen have been poor stuff.

**JUNO.**—No room this week. In our next.

**W. FARMER.**—So many orthodox preachers are wailing over the New Theology that, unless they are of some eminence, we cannot find space to notice them. Thanks, all the same.

**W. P. BALL.**—Much obliged for cuttings.

**M. G. FRENCH.**—Your letter shall appear.

**J. BROUGH.**—Thanks.

**E. HIRST.**—You will not have long to wait. Glad you have joined the Secular Education League.

**J. F. DUPLAY.**—Your definition of Socialism would be more appropriate in a Socialist paper. Our province is Freethought.

**F. ROGERS.**—Mr. Foote is ever so much better. Thanks for good wishes.

**W. B.**—No room to do what you ask in this column.

**W. H. H. NASH.**—You attempt to answer what we never said. We always write carefully—and one word is not as good as another. You substitute "persecution" for "butchery" in connection with Nero, and assume that "writer" is about the same as "historian." For the rest, you only repeat what you said (and we answered) some years ago in our columns. Your claim to speak in the name of "scholarship" is sufficiently amusing. You should read some of the writers you mention. Evidently you have not read Suetonius.

**G. SCOTT.**—Very pleased to see your "fist" again.

**R. OSWALD.**—A fresh supply of the Salvation Army tract is being printed.

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.

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## Sugar Plums.

The *Labor Mail* (Birmingham) for May contains an excellent letter by "Secularist" on "A Secularist's Grievance." It sets forth, with mingled seriousness and humor, the petty persecution which bigotry on the old School Board, on the City Council, and on the Education Committee, has inflicted for many years on the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society. We are very glad to see this well-written and effective letter. We have all along advised the Branch that its only effective policy was to appeal to the people of Birmingham. We are pleased to know that this is now going to be done, and "Secularist's" admirable letter is a

first step in the right direction. A plain statement of the Secularist case against the bigots is being drawn up; it will be printed in leaflet form, and distributed throughout the city. A copy will be left at every house, and an effort will be made to insert it in the newspapers. In this effort the Branch will have our best support.

"Another View" was the heading of an article in a recent number of the *Catholic Herald*. It opens as follows:—

"Catholics will be interested to note that just now there is an attempt in Victoria (Australia) to make the public schools into Bible-religion schools, and that Catholics there are up in arms against any interference with the purely secular schools of the Colony."

The article goes on to say that Catholics take the same stand in America. "We know many Catholics in this country," the writer says, "who rather favor the secular idea, leaving each Church to teach its own religion." This may be taken as an indication that Catholics, like High Churchmen, are inclining towards Secular Education as the only way of dishing the Nonconformists.

Mr. Haldane's speech at the Alexandra Palace ended with a reference to the Education question. We take the following report from the *Tribune*:—

"Speaking only for himself, he was convinced that they would have to go deeper even than any Bill that had been brought forward in the name of either Nonconformity or of the Church. They must either prescribe certain educational national conditions for all schools receiving public moneys, bring them under public control, with free access to all denominations out of school hours for religious teaching—(loud cries of 'No!')—or they must accept the secular solution. (Cries of 'That's it!' and loud and prolonged cheers.)"

Evidently the meeting was in favor of "the secular solution." Bye-and-bye, no doubt, the so-called Liberal leaders will bring up the rear of their own party on this matter. The great thing, after all, is what the rank and file think; and in that respect Secular Education is winning hands down.

Some time ago, the Rev. Stewart Headlam announced, in a letter to the Bishop of London, that Mr. G. Bernard Shaw had found God, and was on his way to faith in Christ as Savior and Lord. On Wednesday evening, the 15th inst., Mr. Shaw lectured to a crowded audience in the Kensington Town Hall, and his subject was "The New Theology." He delivered a masterly discourse, in which the jokes were few and far between. His central point was that such has been the history, and is the present condition of the universe, that the existence of an omnipotent and benevolent personal God is utterly unthinkable. This point he reasoned out in a very calm and lucid manner, and his auditors seemed to be in full agreement with him.

Mr. Shaw related an interesting story in his own life. Soon after he arrived in London, a raw, rash youth from Ireland, he happened to be one of a company of professional gentlemen who met one evening and discussed, among other things, the persecuted Charles Bradlaugh. A violent opponent of Bradlaugh quoted the watch story as an argument against the great Atheist. A Secularist present vehemently denied the truth of the alleged incident. When his turn to speak came, Mr. Shaw said: "I, too, am an Atheist; and, if there be such a God as the Christians believe in, I challenge him to strike me down dead in five minutes, holding my watch in my hand." There was great consternation in the room, all being apparently afraid that Shaw's moments were numbered. The lecturer told that story in great detail, and the audience listened spell-bound. Then he added: "In the sense I was an Atheist then, I am an Atheist still."

In answer to a question, Mr. Shaw admitted that the power behind or within the universe worked unconsciously for countless millions of years; intelligence, mind, self-consciousness, being of late origin in the history of evolution. Replying to another question, he said that to him it was inconceivable how any sensible person can believe in, and worship, an omnipotent and benevolent personal God with open eyes, because the whole evolving universe stands up in emphatic protest against the existence of such a deity.

Mr. Shaw constantly used the word *God*, but said it was *their* term, not *his*. He also employed the word *religion*, but explained that what he meant by it was social service. His use of such terms is unfortunate, because misleading; and the consequence is that the reporters almost invariably misunderstand and misrepresent him. On this occasion, however, most of the newspapers ignored the lecture, which may be taken as a sign that he talked more sense than he sometimes does.

We have received an "In Memoriam" pamphlet relating to Dr. Edward Bliss Foote, the American Freethinker, whose death we had the painful duty of recording last October. The pamphlet is printed for free distribution by Dr. Edward Bond Foote, of 120 Lexington-avenue, New York—who will be pleased to send a copy to anyone requesting it. We have placed our own copy in a receptacle that holds the life-mementoes on which we place the highest value. This "In Memoriam" contains the eloquent funeral address delivered by Mr. T. B. Wakeman, notices of the deceased in American and other papers (including the *Freethinker*), and letters to his two sons from personal sympathisers. Amongst them is the following from Mrs. Eva A. Ingersoll:—

"I have just heard of your father's death. The entire family join with me in sympathy to you and yours. His was a lofty and honorable life; his heart and purse ever ready in the cause of humanity. He will be greatly missed."

This contains the essence of all there is to be said. Those who have spoken longer have not said more. Dr. Foote had a sound head, but it was his heart that all his eulogists praise the most. It was golden. Reading between the lines of these tributes we can see that his was the ever-open hand of melting charity. He made no parade of benevolence, he sought no advertisements, he did good by stealth, and he must have done it on a scale that made him the steward of what he owned for the benefit of mankind, and especially of unpopular causes and their gallant advocates. This characteristic of the man will not seem strange to those who look at the portrait of him in this pamphlet. The face is bold, and the eyes are kind. Here is a man who would not hurt any fellow being, but would stand to the death for any principle.

Among the papers of Dr. Foote was a letter written in anticipation of death and placed with his last will and testament. We quote the following sentences:—

"To my sons, or in case of my demise, to their successors, I would say that my wishes would be that they give generously from the proceeds of my estate to all good movements for the maintenance of free press, free speech, and free mails.....All projects that have for their objects the improvement of the human family have ever enlisted my sympathies and my support, and my successors cannot better carry out my wishes than to give liberally to them."

Dr. Foote's faithful sons can be relied upon to respect his wishes. Even his slightest wish they would regard as sacred. We understand that they are organising a Corporation to which they and others might give and bequeath money to be spent on promoting the Secularist views of human improvement.

We cherish a suspicion that Dr. Foote was a distant relation of ours. His family was of English origin. Its founder, Nathaniel Foote, joined the colony of Massachusetts Bay in 1633. "From him," says the *Biographical History of Westchester County*, "are descended nearly all the numerous family of that name in this country." Now this Nathaniel Foote would in all probability have emigrated from the West of England. Most likely he belonged to the old original breeding-ground of the Footes—the Devon and Dorset country. And in that case some ancestor of his was probably an ancestor of ours. We do not swear by it; it may be only a fancy, after all; but certainly it is a harmless one.

But a curious thing happened two or three years ago. We were travelling to Glasgow, and we had a seat in the third-class dining car. The steward had our name on his list, as usual, but he kept calling us "Dr." Foote. We had to ask him at last why he called us "Dr." "Oh," he said, "I've seen your likeness in a book we've got at home." "What book is that?" we inquired. And he replied "Dr. Foote's *Plain Home Talk*." He seemed astonished when we told him that we were not Dr. Foote, and he looked a bit puzzled when we also told him that Dr. Foote was a personal friend of ours.

Dr. Torrey could not leave Montreal with his personal effects until he had satisfied Mr. Norman Murray, whom he had represented as having been arrested for selling obscene literature. Mr. Murray was not satisfied with the evangelist's apology. He demanded something more explicit and required Dr. Torrey to pay the costs incurred. The evangelist ignoring this demand, Mr. Murray got a court order sealing up his mission funds and baggage. These were only liberated by the payment of something like a hundred dollars for lawyers' and bailiff's fees. Dr. Torrey will probably confine himself to slandering the dead in future. Slandering the living is apt to prove too troublesome.

## OVER-REFINEMENT.

Remember that, before all, we are beings of prey and strife; that we must be careful not completely to extinguish within ourselves the qualities of primitive man, for it was not without reason that nature placed them there. If it is wise to restrain their excess, it is prudent to preserve their principle. We do not know the offensive tricks which the elements or the other forces of the universe have in store for us; and woe be to us, in all likelihood, if one day they find us entirely devoid of the spirit of vengeance, mistrust, anger, brutality, combativeness, and of many other faults, which are all very blameworthy from the human point of view, but which, far more than the most loudly-extolled virtues, have helped us to conquer the great enemies of our kind.—*Maeterlinck*.

I'm not a saint.

Not one of those self-constituted saints,  
Quacks—not physicians—in the cure of souls,  
Censors who sniff out moral taints,  
And call the devil over his own coals—  
Those pseudo Privy Councillors of God,  
Who write down judgments with a pen hard-nibb'd;  
Ushers of Beelzebub's Black Rod,  
Commending sinners, not to ice thick-ribb'd,  
But endless flames, to scorch them up like flax,—  
Yet sure of heav'n themselves, as if they'd cribb'd  
The impression of St. Peter's keys in wax.

—*Tom Hood*.

Politics lays down a rule to curb and measure out the wills of individuals in equal portions; Morals has a higher standard still, and ought never to appeal to force in any case whatever.—*Hazlitt*.

Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him? Let history answer the question.—*Thomas Jefferson*.

## Annual Conference of the National Secular Society.

THE Annual Conference of the National Secular Society took place on Sunday at the Chandos Hall, Charing-cross, London. The following Branches were represented by the following delegates:—*Birmingham*, R. G. Fathers, Mrs. Bolt; *Bethnal Green*, M. Lazarick, C. Ruse; *Bradford*, W. Kaye; *Camberwell*, F. Cotterell, L. B. Gallagher; *Huddersfield*, J. Ollerenshaw; *Helton*, J. Fothergill, R. Chapman; *Kingston*, F. Schindel, G. Wright; *Liverpool*, G. Roleffs, Mrs. Schweizer; *Manchester*, C. Pegg, Mrs. Pegg, R. Johnson; *North London*, E. A. Charlton, A. Stanley; *Newcastle-on-Tyne*, T. H. Elstob; *South Shields*, R. Chapman, J. Horsman, J. Fothergill; *Woolwich*, H. G. Farmer; *West Ham*, A. Allinson, J. W. Marshall, R. Rosetti; *West Stanley*, C. Cohen. Several provincial friends were present, including G. Thwaites (Stockton-on-Tees), J. Underdown (Chatham), and T. Hibbott (Ramsbottom), and Mrs. Fathers (Birmingham). There were also present, G. W. Foote (President), Mrs. Foote, the Misses Foote, F. Foote, C. Cohen, Mrs. Cohen, A. J. Fincken, Mrs. Fincken, C. Bowman, W. Hunt, Mrs. Hunt, E. Woodward, John T. Lloyd, W. Heaford, the Misses Pizer, H. Cowell, F. Wood, Dr. Nichols, James Neate, J. Leat, H. Samuels.

The President took the chair punctually at 10.30, the Secretary (E. M. Vance) called the roll, and the business opened. The chairman hoped the day's proceedings would tend to promote the progress of Freethought. Differences of opinion were natural amongst thinking people; only the unthinking all thought alike; but differences of opinion were quite compatible with the earnest pursuit of a common object.

The minutes of the previous Conference having been taken as read, the President read the Annual Report.

## ANNUAL REPORT.

The past year of the Society's history has not been a specially eventful one. Good regular work has been done, but there is nothing sensational to record. For one thing, the Central Executive has been hampered by want of funds. This difficulty has now ceased to be acute, and a carefully

thought-out effort will be made, when the summer months are over, to place the Society in a better financial position in the immediate future. Such an effort had necessarily to wait until a favorable opportunity presented itself. The grant of £100 made to the Executive by the Secular Society, Limited, has been a very opportune assistance; and further help, under proper conditions, may be expected from the same quarter. Under the will of the late Joseph Townsend, of Southport, the Secular Society, Limited, as residuary legatee, has realised over £1,800. Mr. Townsend's interest in the movement was chiefly through the *Freethinker* and personal regard for its editor. Fortunately, the Incorporation, which your President devised and launched nine years ago, was in existence to give a legal security to Mr. Townsend's generous intentions. The Secular Society, Limited, has lived down the foolish, and sometimes malicious, criticism which haunted its earlier days. It is now seen to be a solid and durable institution, which has already more than once saved the financial situation for the Freethought movement, and may be of still greater beneficence in the days to come.

In looking over the N. S. S. balance-sheet, it must be remembered that it represents only a very small part of the Society's activities. All the Branches throughout the country are absolutely autonomous, doing their own work, having their own incomes, and producing their own balance-sheets. The financial responsibility of several undertakings, also, has been assumed by the Incorporated Society. All that the Central Executive's balance-sheet represents is those necessary expenditures which are of a purely general character. It includes no payment, for instance, to any lecturer or any journalist. Yet the movement which centres round the N. S. S. has its lecturers and its journalists who are regularly occupied, and carry on a ceaseless propaganda of Freethought. To take the Executive's modest little balance-sheet, and say "This is what the Freethought party has to show for itself," would be absurd. The work of the Freethought party is immensely larger—as a glance at the *Freethinker* from week to week would readily verify.

With respect to the *Freethinker*—which, while not the official organ of the Society, is nevertheless devoted to its service—it is pleasant to learn from the management that its circulation has been steadily improving ever since the advertisement gained by the exposure of Dr. Torrey's libels on Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. The press boycott against the paper is as close as ever, but the trade boycott has begun to relax. If it disappeared altogether the paper would be an excellent property. Even now it would be paying its way in every direction if it went by itself. But it is part of the whole Freethought enterprise at the London headquarters, and its weekly surplus is eaten up by other expenses. But this is not the time and place to expatiate on that subject—although it will have to be dealt with before long. The real point, here and now, is that the *Freethinker* is more than holding its own; that it is surely, if slowly, making progress.

The Society's principal lecturers have visited various parts of Great Britain during the past year. Mr. Cohen has even gone as far as Belfast, where he spoke from an Ethical platform, and no doubt tempered the wind of Secularism to the shorn lambs of a more peaceable flock. Mr. Lloyd, who has made a complete conquest of the Freethought platform—being at home upon it, and heartily welcomed wherever he goes—has also been fairly well occupied. The President has had some good meetings at Queen's Hall and Camberwell during the past winter, and some splendid free meetings in the Stratford Town Hall, in the large Picton Hall at Liverpool, and in the great Birmingham Town Hall. His audiences at Manchester and Glasgow have been crowded, and he had excellent meetings at Newcastle-on-Tyne towards the end of 1906. Mr. Cohen's and Mr. Lloyd's meetings at Newcastle were also the best they have had there, and some excitement was caused in the district by the visit of the late Joseph Symes, who delivered his first Freethought lecture there thirty years before.

The Branches started in Wales during what was called the Welsh Revival have had a chequered history. Good work was done for a time at Cardiff, Porth, and Mountain Ash—especially in the last place. But it languished after a while, and the difficulties of Freethought propaganda in those districts were really very great. Welsh religious bigotry does not rely upon the law, but it is learned and skilful in the application of the boycott, and it understands the darkest forms of sinister persecution. Almost insuperable obstacles were thrown in the way of the Secularists. But it must be admitted that they suffered to some extent from their own mistakes. They did not quite realise the necessity of presenting Freethought to the Welsh public through its most accomplished and representative speakers. Mr. Lloyd did indeed go to Mountain Ash twice; the first time there was something like a row, and the second time a good deal of genuine enthusiasm. But nothing further was

done. The President offered to make it easy for the Welsh Branches to secure a visit from Mr. Cohen. He offered to visit Cardiff himself on a Sunday if the Branch could only obtain a decent hall. But the Branches did not avail themselves of these offers. Perhaps in the early future an organised attack upon South Wales may be made from headquarters—of course with the co-operation of the local organisations. Certainly the *Freethinker* has secured many new readers in Wales; the seed is being sown, and some of it will germinate.

An attack should also be made on the West of England. There are good fields of operation at Bristol, Plymouth, and other Western towns. The initial labor, however, is certain to be hard and costly. For a curious new difficulty has arisen. Owing to the cessation of active persecution of Freethought—which always evokes the heroic and martyr spirit—some Freethinkers fondly imagine that the battle with superstition is over, and that all we have now to do is to enjoy the fruits of victory; while others, being no longer braced up by resistance to oppression, have fallen too easy victims to the wretched phantom of "respectability." It will be difficult, therefore, to find an adequate supply of workers from the older generation of Freethinkers. Fortunately new blood is coming into the movement in all parts of the country; and we must try to organise the young men—and, as far as possible, the young women—into fresh regiments for a new campaign.

The Glasgow Branch is in a remarkably flourishing condition, with a large roll of members, a good income, and crowded audiences on winter Sunday evenings. It has also organised lectures at Paisley, Falkirk, etc., on week evenings, when Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd have been visiting Glasgow. The late Mr. Joseph Symes also lectured in the district during his visit, and spoke in rapturous terms of the work he saw going on there, as well as of the fine reception accorded to himself.

The Newcastle Branch reports the last as being the best year's work on the Tyneside for many years. Much more might be done, however, with a little outside financial assistance, and this may be forthcoming. The South Shields Branch has not been quite so active as formerly, but this is owing to temporary local causes. South Shields will zealously share in any Secular enterprise started on the Tyneside.

There is a good field at Leeds, as was shown by the splendid and enthusiastic meeting held in connection with the 1904 Conference. But it has not been worked effectively. Here, also, something better may be done in the new year. The N. S. S. propaganda could usefully be extended to Bradford, where something of the kind is much needed.

Nottingham, Northampton, and other Midland towns, contain readers of the *Freethinker*, and ought to be included within the scope of your Society's activity. It is intended to bring some of the "saints" in those places together, and see what can be done in the way of propaganda and organisation.

The Branch at Birmingham shows no sign of flagging in its gallant fight against tremendous odds. For many years it has been the victim of a most odious conspiracy. Its bigoted enemies have never faced it; they have always stabbed it in the back. First, it was excluded from the use of the Board-school buildings on Sunday. Its real crime was the size of its meetings. The bigots were alarmed at the spectacle. They therefore trumped up the most ridiculous charges against the Branch's literature, calling it demoralising and poisonous. These adjectives—without a particle of evidence or argument—were sufficient to damn the Secularists. They were not heard in their own defence; there was no sort of trial; but there was a sentence. The Branch was refused the right to sell literature at its meetings—a right denied to no other body in the city. Refusing to accept this humiliating condition, the Branch went out into the wilderness. The decree against it was for a year. When the year had elapsed, a fresh application on its part met with the reply that the School buildings would not be let to the Secularists on any conditions whatever. That act of banishment has been endorsed by the new Education Committee. It is an understood thing that Christians are to monopolise the School buildings in Birmingham. Secularists are rated to support them. They have duties, but no rights. Such is the spirit of Christian civilisation in a city which used to boast of itself as the Mecca of English freedom. We all know what John Bright would have thought of it. But another than John Bright now rules in Birmingham. And the sinister part of the tragedy is that the present great Boss of Birmingham is probably no more a believer in the Christian or any other form of religion than the members of the Birmingham Branch are themselves. Happily, however, one foothold is left to the Secularists—and it proves that intolerance is easier to committees than it is to individual authorities. The Lord Mayor of Birmingham has the granting of the use of the Town Hall,

and he has never refused it to the Secularists. For some years past your President has lectured in the great Town Hall to constantly increasing audiences; the evening audience on his last visit being a remarkably fine one. This has been done without the help of the press, which pretends not to be aware of these meetings. Once again the bigots thought the time had come for action. Complaints were lodged against the literature sold at the Branch bookstall. A list of obnoxious publications was drawn up by the Committee. It included the *Freethinker* (naturally), and *Bible Romances*; but it also included Paine's *Age of Reason*, Ingersoll's *Lectures*, and Blatchford's *God and My Neighbor*. The last book, by the way, is sold without let or hindrance when the Socialists use the Town Hall. It only becomes objectionable when it is sold by the Secularists. And it is a pity that Mr. Blatchford, who was appealed to on the matter, both by the Branch and by your President, has not been able to speak a word of encouragement to the Branch, or of protest against his book being placed upon the Birmingham Index Prohibitorium. Practically the Branch has been left to fight its battle alone. Which is another thing to be remembered by those who are apt to fancy that the day of universal toleration has arrived.

Acting on the advice which the President long ago tendered, the Birmingham Branch is preparing to appeal to the public opinion of the city. A statement of its case is being drawn up, and will be printed and distributed to every house in the borough. It will also be inserted, as far as possible, in the local press—even if resort must be had to the advertisement columns. Some effect is bound to be produced. The citizens of Birmingham will be fully apprised of what is being done in their name. If they are satisfied, the case is hopeless. If they are not satisfied, pressure could be brought to bear upon the bigotry which is entrenched in the City Council and in various public committees. Meanwhile the Branch has made sure of the use of the Town Hall several times during next winter. It is to be hoped, therefore, that matters will be brought to a crisis long before the next N. S. S. Conference. And the Birmingham Branch will have every assistance that can be rendered from headquarters.

The Liverpool Branch has held its own amidst the unfortunate difficulties that were explained in the last annual report. Financial help was rendered it by Mr. F. Bonte, who entrusted your President with a handsome donation to be used on behalf of the Branch at his discretion. Several courses of special lectures were delivered in the Milton Hall by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and Symes, and the season was wound up with two lectures by the President to large audiences in the big Picton Hall. Arrangements were made for Mr. Symes to settle in Liverpool as resident lecturer for the Branch. Everything was settled, Mr. Symes was almost on the eve of starting to undertake his new duties, the Branch was looking forward with eager enthusiasm to his arrival, but the veteran's death put an end to what would in all probability have been a highly successful project. The Branch went on with its work in spite of that heavy blow, and will go on with it next winter; and it will be supported in its brave effort to keep the old flag flying.

The whole situation in Liverpool may change at any moment. The real root of all the trouble related in the last annual report has disappeared. Those who strove to wreck the Branch, and failed, were simply his dupes. Your President, indeed, has said all along that the wrecking was instigated from outside. It was a jesuitical attempt to break up the Secular movement in Liverpool just when it was becoming too prosperous. Mischief enough was done, though it was not fatal; and there must surely be regret in the minds of some who became tools in coarser, yet cleverer, hands than their own.

Turning to London, it may be noted that a central hall where Sunday lectures could be delivered regularly, at least during the winter, is yet a desideratum. Lectures have been delivered by the President at the Queen's Hall, but the expenses of meeting there are heavy. There has been an awakening at Camberwell, though it is doubtful if the Secular Hall is now in a position to attract good audiences generally—so greatly has the neighborhood changed during the last twenty years. The West Ham Branch has carried on successful Sunday evening meetings in the Workman's Hall. Three very fine meetings were organised by the Secular Society, Limited, in the Stratford Town Hall, the lecturers being Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd, and the President. These great gatherings were ignored by the local press. Open-air propaganda during the summer was carried on very successfully by the Camberwell, Kingsland, and Bethnal Green Branches. The new North London Branch has held some excellent meetings at Parliament-hill Fields. There have been lectures in Hyde Park under the auspices of the West London Branch, but Hyde Park is becoming too much of a Babel to be of much utility to an intellectual propaganda. The last Annual Dinner, organised as usual by the

Executive, and held at the Holborn Restaurant in January, was a record success.

A sample of work done, and not represented in the N. S. S. balance-sheet, is Mr. Cohen's tract on the Salvation Army. The pamphlet does not pretend to originality of matter; it is confessedly based on Mr. Manson's book; but it puts the principal objections to the Salvation Army in an admirably terse and pointed manner, and its distribution is doing much good in all parts of the kingdom. Some fifty thousand copies have been put into circulation by means of a Fund opened for the purpose in the *Freethinker*. Another fifty thousand copies ought to be circulated in the near future.

During the past year the subject of Secular Education has naturally occupied your Executive's attention. It was decided to participate in the Demonstration in Trafalgar Square organised by the Social Democratic Federation. Your Executive contributed £5 towards the cost, and the President represented the N. S. S. as a speaker. It can hardly be said, however, that this Demonstration was as large as it easily might have been if the issue had been simplified. Early in the present year a meeting was called by Mr. Harry Snell, as secretary of the Union of Ethical Societies, at the *Tribune* Rendezvous, with the object of combining in one organisation all the advanced bodies that were in favor of Secular Education. Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd attended that meeting as your Executive's representatives, with the President, who was one of the speakers; and who, curiously enough, had to correct the sectarian indiscretions of other speakers, and bring the meeting back to the true ground on which Secular Education was to be maintained. It was resolved that a Secular Education League should be formed, and a preliminary Committee was appointed, with your President as one of its members. Since then the League has actually come into being. Its Manifesto has been issued, and it has secured a large number of distinguished names on the General Council, including the great name of George Meredith. There are men of science, men of letters, artists, Church clergymen, Nonconformist ministers, and members of parliament. This list of names is in itself a great achievement. Members are being enrolled, and it is to be hoped that hundreds of Freethinkers will join at an early date, as a number have done already. The Secular Education League should have a brilliant future. The principle on which it is founded—namely, that the State should only concern itself with secular education, and leave religious education to private effort—is one that is triumphing, not only by the growth of public intelligence, but by the very force of events. Its victory would be delayed by a compromise between the rival Churches, but that compromise is impossible, for they all want a thing which, from the nature of the case, cannot be divided. What they aim at is the control of elementary education. Anglicans and Catholics want dogmatic religious education, and Nonconformists hate it; Nonconformists want simple Bible teaching, and Anglicans and Catholics hate that. They will quarrel until the bone of contention is taken away from them. And it is this, more than anything else, which makes Secular Education inevitable. But when it comes it must be a reality and not a sham, and the Secular Education League has a great work before it in shaping and enlightening the public mind, so that the end may be a permanent triumph of principle.

Your Society was not represented in any way at last year's International Freethought Congress in South America. The 1907 International Congress will be held at Budapest in September. The Executive has not formed any definite opinion as to whether, and how far, the N. S. S. should be represented. The matter is therefore left absolutely to the Conference to decide.

Were it possible, the International Congress should be held in Spain, where Signor Ferrer has been lying in prison nearly twelve months, on what is obviously the ridiculous trumped-up charge of complicity in the criminal attempt of Morral to assassinate the King and Queen on their wedding day. Had there been any real evidence against Signor Ferrer he would have been brought to trial long ago. He is still as far off trial as ever. Very likely it is hoped that he will die or commit suicide, for the Spanish authorities have many nameless ways of tormenting such prisoners. If he persists in living, they may bring him before a mock tribunal, instead of before the regular judges, and seal his doom in that way. Meanwhile his property is impounded, his Secular schools have been closed, and his organised effort to spread freedom and enlightenment is stopped. We know what was his crime; it is proved by the action of his persecutors. The treatment of this man is a disgrace to Spain and a scandal to civilisation.

During the past year death has removed two of your Society's vice-presidents. Mr. J. F. Dewar, of Edinburgh, was an old man and an old Freethinker. He had done good service in his time for the Secular cause in the south of Scotland. A far heavier loss to the movement has been sustained through the death of Mr. Joseph Symes. And

there was something tragic in the sudden ending of his career. He had borne the brunt of heavy fighting for Freethought at Melbourne for twenty-three years. Things at last having gone hopelessly bad there, and being out of harness, the old war-horse chafed at his inaction. He scented the battle from afar. Moreover the longing grew upon him to see his native land again and shake hands with old comrades, whom he had not forgotten, and who had never forgotten him. So he set sail, with his wife and daughter, for England. His ship arrived at Tilbury early in August. Your President put himself to much inconvenience to greet his old friend and colleague on landing—and he is glad he did it now. Miss Vance also took the trouble to be there as the N. S. S. Secretary. It did the veteran good to be so welcomed, and he often spoke of it with deep feeling. By order of the Executive a reception was organised at Queen's Hall a few Sundays afterwards. Mr. Symes was delighted with the crowded and enthusiastic meeting. The President took the chair, Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Roger, and Snell also spoke a few words each on behalf of the old and the new Freethought, and then the war-stained veteran told the story of his long fight under the Freethought flag in Australia. It was truly a memorable occasion. For a few months Mr. Symes wrote in the *Freethinker* and went about lecturing. He was in his element again, and was happy. But he did not know that he had struck the bitterest English winter for many, many years. When it came it proved too much for him. There was a chill, an illness, an attack of pneumonia, complicated with heart trouble, and Joseph Symes was dead before the great majority of his friends knew he was ill. The report of his death came like a bolt from the blue. It was a shocking blow to some who loved him for his many good and endearing qualities. Nothing could be done except arranging for the funeral and carrying what comfort was possible to the stricken widow. The funeral was undertaken by the N. S. S. Executive, and care for Mrs. Symes and her daughter was left for the moment to the tried and faithful sympathy of Miss Vance. The cremation ceremony at Golder's Green was attended by a large number of Secularists. When that was over your President set to work through the *Freethinker* to raise a fund for Mrs. Symes, who was totally unprovided for. Rather more than £300 was raised in a few weeks. Mrs. Symes and her daughter, acting on medical advice, returned to Melbourne, setting sail in March, and no doubt arriving about the end of April. Thus ended one of the most tragical chapters in your Society's history.

By no one, except his nearest and dearest, could the death of Joseph Symes have been felt more deeply than by your President. Joseph Symes was a comrade of the old days—and the battles long ago. The last time he saw Joseph Symes, before the meeting of last August, was behind prison bars in Holloway Gaol. An interview like that is never effaced from memory. The last link between your President and the old Freethought platform was broken when Joseph Symes died. This may sound personal, but such things are of the very essence of the higher life of the soldiers in the great war of human liberation. Freethinkers are not devoid of sensibility, though they may despise sentimentalism. Every party lives to a large extent upon the memories of its worthy dead. We do not forget ours. We never shall forget them. In this very month of May, nine years ago, died one whom Joseph Symes would have been so glad to meet again; one who was also a link with a troubled but heroic past; one who was gentle, humane, accomplished, and full of intellectual ability—one who was, in his modest way, as valiant a soldier of freedom as ever drew the breath of life. And at least one who stood by the coffin of Joseph Symes went back in thought to the day when he stood by the coffin of Joseph Mazzini Wheeler. These were stainless heroes of our glorious cause, and in honoring their memory we honor ourselves.

#### ELECTION OF PRESIDENT.

After a brief discussion the Annual Report was adopted. The Secretary (Miss Vance) then read the Financial Report, which was also adopted after a few questions had been asked and answered. The next business was the election of the President for the ensuing year. Mr. Foote, being nominated, vacated the chair temporarily in favor of Mr. Cohen. Several delegates said some flattering things (which we had rather not print) in moving, seconding, and supporting Mr. Foote's re-election, which was carried unanimously amidst applause. On resuming the historic hammer, the President said that many words were not necessary between old friends. His work was a labor of love, and he should continue it as long as he was able. He was glad to retain their confidence. What was thought of him by people who did not know him was a matter of indifference; but he valued the good opinion of those who did know him, and had known him for many years. He was sorry that several country Branches were

not represented at the Conference, in consequence of lack of funds and other hindrances; but he hoped circumstances would be more favorable by the next Whit-Sunday. In the meanwhile, he and his colleagues, in London and in the provinces, would do their utmost to advance the good old cause.

A Report of the rest of the Conference will appear in next week's *Freethinker*.

#### EVENING PUBLIC MEETING.

Queen's (Minor) Hall was filled in the evening, and the audience included quite a gratifying number of ladies. Many seats on the platform were occupied by delegates who had attended the Conference. Before the speech-making there was a musical program, in which Miss Helen Foote and Miss Florence Foote assisted. This part of the proceedings was much enjoyed, and the players and singers were warmly applauded. There were rousing cheers when the President walked on to the platform. The collection was taken up during a brief interval which allowed the audience to work off coughs induced by the inclement weather, and to settle down for "the feast of reason and the flow of soul." Then came speeches by the President and Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and Davies, which kept the ball rolling merrily until past nine o'clock. All the speakers were in good form, and were very much cheered. Finally the President pronounced the benediction in the shape of a short recitation—Leigh Hunt's *About Ben Adhem*—which summed up the truest spirit of the evening's platform eloquence. Thus ended a long meeting in which there was never a dull moment. It was thoroughly animated from beginning to end. And all faces looked happy as the audience broke up amidst endless hand-shaking.

Bigotry of the genuine Roman Catholic variety is exhibited by Mrs. Sydney Rosenfeld, president of the Century Theatre Club of this city. The club was to make an exhibit for the benefit of the Actors' Fund, and invited Mark Twain to contribute his books and his presence to help make the affair a success. Mrs. Rosenfeld is a Christian Scientist, and when she heard of the invitation she at once wrote to the moving spirit of the affair, Mrs. Edith Ellis Baker, that in view of Mark Twain's having published a book against Christian Science and made derogatory remarks about Mrs. Eddy she could not permit him to appear at a club of which she is president, nor allow his books or any extracts therefrom to be sold in any booth bearing the name of the club she represents. Characterising the humorist as "Belial," with whom she could have no dealings, Mrs. Rosenfeld declared: "My Christ is more to me than anything else in the world; and if you insist on having Mr. Mark Twain at the Century Theatre Club Booth, I must resign from its presidency on that account." It is interesting to note the further statement of the lady that when she joined the "Mother Church" she subscribed to certain by-laws under which she would be disciplined if she submitted to the presence of Mr. Mark Twain as the guest of the society over which she presides. If Christian Science can take on these arrogant airs at the present stage of its development, what better could we expect it to be than orthodoxy if clothed with the powers usurped by the older form of Christianity?—*Truthseeker* (New York).

#### Obituary.

I HAVE the painful duty to record the death, at the age of 66, after a long sickness, of Mrs. Amelia Stead, wife of one of our members, Mr. T. Stead, one of the old Secularist workers in this district, and one of the first members—I believe the first female member—of the Huddersfield Branch of the N. S. S. She was ever of a lively, witty, cheerful, and generous disposition, and after more than forty years of a very happy married life she passed away on Wednesday last, to the great grief of her devoted husband and children, and of a large circle of friends. The Freethought ranks never had a more enthusiastic worker, especially during the severe struggles and trials of our late President and our present Chief, for whom she entertained an unbounded admiration. The principles of Secularism sustained her right up to the end, as almost her last, and oft-repeated request, was for a Secular funeral. This was duly complied with. One of our members, Mr. Atkinson, read the Secular Funeral Service at the Kirkheaton Cemetery in the presence of numerous friends and spectators, a great many of whom probably heard the simple but beautiful service for the first time.—W. H. SPIVEY

**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.**

**OUTDOOR.**

**BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S.:** Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.15, C. Cohen, a Lecture; 6, W. J. Ramsey, "Where Angels Dwell."

**CAMBERWELL BRANCH N.S.S.:** Station-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Campbell and Jesus." Brockwell Park, 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, "Secularism and Christianity"; 6, F. A. Davies, "Whitewashing Christianity."

**KINGSLAND BRANCH N.S.S.:** Ridley-road, 11.30, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

**NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.:** Parliament Hill, 3.30, H. Wishart, a Lecture.

**WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.:** Outside Maryland Point Station (G.E.R.), 7, J. W. Marshall, a Lecture.

**WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.:** Hyde Park (near Marble Arch), 11.30, a Lecture.

**WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S.:** Beresford-square, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

**COUNTRY.**

**HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 9 Room, Trade and Friendly Hall):** Tuesday, at 8, Branch meeting.

**OUTDOOR.**

**EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S.:** The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; The Mound, 7, a Lecture.

**HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N.S.S.:** Market Cross, on Saturday, at 8, George Whitehead, a Lecture.

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