

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*So I the culture may begin,  
Let others thrust the sickle in ;  
If but the seed will faster grow,  
May my blood water what I sow !*

CHARLOTTE BRONTE.

## A New Humorist.

WHEN I started the *Freethinker*, in May, 1881, I printed in it a kind of manifesto, in which I said that the paper would "do its best to employ the resources of Science, Scholarship, Philosophy, and Ethics against the claims of the Bible as a Divine Revelation." That was the serious and solid side of the enterprise. There was another side, which turned out to be of greater immediate importance. I said that the paper would also "not scruple to employ for the same purpose any weapons of ridicule or sarcasm that might be borrowed from the armory of Common Sense." Two years later, I heard that a manifesto read out against me in the Court of Queen's Bench, where I was tried for "bringing the Holy Scripture and the Christian Religion into disbelief and contempt."

In the fifth number of the *Freethinker*, I referred to Voltaire's method of attacking Christianity, and said that those who charged him with treating religious questions in a spirit of levity knew that irony and sarcasm were the deadliest enemies of their faith. And I added:—

"Superstition dislikes argument, but it hates laughter. Nimble and far-flashing wit is more potent against error than the slow, dull logic of the schools; and the great humorists and wits of the world have done far more to clear its head and sweeten its heart than all its sober philosophers from Aristotle to Kant."

It was laughing at Christianity that brought me into trouble. Grave writers had brought it into *disbelief* with impunity; I paid the penalty for bringing it into *contempt*.

In the new year's number, 1882, I replied to various objections to the policy of the *Freethinker*, and I ended by saying—"If, as we believe, ridicule is the most potent weapon against superstition, we shall not scruple to use it."

From the beginning of March, 1883, to the end of February, 1884, I was a prisoner for Freethought in Holloway Gaol. Directly I was a free man again I resumed the conduct of my paper, and in the very first article I wrote I declared that I had nailed my colors to the mast before I went to prison, and that they were there still. I promised my readers that I would not swerve a hair's breadth from the old policy:—

"The absurdities of faith shall, if possible, be slain with laughter. Priests and fools, as Goldsmith said, are the two classes who dread ridicule, and we are pledged to an implacable war with both."

And I kept my word.

When I referred to "the great humorists and wits of the world" I was not speaking from a plentiful lack of knowledge. I knew them all from Aristophanes to Heine. And when I came across the writings of George Meredith I recognised his genius and wit at once, and sang his praises long before he achieved any measure of popularity.

But I am told that I am floored at last. I have met with a far more subtle humorist and wit than

Aristophanes, or Lucian, or Erasmus, or Rabelais, or Shakespeare, or Cervantes, or Molière, or Butler, or Swift, or Voltaire, or Sterne, or Byron, or Courier, or Heine, or Meredith. I have met with Mr. A. M. Thompson. This gentleman tells me that I am a grave, dull person, incapable of understanding his "persiflage." He cracks a joke, and I pull a long face, as though he spoke on affidavit.

This is very interesting. It will be especially so to the readers of this journal. Mr. Blatchford discovered Determinism; Mr. Thompson discovers that the *Freethinker* is a solemn journal. It is extraordinary that two such discoveries should be made at one newspaper office.

Mr. Thompson indicates the most important difference between the *Clarion* and the *Freethinker*. At the *Clarion* office they keep a box of "Attic salt." At the *Freethinker* office they serve up every dish unseasoned. This is Mr. Thompson's view of the case, though some may think he is not the best judge, and that it would be better to let the people at the tables judge for themselves.

I may also observe that Mr. Thompson might have been obliged to write differently if his readers had known exactly what he was replying to. As a matter of fact, I anticipated his reply that he was joking. "If this is meant for humor," I said, "it misses the mark." I regarded it—and I am sorry to say I still regard it—as a part of the long-continued *Clarion* policy of ignoring the existence of "any organised popular Freethought movement in England." My article was not an effort in "persiflage." It was perfectly serious—and people who can never be serious are only clowns. Mr. Thompson treats the whole thing as a joke. Well, I suppose he is the best judge of his own business.

But I really must assure Mr. Thompson that we of the *Freethinker* are not anxious for his "advertisement." We have always managed to do without that sort of thing. All we want is the breaking down of the trade boycott against us. We are really very well known. Personally, I could hardly be otherwise; for I have the distinction of being the last prisoner for Freethought in England. I challenged Christianity when it was dangerous to do so. I am glad that others find the work easier now. It proves that I did not fight and bleed in vain.

It is on this serious note that I would like to end, but I cannot. The serious appeal with which I ended a fortnight ago was lost on Mr. Thompson. He chose to end his reply, in last week's *Clarion*, with what he evidently regarded as a very witty personality, although it is a hackneyed thing that has done duty thousands of times. I will therefore take a closer view of his wittiness.

Mr. Thompson confesses that it was he who advised a correspondent to "study the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Blatchford, and the Bible." He also confesses that this was one of his jokes, and draws my attention to the fact that Mark Twain delivered the "same joke" at the Savage Club, and "everybody laughed." I don't think it was the same joke, and Mark Twain shall be left out of the reckoning. And now let me say that the only possible excuse for that *Clarion* answer is that the writer meant it. Honest admiration, may be mistaken, but cannot be contemptible. And now let me further say that Mr. Thompson, having explained

that he was joking, should explain his joke—for his wit fairly dazzles me. I suppose it is a case something like that in Milton, where the skirts of Omnipotence appear "dark with excessive bright." Mr. Thompson sits (or soars) like Shelley's poet "hidden in the light of thought." He will not be angry, then, if I ask him to reveal himself more freely. He bracketed three names together, and the "joke" must be at the expense of one of them. Which was it?

And while humor and wit are being considered I may offer a few reflections. Standing on your head is not originality. Laboriously beating about the bush without starting the hare is not humor. Circumlocutory language is not irony. Funny language is not wit. Humor, irony, and wit must be substantial in the thought before they can take form in expression. Wit without reason, as Heine said, is but a sneeze of the intellect. A fine fencer may add playfulness to his efficiency, but the playfulness without the efficiency is the antic of a pantaloon.

In the light of these reflections I think Mr. Thompson fairly describes the *Clarion* paragraph which I had to criticise. "One would have thought," he says, "that my poor little joke was obvious enough." There is clearly a doubt about the obviousness, but the rest of the description seems tolerably accurate.

G. W. FOOTE.

### The Problem of Evil.

ONCE every month the Rev. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, dispenses with the customary sermon and delivers a lecture to his congregation. On such occasions the congregation is, presumably, expected to brace itself for an unusually trying intellectual effort and to consider with the speaker some pressing religious or social question. Mr. Horton has, he tells us, been delivering these monthly lectures for twenty-seven years, and during the whole of this period he has had one problem constantly before him—the problem of pain and evil in relation to religious faith. Having had this problem before him so long, what he has to say in relation thereto should be worth considering—what its value is we shall see presently. But after so long a period of gestation the product should be of *some* value.

One reason, he says, for his not dealing with the subject before is that he has nothing new to say on the subject; which is true enough, although it is often necessary to repeat an old message—when it contains anything in the shape of information. But Mr. Horton leaves the question exactly where he found it. He admits, as everyone is bound to admit, the existence of pain and evil, and also allows that many of the usual apologies fail in their purpose. Pain is pain, evil is evil, however we may disguise it; innocent people suffer in a manner quite irreconcilable with human notions of justice, and people are inevitably driven to contrast these facts with what they are told concerning the existence and nature of Deity. Dr. Horton's own conclusion is that we must fall back upon faith. We must believe things to be right although our judgment says the contrary. A cowardly conclusion, and as useless as it is cowardly. For people cannot chloroform themselves in this way for long. The old facts are there, and they give rise to the same questions; and it is better to face facts at once than evade them for a time by thus playing false to one's convictions.

Even this conclusion, however, poor as it is, is not reached with any degree of courage. To command respect, the anodyne of faith should be applied pure. To adulterate it with reason, however weak the latter may be, is to make one suspect the efficacy of the former. It is approached, first with a parade of the pain and evil existent, to display the speaker's courage in facing facts, and then with a plea on behalf of Christianity as the only religion that can

offer an explanation or comfort. But it really does neither one nor the other. To find either comfort under pain or an explanation of its existence in Christianity, one must believe in Christianity to begin with. One cannot, that is to say, in the presence of pain take up the Christian theory as satisfactory, as one takes up the scientific explanation of a given phenomenon. In the one case the theory is accepted because it covers and explains the facts; in the other case the facts are ignored or disguised because the theory demands it. But, as a matter of fact, it does not always do even this. The fact of the letters Dr. Horton has received, asking him to deal with the question, together with the fact of the number of people whose faith is weakened or destroyed by the presence of undeserved pain and evil, are quite enough to prove what a poor thing the Christian explanation is. In practice it is other people's suffering that Christians bear patiently; the evil that affects others they find an adequate explanation of. When it attacks themselves they begin to suspect that perhaps, after all, everything may not be for the best in this best of all possible worlds.

Christianity, says Dr. Horton, explains moral evil as "the fault of the free will making a wrong choice, and shows that the possibility of the wrong choice is involved in the moral freedom. This is the old cant and the old absurdity. The theory that moral right depends upon the possibility of moral wrong in the same individual is absurd, because there is less practical possibility of the developed character doing wrong than there is of the undeveloped one. Conscientious choice is an expression of indecision, and with the developed character there is little or no indecision when confronted with certain facts. One's nature then becomes so developed as to respond in only one way to certain facts or relations. Besides, the choice that often enough results in pain or evil may be made without any reference whatever to the moral character of the individual. Out of pure good nature one may do things that will result in ultimate evil to oneself or to one's fellows. Evil often enough results from sheer want of judgment—very frequently an unavoidable want of judgment.

Or, again, all evil is not moral evil, as Dr. Horton assumes—that is, it does not result from the wrong choice of a free will. The evil and suffering that follows from an earthquake or a volcanic eruption, from the ravages of a plague or the prevalence of a famine, have no connection with "choice" or "free will," and it is in face of these facts that outraged human nature asks how it is to reconcile them with the existence of a Deity such as the Christian posits? Here is wholesale disaster which brings no compensating feature, wholesale suffering that may degrade not only those now living, but also those that are to live "unto the third and fourth generation." Can anyone say that human nature would be worse did no such calamities occur? Will anyone say that human nature is the better for their occurrence? And if there are none who can or will answer these questions in the affirmative, why not have the courage, even the decency, to refrain from putting forward "explanations" that explain nothing, and which are really an insult to average human intelligence?

Dr. Horton believes that even though we get rid of Christian theism we have not solved the problem, because the pain and evil is with us still. It is true we do not, by rejecting theism, abolish pain and evil, but we do get rid of the "Problem of Evil." For this is a problem that is entirely a manufactured one. Given a deity who is all wise, all powerful, all loving, the problem is how to reconcile his existence with the world as we have it. And the answer is that it cannot be done. All sorts of excuses have been tried. Free-will, the purifying effects of pain, the developing effect of evil, with infinite variations upon the three, and still the difficulty remains. No theory is adequate, because no explanation is possible. It is like the problem of an irresistible force meeting an immoveable object. It is puzzling until one realises that it is a problem that never ought to be

put—a mere jumble of words, and nothing more. So with the problem of evil. Having embraced a quite unwarrantable hypothesis, the theist is naturally hard pressed to reconcile it with the facts of existence. He cannot remove these facts, he will not relinquish his theory. The result is a pitiful exhibition of word-spinning and mental chicanery. A prostitution of intelligence on behalf of a theory, without mental warranty or moral justification.

Put this impossible theory on one side, and what remains? Not a "Problem of Evil," not a question of harmonising the existence of evil with that of a being who could prevent but who will not, but the task of bringing human nature into a more harmonious adjustment with its surroundings. We see then that pain and evil are words that have validity only in relation to human nature, or at least to a sentient organism. They have no legitimate application to the universe at large. Apart from a sentient organism, Nature knows nothing of either pain or pleasure, goodness or evil. The devastations of an earthquake or of a plague are equally, with the fall of a fruitifying shower of rain or the ripening of corn, parts of Nature's mechanical economy. In that economy the death of a man is of no greater importance than the falling of a stone down a mountain-side. They are parts of Nature's eternal process of readjustment. The essential fault of the theist is that he inverts the proper order of things, and tries to fix a standard of good and evil, evolved by human nature, and of proper and useful application within the limits of human nature, upon the universe at large. It is all part of that anthropomorphic process that began with man reading his own feelings and intelligence into the forces around him. Science has by now taught most people the folly of this; one day it will teach them that to read human moral qualities into the universe is every bit as stupid, and as useless.

Apart from theism, there is in ethics no problem of evil. The ethical question is not how is it that men do evil, or why is it that evil exists, but how is it that people do good, and that so generally that on any fairly large estimate there is a balance of good over evil? How a man falls off a tight-rope is not a problem that would trouble one; but how he manages to keep on is one that would perplex many. So it is with life and conduct. The ways of doing wrong things are almost infinite in number. The ways of doing right are perplexingly limited, and the question in ethics is, what are the methods by which people have not only found out what is right, but have, in the main, managed to do the right? And as to the scientific student morality is only an extension of the wider biologic process of adaptation, he is at no loss to answer this question—at least, in its general outline. The only real difficulty commences when he sets to work to make this adaptation of the human organism to its environment more complete. Then he finds himself faced with the difficulty of acquiring a knowledge of human nature and its potentialities that will be adequate to the task of controlling those forces which seem bent upon its destruction. And he finds, above all, that he is forced to wage warfare against a perfect host of beliefs and tendencies inherited from the past, and which self-interest on the one side, mental sluggishness on the other, combine to keep in existence.

Dr. Horton says we gain nothing by giving up the Christian "explanation" of the problem. Do we not? Well, we at least get rid of a very depressing theory that has no foundation in reason. Evil, as part of the pre-arranged plan of an almighty creator, is one thing evil, as the result of imperfect adaptation between man and his surroundings, is quite another thing. One can easily imagine pessimism and despair as the result of the first, and as easily picture incentive to effort, a determination to effect an improvement, as the result of the other. To the non-theist, pain and suffering are not present as the fiction of a heavenly parent possibly desirous of educating his children. They are the inevitable results of a developing organism, but remedial in

the light of larger knowledge and more effective co-operation. He need waste his time neither in explaining their existence, nor in inventing reasons of benevolence for their presence. That they are here is enough reason for him to work for their removal, and that they will yield to the intelligent direction of human effort is ample reward for his labor.

C. COHEN.

### Is the Christian Ethic Sufficient?

THE Right Reverend Charles F. D'Arcy, D.D., Lord Bishop of Clogher, Ireland, undertakes, in the July issue of the *Hibbert Journal*, to answer the above question in the affirmative. To the Bishop, because of his profession, no other reply was possible. The business of the present article is to examine the grounds on which a dignitary of the Church bases such an affirmation. At the very threshold of Dr. D'Arcy's treatise a glaring error stares us in the face. He says that the "Christian religion has in all ages of its history made its appeal to the conscience in the first instance," its appeal to the intellect always coming later. This is the direct opposite to the truth. Christianity's first demand is for faith. Back of everything else in it is the duty to believe. Sin, in the Christian sense, is primarily against God, and necessarily there can be no realisation of sin without belief in God. The Christian appeal to the conscience is impossible without a prior and successful appeal to the believing faculty. No child comes into the world a believer in God and in sin. Belief originates as the direct result of dogmatic teaching. No supernatural religion can make its first appeal to the moral sense, because the moral sense itself is, in the first instance, the outcome of intellectual training.

The Bishop is quite right when he says that it is the ethical side of Christianity that represents its value for human life, and that to attack it on this side is therefore "the most deadly assault which could possibly be made"; but it is a mistake on his part to assume, at the outset, the superiority of Christian ethics to all others. It is true that the ethics of Christianity ought to be found in the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels; but, as a matter of fact, the ethics of Christianity can be proved to have been a gradual growth throughout the centuries. However, the Bishop maintains that "Back to Christ" is the principle which must prevail here. Be it so. Let us follow his lordship on this backward journey.

On the way, the Bishop makes some highly-sensible observations. He finds serious fault with much of the moral teaching of the Church. She has often given too little attention to "goodness as the healthy activity of the soul, both blessed and beneficent, and wholly apart from its bearing on the question of salvation or of ultimate rewards." She has frequently left "devotion to the public welfare and duty to the State out of account." He frankly admits that "in some of these respects it is perfectly true that certain phases of Christian moral teaching compare unfavorably with the higher attainments of Pagan philosophy." He also condemns those theologians who regard the Beatitudes as "a presentation of the ideal character." The Bishop rightly holds that they are nothing of the kind. He takes them as found in Luke vi. 20-26, and avers that "what they declare is the preaching of the Gospel to the poor." At this point, however, we begin to dissent from the Bishop's exposition. It is true that in the Beatitudes, Jesus "proclaims a blessing for all those who had hitherto been forgotten or despised—the poor, the hungry, the wretched, the hated and persecuted"; but it is also equally true that Jesus made poverty itself a condition of blessedness. "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." Here "the kingdom of God" is introduced, not as a future compensation for present poverty, but as a form of blessedness accessible only to the poor. We know—the Bishop

cannot deny it—that poverty is not a blessing, but a terrible curse to those who are doomed to endure it. Be that as it may, however, nothing is more certain than that Jesus (Matthew xix. 21, 22, 24-29) offered the kingdom of God exclusively to the poor. Whatever he meant by such a kingdom, there is no doubt but that poverty was the door through which entrance into it could be effected.

But let us come into closer quarters with the Bishop's essay. On what grounds does he maintain the sufficiency of the Christian ethic? Unfortunately, he does not inform us, nor does he tell us what Christ's moral teaching is. All he says is that "the trend of modern critical study of the Gospels is in the direction of the conviction that the kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven, in the phrase characteristic of St. Matthew) is the first great leading conception of the teaching of Christ." The vagueness of that sentence is simply delicious. After nearly two thousand years we are at length tending in the direction of the discovery of the inner significance of the ethics of the Christian religion! We are just beginning to find out that "the kingdom of God is the first great leading conception of the teaching of Christ." That is all the length a Lord Bishop has got in the twentieth century of his own religion. But what is meant by the term "the kingdom of God"? That is one of the many unsolved mysteries. The Bishop admits that "the attempt to define it gives rise to highly controversial questions." And yet he has the temerity to affirm the sufficiency of the Christian ethic while acknowledging that it is summed up in a phrase, the meaning of which is still in dispute! This is an extremely comical position to occupy. It practically comes to this: Yes, the Christian ethic is sufficient for every conceivable requirement, but so far we have not succeeded in finding out what it is. It is the best ethic in the world, beyond a doubt; but any "attempt to define it gives rise to highly controversial questions."

The worst, or the best, of it is that the Bishop does not seem to realise that in making these strange concessions he is practically giving up the whole case for the sufficiency of the Christian morality. Instead of honestly setting out to expound and defend the numerous ethical maxims ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels, he leaves them severely alone, and shelters himself behind the hopeless ambiguity of the phrase, "the kingdom of God."

"Is the kingdom to be identified with the Church?" he asks. "Or is it to be taken to mean the rule of God in the heart of the individual? What is to be made of eschatological doctrines which appear so clearly in many places? What is the relation of the teaching of Christ in the Gospels to the thought and expectations common among the Jews at that time? Is our Lord's view of the kingdom but a more spiritual form of the national hope which was then filling the mind and stirring the heart of Israel?"

Dr. D'Arcy does not grapple with any of these questions, but contents himself with saying that "it seems to have escaped attention very generally that Christ's own teaching presents the kingdom as, in the first instance, an ethical ideal." Then he adds: "It is surely to be gathered from the Gospels that the moral teaching of Christ, as we have it presented in the Sermon on the Mount, is an unfolding of the inner life of the kingdom as he conceived it." The Bishop improves as he proceeds. After the last luminous question comes one of the richest sentences ever penned by the human hand: "The morality of the kingdom is to be inward, not outward—of the heart, and not of mere conformity to rule." Inward morality is an impossibility, morality being simply a relation between man and man. If a man conforms to a good social rule, he must of necessity do so either with his heart, or with his head, or with both in happy union; and as far as the effect is concerned, it matters little how he does it. But what are we to understand by the "morality of the kingdom"? Jesus is reported as saying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and these things

[the necessaries of life] shall be added unto you." But how can we seek the kingdom of God when we do not know what it is? Jesus "never said exactly what it was." Mr. Campbell assures us that it is Socialism, and, in that belief, preaches Socialism as the very Gospel of Christ. Others are equally convinced that the "socialist interpretation of the Gospel is a mistake." Indeed, the Bishop asserts that "it is not a mistake to say that modern Individualism is the creation of Christianity." Then he adds: "That both these doctrines [Socialism and Individualism] can be traced to Christ, and that the principles which underlie both are to be found united in his great conception of the kingdom, are surely profoundly interesting facts." So they are, indeed; but they are also equally ludicrous.

Now, let us consider the alleged utterances of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God. He began his public ministry by announcing, "The kingdom of God is at hand." On sending out the seventy missionaries, he instructed them, after entering a city, being received, and doing certain things, to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." He spoke of some people as going into the kingdom of God before others. What did he mean? Was he speaking of this world or the next? There are indications not a few that he meant the world to come. The day before his crucifixion, after partaking of the paschal supper with his disciples, he said: "Verily, I say unto you, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." In his description of the Day of Judgment, he represents the king as saying to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Now, to Jesus, the end of the world, or the kingdom of God, was at hand. When he said, "The kingdom of God is at hand," is it not reasonable to suppose that he referred to the dissolution of this world as imminent, as on the point of coming to pass? Paul says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," which proves conclusively that to him the phrase was a synonym of the future state. The business of Jesus, then, was to proclaim the speedy approach of the end of the world, and urge his hearers to prepare for it. His teaching practically amounted to this: Despise earthly riches; entertain no anxiety about food and raiment; concentrate all your attention on the kingdom; during the short while you remain here diligently seeking this kingdom, your Father will provide all the necessaries of this perishing life.

That exposition of Jesus' teaching concerning the kingdom being correct, does it not of necessity follow that, in the nature of things, his moral code is almost worthless, so far as the adequate direction of social life in this world is concerned? Many of his precepts are preposterous, absurd, impossible. Dr. D'Arcy cannot reasonably deny this statement. He says: "When we are told not to resist the evil man, to turn the other cheek to the smiter, to give the cloak to him who has taken the coat, to give to him that asketh, and so on, we wonder at the greatness of the demand, but reflect on the impossibility, as it appears to be, of such rules being generally obeyed in the world in which we live." Hence, without any further remark, he sets "such rules" aside, and expatiates on "the kingdom regarded as an ethical principle." But will his lordship tell us what "ethical principle" can there be, when "the precepts of Christ," or "such rules," are ignored because of the impossibility of observing them in the world in which we live? What the Bishop's article really amounts to is this: The Christian ethic is sufficient, but impracticable; it is perfect, but indefinable; it may mean Socialism, or Individualism, or a happy combination of both. At any rate, there is an ethical principle hidden away in the phrase the kingdom of God, only, unfortunately, we do not know what the phrase signifies. Thus is legitimised the conclusion that the Christian ethic is woefully insufficient for the due regulation of this earthly life.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Inspiration.

BY THE LATE COL. R. G. INGERSOLL.

WE are told that we have in our possession the inspired will of God. What is meant by the word "inspired" is not exactly known; but whatever else it may mean, certainly it means that the "inspired" must be the true. If it is true, there is, in fact, no need of its being inspired—the truth will take care of itself.

The Church is forced to say that the Bible differs from all other books; it is forced to say that it contains the actual will of God. Let us, then, see what inspiration really is. A man looks at the sea, and the sea says something to him. It makes an impression upon his mind. It awakens memory, and this impression depends upon the man's experience—upon his intellectual capacity. Another looks upon the same sea. He has a different brain; he has had a different experience. The sea may speak to him of joy; to the other of grief and tears. The sea cannot tell the same thing to any two human beings, because no two human beings have had the same experience.

Another, standing upon the shore, listening to what the great Greek tragedian called "The multitudinous laughter of the sea," may say: Every drop has visited all the shores of the earth; every one has been frozen in the vast and icy North; every one has fallen in snow, has been whirled by storms around mountain peaks; every one has been kissed to vapor by the sun; every one has worn the seven-hued garment of light; every one has fallen in pleasant rain, gurgled from springs and laughed in brooks while lovers wooed upon the banks, and every one has rushed with mighty rivers back to the sea's embrace. Everything in Nature tells a different story to all eyes that see, and to all ears that hear.

Once in my life, and once only, I heard Horace Greeley deliver a lecture. I think the title was "Across the Continent." At last he reached the mammoth trees of California, and I thought, "Here is an opportunity for the old man to indulge his fancy. Here are trees that have out-lived a thousand human governments. There are limbs above his head older than the pyramids. While man was emerging from barbarism to something like civilization, these trees were growing. Older than history, every one appeared to be a memory, a witness, and a prophecy. The same wind that filled the sails of the Argonauts had swayed these trees." But these trees said nothing of this kind to Mr. Greeley. Upon these subjects not a word was told him. Instead, he took his pencil, and, after figuring awhile, remarked: "One of these trees, sawed into inch boards, would make more than three hundred thousand feet of lumber."

I was once riding in the cars in Illinois. There had been a violent thunderstorm. The rain had ceased, the sun was going down. The great clouds had floated toward the west, and there they assumed most wonderful architectural shapes. There were temples and palaces domed and turreted, and they were touched with silver, with amethyst and gold. They looked like the homes of the Titans, or the palaces of the gods. A man was sitting near me. I touched him, and said: "Did you ever see anything so beautiful?" He looked out. He saw nothing of the cloud, nothing of the sun, nothing of the color; he saw only the country, and replied: "Yes, it is beautiful; I always did like rolling land."

On another occasion I was riding in a stage. There had been a snow, and after the snow a sleet, and all the trees were bent, and all the boughs were arched. Every fence, every log-cabin had been transfigured, touched with a glory almost beyond this world. The great fields were a pure and perfect white; the forests, drooping beneath their load of gems, made wonderful caves, from which one almost

expected to see troops of fairies come. The whole world looked like a bride, jeweled from head to foot. A German on the back seat, hearing our talk, and our exclamations of wonder, leaned forward, looked out of the stage window, and said: "Y-a-a-s; it looks like a clean table-cloth!"

So, when we look upon a flower, a painting, a statue, a star, or a violet, the more we know, the more we have experienced, the more we have thought, the more we remember—the more the statue, the star, the painting, the violet has to tell. Nature says to me all that I am capable of understanding—gives all that I can receive.

As with star, or flower, or sea, so with a book. A man reads Shakespeare. What does he get from him? All that he has the mind to understand. He gets his little cup full. Let another read him who knows nothing of the drama, nothing of the impersonations of passion, and what does he get? Almost nothing. Shakespeare has a different story for each reader. He is a world in which each recognises his acquaintances—he may know a few—he may know all.

The impression that Nature makes upon the mind, the stories told by sea, and star, and flower, must be natural food of thought. Leaving out for the moment the impression gained from ancestors, the hereditary fears, and drifts, and trends—the natural food of thought must be the impression made upon the brain by coming in contact, through the medium of the five senses, with what we call the outer world. The brain is natural. Its food is natural. The result—thought—must be natural. The supernatural can be constructed with no material except the natural. Of the supernatural, we can have no conception.

"Thought" may be deformed, and the thought of one may be strange to, and denominated as unnatural by, another; but it cannot be supernatural. It may be weak, it may be insane, but it is not supernatural. Above the natural, man cannot rise. There can be deformed ideas, as there are deformed persons. There can be religious monstrosities and misshapen, but they must be naturally produced. Some people have ideas about what they are pleased to call the supernatural; what they call the supernatural is simply the deformed. The world is to each man according to each man. It takes the world as it really is, and that man to make that man's world, and that man's world cannot exist without that man.

You may ask, and what of all this? I reply: As with everything in Nature, so with the Bible. It has a different story for each reader. Is then, the Bible a different book to every human being who reads it? It is. Can God, then, through the Bible, make the same revelation to two persons? He cannot. Why? Because the man who reads it is the man who inspires. Inspiration is in the man, as well as in the book. God should have "inspired" readers as well as writers.

You may reply, God knew that his book would be understood differently by each one; really intended that it should be understood as it is understood by each. If this is so, then my understanding of the Bible is the real revelation to me. If this is so, I have no right to take the understanding of another. I must take the revelation made to me through my understanding, and by that revelation I must stand. Suppose, then, that I do read this Bible honestly, carefully, and when I get through I am compelled to say, "The book is not true!"

If this is the honest result, then you are compelled to say, either that God has made no revelation to me, or that the revelation that it is *not* true is the revelation made to me, and by which I am bound. If the book and my brain are both the work of the same infinite God, whose fault is it that the book and the brain do not agree? Either God should have written a book to fit my brain, or should have made my brain to fit his book.

The inspiration of the Bible depends upon the ignorance of him who reads.

## Acid Drops.

The Bishop of Durham, who launched that cock-and-bull story about John Stuart Mill having died a believer, and ran away when it was exposed and refuted, has been preaching at St. Helen's Church, West Auckland, and we see by the local *Advertiser* that he told his congregation that "he had received an infidel production in the shape of a paper stating that he was a 'professional liar.'" Well, so he is. Only a professional liar would have started that story about John Stuart Mill thirty-four years after his death, and soon after the death of his step-daughter, Miss Helen Taylor, the only person who could authoritatively contradict Dr. Moule's nonsense. The story itself—as we clearly proved—is absolutely against all the evidence; and, being stated as it was, at such an opportune moment, it shows that its author was not only a liar, but a very cunning liar too. Even now Dr. Moule prefers to raise prejudice by crying "infidel" rather than answering our damning indictment—which, by the way, we think of putting into pamphlet form for circulation in his lordship's diocese.

The *Advertiser* editor, after referring to—but not reporting—what it calls the Bishop's "defence," says that those who heard it "would no doubt agree that the attacking party would have a sorry time of it if it came to personal controversy." Indeed! We should be glad to afford the Bishop an opportunity of giving us "a sorry time." We are quite ready, if he is, to have a "personal controversy" with him in the biggest hall in Newcastle-on-Tyne on the question of whether John Stuart Mill died a Christian. What a chance for his lordship! He would be able—as his friend suggests—to convince, convict, and shame the "infidel," and win a great victory for the cause of Christ. Will he embrace it? We wish he would—though we cannot say that we *hope* so, for we have had a long experience of his cloth.

The Bishop of Durham has spoken again, and this time he has told the truth. He said that the mass of the population of this nominally Christian country are distinctly getting less Christian as regards the observance, reverence, and obedience to the old faith usage, that the Lord's Day is a matter of contempt, that the Lord's Word is a matter often only, at the best, of a miserable kind of patronage, and that awe of God is dying out of the common consciousness. We have been saying the same thing for years, and for our pains we have been systematically dubbed—liars.

Dr. Torrey is absolutely without a conscience. He has just communicated to the press a glowing account of his recent mission in Montreal, Canada. The whole city was thoroughly stirred. Quite a number of Roman Catholics found the blessed Savior. The fire got into the homes and the shops, and filled the whole place. Altogether, 2,400 persons publicly confessed Christ, and handed in their names and addresses. That is the gist of his message, which is now going the usual round. But the account is incomplete, and needs to be supplemented. This notorious libeller of dead Freethinkers omits to mention that at Montreal he libelled a living one, and got into serious trouble through it. Mr. Norman Murray, a citizen of Montreal, asked him an awkward question, and the mountebank, losing his temper because he could not answer it, savagely turned on him, and told him that he was a worse man than King David, who murdered a soldier and stole his wife. Mr. Murray prosecuted him for defamation of character, and the great blackguard had to make a humble apology and pay heavy costs. To this disgraceful case the cowardly revivalist makes no reference whatever.

The simple old Gospel having failed to draw, American preachers are resorting to startling devices to attract the people. The Rev. Dr. Myers, Ohio, has engaged a brass band, and goes through amazing antics in the pulpit. On one occasion, choosing as his subject "The Stainless Flag," he dragged into the pulpit a huge American flag disfigured by a big blot artificially attached. He made a dramatic onslaught on the drink evil, and reached the climax of the performance by indignantly tearing off the blot to the accompaniment of thunders of applause. And yet the Gospel is said to be the very power of the Almighty unto salvation.

Dr. Aked, late of Liverpool, ardent democratic and nominee of Rockefeller, has become an American citizen. We see that he is off to the mountains until September, and that his church is closed meanwhile. We presume there are no souls worth saving on Fifth Avenue during July and August.

Rev. Dr. Aked, who loved Liverpool so much before he shook the English dust off his boots and became an American citizen, has been shaking the English dust off his mind too. Before starting on his long summer vacation, at the expense of his millionaire employers, he showed that he was trying to earn his salary.

"He said he considered the monarchy and aristocracy in England were stifling the life of the nation, education was being conducted on denominational methods which were most hateful, the military despotism was oppressive, drunkenness was increasing, and the morals of a large number of the people were of the lowest type."

This will please the citizens of the great American Republic, with its Rockefeller and Thaw cases. But the question arises, Why did not Mr. Aked stay in the old country where the people are hurrying so to hell? The soul-saver has missed his chance.

Mr. H. M. Thompson is a subtle wit, but he pales before a contributor to the *Two Worlds*, who has been writing a message from a lady called Miriam "Concerning Jesus Christ." This "communication"—as it is called—was "received October 18, 1906." There has been no hurry, therefore, over its publication; which is strange, in view of its immense importance. "Miriam" states a few things about Jesus which can be read in the New Testament, and repeats a few commonplaces of rationalist criticism; then she says she fears she has "not been able to give a very satisfying account of this truly remarkable man, but it is the best that I am able to give"—which we can quite believe. "Miriam" does not say when she acquired English. When she did acquire it—judging by the expression "would have liked to have heard him"—she must have done so in inferior society. But, after all, this is taking a joke too seriously. The *Two Worlds* contributor must be congratulated on carrying his joke through to the end with a straight face. Perhaps he was trying to see how far he could go with such readers.

The deputation that waited on Sir Edward Grey at the Foreign Office, with reference to the necessity for European control in Macedonia, was headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and included a number of other reverend gentlemen of both the Anglican and Nonconformist Churches. What these men of God are concerned with is the welfare of the good Christians of Macedonia; they don't care a straw about the Mohammedans, who may all go to Hades. It must have been gall and wormwood to them, therefore, to hear Sir Edward Grey state the "particular form of outrage due to Turkish troops and gendarmerie had disappeared" and that the present "crimes of violence" are all "committed by rival Christian nationalities upon each other." The intervention of the Powers had reduced one evil and given rise to another. An idea had got abroad that there was going to be Macedonian autonomy and further dismemberment of the Turkish dominions. "Consequently," Sir Edward Grey said, "the different nationalities who had interests in this region seemed to think themselves justified in persecuting or even attempting to exterminate villages which did not belong to their own race or their own Church in order to peg out claims for themselves in case any division took place." This is precisely what we have long been saying in the *Freethinker*. The Macedonian question is purely a question of savage and brutal strife between rival Christians. And it is well that persons like the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Rev. Dr. Horton, the Rev. Stephen Gladstone, the Rev. Canon Barnett, the Rev. Scott Lidgett, and the Rev. Thomas Law, should be reminded of the fact.

The Pope sulked when the International Freethought Congress met at Rome, and petulantly closed the Vatican against visitors during the week the Congress was sitting. Naturally, the Pope had another sulking fit during the recent Garibaldi celebrations. The whole of the Papal Court was ordered into ten days' spiritual retreat.

The case of Tucker *v.* Godley was settled out of court. But some nice disclosures were made in court before an arrangement was arrived at. Mrs. Tucker sought to recover £1,850 obtained from her late husband by the late Mr. Godley as an agent from the Lord God. Mr. Tucker was quite enslaved by Mr. Godley, and when the latter got hold of the money he said it was "a gift from God." Same old game!

The child named Florrie Lanczovvi, who fell from a train near Hathfield Station and was killed, was travelling with a Sunday-school party from the Church of the Ascension, Lavender Hill, London, S.W. Another proof of "Providence."

For revelling in audacious self-contradictions and blank assertions, for recklessly mixing scholarly sanity and childish credulity, the Rev. Dr. Horton easily takes the biscuit. While pretending to be exceptionally fair and non-partisan, he delivers the most biased and bigoted religious opinions. The other Sunday evening, speaking on the problem of evil and pain, he expressed a wish that "Christians would be more candid and put themselves more side by side with those who are not Christians, admitting the mysteries and difficulties of life." Then he dwelt, with eloquent pathos, on the essential insolubleness of the riddle of the Universe. He also drew a vivid picture of the horrible cruelties, injustices, inequalities, and sufferings of the world. And yet, in the midst of all these frank admissions and wise counsels, we find this astounding statement: "As you reflect, it will dawn upon you that the Christian religion emerges as the one genuine solace and the only rational explanation of this scene of sorrow and sin." Whatever is rationally explained ceases to be a mystery. Yet Dr. Horton fully acknowledges the "mysteries and difficulties of life," and in the same breath offers the Christian religion as the "only rational explanation" of them. What a mighty triumph of modern apologetics! What a shining instance of pulpit sanity and logical consistency!

Here is another brilliant example. In his latest published sermon, Mr. Campbell, in his notoriously oracular style, declares that "God is indwelling us anyhow, whether we know it or not." How nice to entertain the best of guests without being aware of it! Someone says, "I am sure God does not indwell me." Mr. Campbell retorts: "You are a liar, sir; I am the one who *knows*." Yet there are sinners in the world, and Mr. Campbell says to them: "God goes one way, and you the opposite; God's face is towards life, while your very life is deathwards."

Unfathomable is the conceit of the Nonconformists. They are everlastingly bragging of their infinite superiority to all others. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Had it not been for them the English nation would have perished long ago. One of the greatest swaggerers among them is the political superintendent of Whitefield's Tabernacle, the Rev. C. Sylvester Horne. Speaking at Newton Abbott lately, this vain boaster said: "Even the nation is discovering that its best friends and heroes are Free Churchmen." Why did he not set up the claim, while at it, that Free Churchmen *are* the nation? Mr. Horne had better study his Bible more. In Proverbs xxvii. 2, we read: "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." That would be a magnificent text on which to hang a sermon on Humility or Self-denial.

One of the Nonconformist M.P.'s, Mr. R. W. Perks, has just returned from a trip to the United States. Part of the business of his tour was to arrange, both in Canada and America, that Methodist employers should give the preference for employment to men and women who were also Methodists. So that while Nonconformists are shrieking over tests in training colleges, they are seeking to apply them in business. This is, of course, a good old-fashioned Methodist principle, but it means hypocrisy and terrorism just the same. Mr. Perks explains that the Methodists would not apply any sectarian tests; preference would always be given to those who belonged to that religious body. Which, being interpreted, means that Methodists will not lose anything by refusing to engage a man when one is needed, and no fellow-believer is handy; but if they can vent their sectarianism free, gratis, for nothing, they will do so.

Incidentally, Mr. Perks gave a strong confirmation of what has been often pointed out in these columns. In the States, he said, Methodism "ministers largely to the cultured and wealthy middle classes.....It is not democratic as British Methodism is, and has no strong hold upon the working-men. Its ideals on social and economic questions are less popular than ours." Quite so. In England, the Nonconformists parade their sympathy with the democracy, and appeal to it for support. This results from the fact that they are fighting a State Church that is necessarily connected with the "upper" classes, and are bound to appeal to the democracy on the same principle that nobles and kings, during the Middle Ages, bought the support of towns and cities. In America, where there is no State Church, the same religious bodies are, in the main, on the side of the money-kings *against* the democracy. A mere political accident throws them on to the democracy here for support. Where the political conditions are different, we are able to see organised Christianity acting on its usual principle of selling its service to the party capable of offer-

ing the highest pay. This is the one principle to which the clergy have always been true. They are the Swiss guard of the intellectual world.

We understand now why the weather has been so wretched during this pretended summer. Rev. Dr. Davidson, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, says it is clear that God "has a controversy with us." In the hour of prosperity we have forgotten to give him the praise. He has, therefore, withheld the ripening sunshine and sent the rotting rain. And how to stop it? Why, this way. Let the members of the Presbyterian Church, and especially the ministers, pray "both in public and in private for a favorable season throughout the remainder of the summer." That will do the trick. It is as easy as lying.

Dr. Davidson says that "God rules the elements; it is he that sends the sunshine and the shower." It must be he, too, that sends the Dr. Davidsons and other clergymen. Which shows the height (or depth) of his wisdom.

A Yorkshire vicar has been suggesting that the late succession of fine Sundays, amid general bad weather, proves that God has been "giving us this object-lesson by giving special honor and favor to His day," and so teaching that "the Sabbath should be used for rest and worship, and not for pleasure and amusement." Now this is really an original plea. All along we have imagined that a fine Sunday, after a wet week, was an invitation to an excursion; but it seems we were wrong. We were also under the impression that the stretch of unseasonable weather we have been having, with its bad effect on trade, farmers, and fruit-growers, was ill-calculated to fill one with devout feelings on Sunday; but we suppose this was another blunder on our part. And when one comes to think of it, it is the custom of Providence—to judge from those who have stood forward as authorities on the subject—to half cripple a countryside in order to drive a lesson of repentance home to the village wastrel.

Before the King went down to open the new Alexandra Dock at Cardiff, a pious performance by Bishop Hadley, of Menevia, took place in the presence of Lord and Lady Bute, and other titled persons. A litany was recited and a prayer was offered up to the "One Above," who was asked for the divine blessing on "this port made by the hands of thy servants together with all ships that come in or go out, and those that sail in them." "Grant them always," the prayer concluded, "a good voyage and safe harbor." Then the Bishop sprinkled holy water over the place and the dock was duly "blessed." We suppose the Bishop received the usual consideration. But who believes that he did any good? Does he believe it himself? Everyone knows that the prayer, the holy water, and the divine blessing will all be eliminated from the Insurance Companies' calculations.

King Edward of England has entrusted to Ambassador Bryce a Holy Bible to be given to the Bouton Episcopal Church, Williamsburg, Va., in commemoration of the tercentenary of the establishment of the Anglican Church in Virginia. The receipt of the gift will mournfully remind the faithful of Williamsburg that the Anglican Church did not stay established.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

One of the speakers at the Mildmay Conference, recently held, said that "there are 252 heathen people who have never heard the Gospel, for every letter there is in the Bible." How terribly sad! But, in spite of this fact, and in spite of the distinct "backsliding in religious matters" acknowledged to be going on throughout Christendom, preachers still describe Christianity as "universally triumphant."

At the Gloucestershire quarter sessions, Mary Ann Tucker, wife of a Church of England missionary, was charged with neglecting her four children in a manner likely to cause them unnecessary suffering and injury to their health; and finally she pleaded guilty to habitual drunkenness, in order that she might be sent to the Bentry Retreat for two years instead of to prison. Charles Tucker, her husband, who appeared as a witness, was told by the Chairman that he ought to have interfered in his children's behalf. "You have gone on lecturing and reading the Bible to other people," he said, "while your own children are being killed by neglect. You are a very fortunate man not to be in the dock." Mrs. Tucker, in *her* evidence, stated that her married life had been an unhappy one; her husband had given her eighteen black eyes, and she had flown to drink to drown her sorrows.

Mr. F. W. Jowett, M.P., in last week's *Clarion*, referred to the sudden death of Sir Alfred Billson. Mr. Jowett said,

that close acquaintance with him in the House of Commons had "revealed a kindly and courteous personality which enables us to say of him, in all sincerity—may he rest in peace." If it is any satisfaction to Mr. Jowett, we beg to assure him that *he will*.

The dear *Daily News* found room for a letter half a column long, in the most conspicuous position, from a lady arguing that the walls of Jericho *might* have fallen down when the Jewish priests blew their trumpets—for if they sounded the right note the walls would have been set vibrating, so that "the thing is not impossible, though doubtless highly improbable." But if it is highly improbable, what more do we want in order to disbelieve it? Did not Bishop Butler argue that the whole of human life is conducted upon probability? It is a pity that the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience hasn't something better to do with its space.

John B. Richards, in the *Islington Gazette*, says that—"It has been admitted and acknowledged by the foremost leader of secular thought in England, Mr. G. W. Foote, that there is law and order throughout the whole of nature." We are not aware that Mr. Foote has ever used such an expression. "Law and order" is policeman's language. Certainly there is order in nature—in the sense that nature acts by invariable method, and this method is often called "law"—a designation which is a "godsend" to the clergy, who jump at it and say that "law implies a lawgiver." "Law" is a term in politics and jurisprudence; it never ought to have been introduced in natural science, where it has caused nothing but confusion.

An American financial paper declares that what is needed in America is "a revival of old-time piety in the hearts of the people." A religious weekly thinks this is a promising symptom of American life, and evidently regards it as a revival of interest in religion. This may be; but, for our part, we are inclined to think that it is not unconnected with the growing determination of the American people to tackle the "trusts" and the dangerous moneyed interests of the United States. We have not the least doubt that these threatened interests would much rather see the people devoted to "old-time piety" than to cleansing the municipalities and curbing the monopolies. These know where to find their real friends, and we have never discovered that American "bosses" were antagonistic to religion. If the people can be kept engaged with religious exercises the end for which genuine reformers are working will be the longer delayed. And, after all, the old-time piety did not stop all these abuses growing up; and it is puzzling to see how it is going to end them now that they have developed.

The *Christian World* says the man would be hailed as a benefactor who would supply some word to take the place of "call" when a minister receives an offer from another church. Well, in other professions when a man receives an increase in salary they call it a "rise."

Behold, how fervently these Christians love one another! Mr. R. J. Campbell, addressing a large company of North London Socialists in the grounds of his home at Enfield a few days ago, made the significant confession that "almost every Free Church pulpit was closed against him." Evidently, the pietistic boycott of the City Temple oracle, so ardently recommended by the editor of the *British Weekly*, is already in flourishing operation. This is, indeed, an energetic exhibition of glorified Christian charity, made by the Divinely-ordained servants of the God whose very being is love!

The Divine worship of the future will be rendered by machinery. Already a beginning has been made, though we are not informed whether the Lord approves of it or not. In the parish church at La Martre, in the department of Var, the officiating priest is in charge of a phonograph, and when one record is finished, he adjusts another one, winds up the clockwork, and then goes on with the service, the phonograph chanting all the responses. This is surely an instance of that mechanical worship against which Jehovah's wrath burned so hotly in olden times. Perhaps the Almighty chooses now to be worshiped by machinery rather than not at all.

The Rev. Dr. Rasdall is rapidly developing. He now pronounces the Ten Commandments obsolete, and discourages the frequent reading of them at church. The second commandment, he says, is false, and the fourth completely out of date. Nobody keeps the Sabbath now, and to repeat the commandment about it is sheer hypocrisy. Let us be of

good courage; the leaven of Freethought is transmuting even the Established Church.

"If persons stole dollars as they steal ideas and opinions," the *New York Truthseeker* says, "society would be a den of thieves." Perhaps so—but there would be very few persons robbed.

"Praise be to God," said Nietzsche, "who made the whole universe to be as stupid as he could." Amen! And his final triumph was the clergy.

What a ferocious follower of the meek and lowly Jesus the Rev. Dinsdale T. Young is. No wonder he is one of the most popular preachers in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. So full of the beautiful spirit of Christ is he that he would send to hell straightaway all who do not pronounce his shibboleths. Preaching at Newcastle-on-Tyne, in connection with the United Free Methodist Assembly, on the Deity of Christ, he said: "Perish every pulpit that is not based upon this! Perish every church that does not found itself on it!" We have not heard that a single church or pulpit has been demolished since the malediction was made. We positively know that three days later the City Temple was still standing, though a violent thunderstorm had raged over London during the interval!

Mr. Birrell travelled all the way from Dublin to Newcastle-on-Tyne in order to say some questionable things to the United Methodist Free Church Assembly. For instance, he said that "Christianity would always be the one powerful motive to induce man to love his neighbor better than himself." Silly as Christianity often is, it does not teach this silliness. Jesus taught "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"—and in doing so he simply quoted from an ancient Jewish writer, for it may be found, word for word, in the Old Testament. The man who says he loves his neighbor better than himself is an idiot or a hypocrite.

Mrs. Mitchell, of Garnham-street, Stoke Newington, who threw two of her children, and then herself, out of a window at the top of the house, was a member of the Salvation Army. We attach no particular importance to this fact. But it would have meant a great deal if she had belonged (say) to the North London Branch of the National Secular Society.

At the Leeds County Court, a Jew named Louis Goldberg, being sued by a co-religionist named Louis Cohen for a bill of £4 16s. for groceries, pleaded that £2 worth had been supplied on Sundays, and that, therefore, the amount could not be enforced. His trick was trumped, however, by the judge, who held that the Act did not apply to necessary goods.

It is a significant fact that the "rioters" at Rawal Pindi sacked the church and mission library and threw the religious books into the street, exclaiming, "Christians read these. Rub them in the mud"—adding ironically, "Christ be glorified." Evidently the missionaries don't create much affection for themselves, or respect for their faith.

"Gladstone the Unkissed"—Old Dowie's son—was left penniless by his father. He has been engaged as the manager of a summer hotel, the proprietors believing that he will be an attraction. Probably they think the ladies will rush to see the young man who has never been kissed, with a view to giving him his first lessons in osculation. For "Amurrica" is a strange land in some things—especially where religion is concerned.

Mr. R. G. Knowles, the famous music-hall artist, appears to be going in for a humorous Sunday lecture tour. We suppose his object is to make money. Some American ministers, however, take him more seriously. They say—"The people are leaving the churches. We must get them back at any price. Come here to amuse and instruct them." Mr. Knowles as a church-filler will certainly be a novelty.

For real conceit and impudence commend us to a Christian—preferably a Dissenter. This is the way Dr. Fitchett—a Methodist, of course—addresses a Methodist Conference:—

"If I were dropped from a balloon into a gathering of Baptists I could tell who they were by the way they cut their hair. If I were dropped into an Anglican Synod I could discover my ecclesiastical whereabouts by their collars. A Methodist gathering would be signalled by the intelligence and kindness of the faces."

It is really a pity not to have added "beauty," and so completed the description.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Suspended during June, July, and August).

## To Correspondents.

- W. DEX thinks that "S. P." must have mixed up Gladstone with Karl Marx. The latter says in his *Capital*, p. xix., that—"The English Established Church will more readily pardon an attack on 38 of its 39 articles than on 1-39th of its income."
- D. MALIGNER.—Glad you appreciated the "Life's Little Ironies" article. Copies of the Salvation Army tract have been sent you for distribution at General Booth's meeting.
- E. W. CHOLDCROFT.—Hardly worth our attention. It seems a mere "scuffle of kites and crows"—both Christian.
- C. MACKENZIE.—See our pamphlet *What is Agnosticism?* There is no real difference between the Agnostic and the Atheist. Both are "without God." Glad to hear you read the *Freethinker* with so much pleasure; but sorry you fancy you differ from us in believing that "there are some few good and sincere men calling themselves Christians." Of course there are. We know some of them ourselves.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—We note what you say about the gentleman, and agree with you that Secular Education is of primary importance.
- J. LENOLO-CAREY.—The paragraph was not our own, but there is nothing wrong with the grammar. The best English writers use "is" after more than one substantive when these are substantially the same thing, or aspects of the same thing. It depends on what is meant—several things or only one thing. "Is" would be equally right after "nine-tenths" or "six pounds," because it is not the separate tenths or pounds that are referred to, but the total quantity. Learning and pedantry are not identical.
- GUY A. ALDRED.—We do not fill the *Freethinker* with Christian "charges" against ourselves and our colleagues. Why should we give space to their "charges" against you?
- N. LEVEY (Edinburgh).—Do you mean that the Socialists broke up the N. S. S. Branch meeting on the Mound? That is how we read your letter, but we hope we are mistaken. We trust the local "saints" will support the Branch platform. Of course, the police have no right to "warn" you off the ground. It is as available to you as to others. Their business is to assist in keeping the peace, not to encourage its violation.
- J. BUSH writes: "I wish to thank you for the six copies of the *Freethinker* which you sent me. I am now a constant reader, and am very pleased with it. I look forward to getting it every week, for I think it the best and brightest paper I have ever had to read. You are doing a good work for mankind. I assure you the *Freethinker* is a great help to me, and I will do my best to promote the circulation of your wonderful paper." A letter like this should encourage our friends to forward us more names and addresses of persons who might become regular readers of the *Freethinker* if it were sent to them gratuitously for six consecutive weeks.
- MICHAEL STITT.—Pleased to see your "fist" again. Thanks for good wishes; also for the cutting. See paragraph.
- E. BARSBY.—Thanks for the Japanese paper, though we cannot read it. Glad to hear you have not been able to find the names printed of any leading Japs who have been won over by the Salvation "William the Conqueror." We hope the *Freethinker* you send out to your young Japanese friend will do good in that part of the world.
- R. BELL.—We don't understand. There is no partiality on our part. We acknowledge what reaches us. Do you enclose your name with the cuttings? Some senders don't. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.
- "C." writing from Connecticut, U.S.A., says: "I may say that I look forward very much to the arrival of the mail that brings my weekly *Freethinker*, and I enjoy reading it more than ever now I am so far away from my fellow members of the N. S. S."
- C. W. STYRING.—Pleased to have your reasoned concurrence, and also to note your confidence that "the dignity of the paper" is safe in our hands. Thanks also for the cuttings.
- THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—H. Black, 6d.; B. Evans, 1s.
- T. H. ELSTON.—The matter shall be brought before the next Executive meeting.
- A. ALDWINKLE.—There was no "misunderstanding" at all. The matter cannot be smoothed over in that way. As far as you are concerned, you did not "vex" us in the least; we allow for differences of opinion, and never in our dreams fancied we were infallible. No offence should ever be taken where there is no ill intention.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- J. DE B.—Best thanks.
- ELIZABETH LECHMERE.—Thanks for cutting. The letter shall be posted on to Japan.
- J. BROUGH.—We are obliged to you for all your trouble.
- C. J. P.—Your letter to Mr. Campbell was a poser; no wonder you have had no reply.
- A. L. COATES.—Thanks for cuttings and "kind regards from Newcastle 'saints.'" You will probably like our rejoinder.

HAROLD ELLIOTT.—Thanks for your letter, and copy of your letter to "Dangle." We appreciate your good feeling, and are glad you thought our article "temperate."

W. A. B. PARRY.—Pleased to hear you have taken the *Freethinker* for years and are still "delighted with it." Pamphlets sent.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks.

E. J. JONES.—Much obliged; shall use next week.

F. J. GOULD.—Always very glad to hear from you. Proof in due course.

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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.

Amongst the new Civil List pensions is one of £100 to Mr. John Davidson "in consideration of the merit of his poetical works." Of course the man in the street knows nothing of Mr. John Davidson. He is a poet of considerable power, and he is a thorough-going Freethinker, who longs for the early destruction of Christianity. His gifts are not of a very marketable character, and we daresay he will find this £100 a year very useful. The wonder is that he ever obtained it.

A pension of £150 goes to Miss Louise de la Ramée, the lady who is known in the literary world as "Ouida." She also is a Freethinker—as her Essays testify. Opinions differ as to her quality as a novelist. Colonel Ingersoll considered her *Ariadne* as the finest work of fiction in the English language. We do not share that opinion, but a book that Ingersoll praised so highly must have great merits.

Miss M. Betham-Edwards, who had a pension of £50 before, is granted a further £50. We think this lady may be described as a Freethinker. To balance her and Mr. Davidson and "Ouida" pensions are granted to that excellent man and writer, the Rev. Canon Augustus Jessop, and to Mrs. Momerie "in consideration of the eminence of her husband, the late Dr. Momerie, as a preacher and theologian."

Mr. Foote was away last week and could not see the proof of his front-page article. A few slight blunders crept into it in consequence. It is hardly worth while to point them out now, but readers who noticed them will accept this explanation.

Mr. Cohen lectures in Victoria Park to-day (July 21), both afternoon and evening. The weather promises to be fine, and there should be bumper meetings.

Mr. Cohen will be gratified to learn that his recent article in reply to the Rev. D. Warschauer has been reproduced in the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, U.S.A. One of the late Joseph Symes's articles is reproduced in the same number from our columns.

"Although Prince William of Sweden speaks English fluently, in view of his intended visit to this country he has employed a teacher to give him the right American accent. The difference between the English and American accent of cultivated persons in both countries has been greatly exaggerated. When George William Foote, editor of the London *Freethinker*, made his first visit to America about ten years ago, he brought with him no accent that would have distinguished him from one of our college professors who mind their pronunciation. If Prince William of Sweden will stop at the *Freethinker* office in London for instructions, and then obey them, his English will take him through New York

without attracting notice except for its excellence. We had a visit a few weeks ago from Captain Taylor of the English steamship *Isle of Kent*, who might have been born and raised on this coast for aught to the contrary indicated by his speech."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Mr. F. Bonte's pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*, has been translated into French and Flemish, and we have been favored with a copy of both editions. The Flemish edition is published at Rousselare, by D. L. Ackerman and Co. The French edition is published at Brussels, by the Bibliothèque de Propagande, 34 Boulevard du Midi, at 20 centimes. The title is *Illusions Dissipées; ou Comment On Perd la Foi*. A few passages have been omitted from this edition to suit the more timid Socialists. Even with this modification, it is expected that the pamphlet will cause considerable ferment.

One of our continental exchanges, the *Journal de Charleroi*, publishes some matter on the scepticism of Garibaldi. In 1880, he wrote declaring his adhesion to the Freethought Congress at Brussels. In a letter to Luigi Stefamoui, dated June 4, he said: "Freethinkers are the apostles of truth, that is to say, of reason and science; they are also the best teachers of the people. Schools should all be secular. Priests are false apostles. Authors of tortures, stakes, human sacrifices, they are the natural enemies of nations, whom they have kept, and still keep, in a state of sanguinary discord." Writing in the same year to Baron Swift, of Venice, he said: "I wish Italians would understand that OUR ATHEISM is synonymous with liberty, reason, and science, and that its object is to destroy the most scoundrelly of all human evils—priestcraft."

Dr. J. E. Roberts, whose lectures have been published occasionally in our own columns, is minister of the Church of this world, in Kansas City. We see by an American exchange that he has started a monthly magazine under the title of *Here and Now*. We hope to be favored with a copy.

Mr. Philip Bright, the Liberal candidate for the Colne Valley vacancy, answers some questions put to him by the Northern Counties Education League in the affirmative. One was whether he would "restrict State-paid schools to general national and moral education, leaving religious teaching to those who will give it at their own cost outside the public schools course." We are not quite certain that this means the same thing as Secular Education. Mr. Victor Grayson, the Labor candidate, says: "I am a whole-hogger for the completely secular solution." There is nothing doubtful about that.

The July number of the *Humane Review* (quarterly) contains some very interesting and useful articles. The judicious writer who signs himself "Lex," deals with "Some Fads in Penology," and there is a long and able article by H. B. Montgomery on "How to Reform our Prison System." Dr. W. E. A. Axon writes on "A Friend of Shelley"—John Frank Newton, the vegetarian, who is mentioned in the Notes to *Queen Mab*. The final article is an indignant protest against the inhumanity which goes on in the Reptile House of the Zoological Gardens.

Although there is nothing new to students in the following passage, it will be of interest to such as are under the delusion that the introduction of Christianity brought a more humane and civilised feeling into the world. It is taken from Andrew Dickson White's (author of the *Warfare Between Science and Theology*) *Autobiography*. As the result of his historical studies, he says: "I found that in Greece and Rome, before the coming in of Christianity, torture had been reduced to a minimum and, indeed, had been mainly abolished; but that the doctrine of the Mediæval Church.....had led to the re-establishment of a system of torture.....far more cruel than any which had prevailed under Paganism. I also found that, while under the later Roman Emperors, and in fact down to the complete supremacy of Christianity, criminal procedure grew steadily more merciful, as soon as the Church was established in full power.....it extended the use of torture.....to all criminal procedure, and maintained it, in its most frightful form, for more than a thousand years." Professor White also adds that torture assumed "even more hideous characteristics in the Protestant Church, especially in Germany." And those who know the kinds of torture against which the eighteenth-century Freethinkers wrote are aware that, for sheer brutality, torture under Christianity eclipsed anything the world had ever seen.

Legislation is passed in Switzerland by the direct voice of the nation. A referendum on the Bill for the Separation of Church and State has resulted in the endorsement of the measure by a sufficient majority.

Few papers have found such attached readers as the *Freethinker* has always had. A veteran friend writes us this week from Southsea, and his pathetic letter has touched us very much. "I have taken the *Freethinker* and read it," he says, "from its first issue. I think I can claim all those who have written for it as friends, though I have not shaken their hands. Now through sickness and failing eyesight I cannot read it. I feel I am being taken from you all, and I think you can imagine my condition. I always looked to the *Freethinker* for instruction and amusement; and I take this opportunity of wishing you all farewell, and good health and long life to carry on the fight against the common enemy."

Rev. H. T. Tracy, vicar of St. Saviour's, Dartmouth, in his *Parish Magazine*, deals with the scarcity of curates, and incidentally refers to the *Freethinker*, which he doesn't find as solemn as Mr. H. M. Thompson does. "The dear *Freethinker*," he says, "of course took the opportunity to point out that jobs of £500 to £15,000 a year will never go begging. I have no quarrel with the *Freethinker*; on the contrary, I have in these columns recommended it to the notice of all religious teachers, for the simple reason that if a man cannot bear to hear the other side he has a poor case. And the *Freethinker* is always amusing and frequently instructive. But surely the editor is much too clever a man not to know that the position of an Archbishop with £15,000 a year is not for a moment to be compared with a layman on a similar income." This is true, of course, to a certain extent, but the extent may easily be exaggerated. Every rich man has to spend a lot of his income in keeping up his "position." Bishops have to keep up palaces. But why on earth do they inhabit such places? Why don't they strike against it? Until they do so, living in palaces is part of their reward, and the cost is legitimately to be reckoned as a part of their income.

#### TENNYSON AND THE BIBLE.

It is perfectly clear that Tennyson was far from an orthodox Christian. Quite as certainly he was not a Bibliolator. He read the Bible, of course; and so did Shelley. There are fine things in it, amidst its falsehoods and barbarities; and the English version is a monument of our literature. We regard as apocryphal, however, the story of Tennyson's telling a boy, "Read the Bible and Shakespeare; the one will teach you how to speak to God, and the other how to speak to your fellow-men." Anyhow, when the poet came to die, he did not ask for the Bible and he did ask for Shakespeare. The copy he habitually used was handed to him; he opened it at *Cymbeline*, one of the most pagan of Shakespeare's plays; he read a little, and then held the book until Death came with the fall of "tired eyelids upon tired eyes."—G. W. Foote, "*Flowers of Freethought*."

#### CAINS—OLD AND NEW.

Cain took care not to commit another murder, unlike our railway shareholders (I am one) who kill and maim shunters by hundreds to save the cost of automatic couplings, and make atonement by annual subscriptions to deserving charities. Had Cain been allowed to pay off his score, he might possibly have killed Adam and Eve for the mere sake of a second luxurious reconciliation with God afterwards. Bodger, you may depend on it, will go to the end of his life poisoning people with bad whisky, because he can always depend on the Salvation Army or the Church of England to negotiate a redemption for him in consideration of a trilling percentage of his profits.—G. Bernard Shaw, *Preface to "Major Barbara"*.

#### DEAD AND LIVE TRUTHS.

We are all of us willing enough to accept dead truths or blunt ones; which can be fitted harmlessly into spare niches, or shrouded and confined at once out of the way, we holding complacently the cemetery keys, and supposing we have learned something. But a sapling truth, with earth at its root and blossom on its branches; or a trenchant truth, that can cut its way through bars and sods; most men, it seems to me, dislike the sight or entertainment of, if by any means such guest or vision may be avoided. And, indeed, this is no wonder; for one such truth, thoroughly accepted, connects itself strangely with others, and there is no saying what it may lead us to.—John Ruskin, "*The Two Paths*."

## The Dangers of Credulity.

BY W. W. COLLINS.

If illustration and example were wanting of the grave dangers arising from ignorance and credulity, Christchurch has, of late, been well supplied with them. The doings of certain self-styled medical specialists, the dangers attending their doings and the disasters consequent upon them, have, within the last few days, so painfully obtruded themselves, that the attention of none, save of the most careless or the most callous, can fail to have been arrested. Life's journey is naturally beset with pit-falls and quagmires, among which the unwary traveler stumbles, and into which he often falls, and, as though these evils were not sufficient, unscrupulous and designing men, knowing the weaknesses of their fellows, lie wait, and, with cruel and cunning craft, spread their nets and lay their snares for their unsuspecting prey. Surely of all the evils from which humanity has suffered, and from which it still suffers, none has entailed such dire, such calamitous injury as the perpetuation of ignorance and error. What crime is there to compare with that of withholding knowledge? What madness can equal that of not only starving reason, but feeding unreasoning credulity. It may be, it doubtless is, true that society needs more adequate legislation to protect it from the harpies who are restrained by no humane sentiment, nor withheld by any moral scruple, but, after all, the only sure and enduring safeguard is knowledge, always knowledge, and still more knowledge.

Even in this age of boasted enlightenment, the opinion is still widespread that there is something meritorious in the act of belief itself. This opinion has been developed by the teachings of past centuries, and it is perpetuated by much of the teaching of to-day. It never seems to dawn on the holders of such opinion that to believe without considering, without questioning or investigating, without some knowledge of the validity of the grounds on which the belief rests is simply to place one's self in the position of the most unreasoning and uncultivated savage—for he does no other than this. The fearful fruits of "blessed are they which have not seen, but yet have believed," have been gathered in every age and in every land, and a crop of such fruit is still abundant. On the tree of knowledge the ripe fruit still hangs temptingly, but unseen to eyes blinded by prejudice and untouched by hands paralysed by fear. Blind belief is just as sure to err as blind unbelief, and its dangers are more positive, unless history is a mere fabrication, and its facts the veriest of fictions.

Without asking, and without expecting that each individual shall be made an expert in science, trained in philosophy, and conversant with the methods of metaphysicians, surely we have a right to expect that in these days of ever-increasing knowledge, the people shall be taught some of the fundamental truths concerning their own bodies, and shall have imparted to them some knowledge of the laws to which their bodies are subject. Yet, strange as it may appear, not only are the means of imparting such knowledge all too scanty and inefficient, but the people themselves, if not actually hostile towards it, exhibit a most lamentable indifference regarding it. Try to enlighten them as to the human body's wonders, its intricate and delicate structure; endeavor to teach them certain verifiable facts concerning its origin and development; seek to instruct them in all that may be known concerning it as it is, instead of vaguely speculating as to what it will be a hundred years hence, and their spiritual leaders and guides will encourage them, if they do not directly teach them, to regard you as their arch enemy, to be mistrusted as a teacher, and to be kept from participating in the practical concerns of their everyday collective life. Nor is this all, nor the worst, for such is the demoralising effect which cre-

dulity has upon those who are its victims, and also upon those who trade upon and profit by it, that both will join, not only in traducing the character and detracting from the usefulness of the living, but in defaming and dishonoring the dead. Seneca discovered, some 2,000 years ago, that malicious natures do not lack the wit to abuse honest men than themselves. Credulity has, indeed, proved a most persistent preservative of such natures. And, lest it be thought that we have exhausted the bounds of its blighting influence, or traced the full extent of its operations, it is necessary to point out that to such a degree has it blinded and blunted the moral sense of the community, so deadening has been its effect on the social conscience, that not only is it not generally deplored and denounced, but men, who are themselves neither ignorant nor credulous, will, for the sake of gain, position, or popularity, devote their talents to the fostering of popular prejudices, even to assisting in those base and despicable means employed, from which, under more healthy and vigorous moral conditions, they would recoil with contempt and disgust.

To the great scientific truths which have made the names of their discoverers immortal, and which, to-day, are incorporated with the thought of every claimant to culture, the masses are still strangers. The widespread suspicion that these truths are incompatible with existing faith must be held accountable for this. Nor is this a cause for wonder. Neither knowing nor caring; not having been trained to know or to care for great scientific truths; inheriting a suspicious bent, strengthened through generations of unrestrained superstition, what other attitude could be expected? Have not these people been taught to believe that a dead man, let down into Elisha's sepulchre, revived immediately he came into contact with the deceased prophet's bones? Have they not been trained to receive without question such statements as that multitudes, both of men and women, were cured of whatsoever diseases they had by simply being carried into the street that the shadow of Peter might fall upon them; and that handkerchiefs or aprons taken from Paul's body caused diseases and evil spirits to depart from those who were afflicted? While such beliefs as these are sedulously cultivated, what hope is there for any general interest in a knowledge of the laws of nature, what chance for an acceptance of the truths dependent upon their immutability? Nor is it the mere holding of such beliefs, but holding them without examination of the evidence upon which they rest, or even inquiring into the historical trustworthiness of the evidences themselves. This is the real danger. In a recently published book, *The Ultimate Problems of Christianity*, the Rev. Dr. Clifford declares "more than half our current faith rests, I fear, upon unhistorical foundations." How much more than the half he does not say, but those who know the nature of the evidence on which this statement is made, know how thoroughly and completely unimpeachable it is. That sturdy old Scotch philosopher, of Aberdeen University, Professor Alexander Bain, has shown us how "the few may have a self-interest in withholding the truth from the many; neither the few nor the many have an interest in its being withheld from themselves. Each one of us has the most direct concern in knowing on what plan this universe is constituted, what are its exact arrangements and laws. Whether for the present life or for any other, we must steer our course by our knowledge, and that knowledge needs to be true. Obstruction to the truth recoils upon the obstructors. To flee to the refuge of lies is not the greatest happiness of anybody." And this knowledge is with us; it is ours to command. It belongs to that same class of knowledge which has transformed a once savage into a civilised race. It is to the widest possible diffusion of this knowledge to which alone we must look if we would safeguard the community from the dangers of credulity. To permit prejudice or ignorance, or fear to withhold us from striving after such knowledge

would be to palter with truth. To call these to our assistance in order to keep the people in ignorance of such knowledge, would be to commit the greatest crime possible against society itself.

—*The Examiner* (Christchurch, N.Z.).

### The Seamy Side of Gentle Jesus.

1. *His religious tolerance.*—"I am the Light of the world: no man cometh to the Father but by me."

2. *Christ as Prince of Peace.*—"Verily I came not to bring peace but a sword."

3. *Christ as mystic.*—"He in me and I in him," "I have meat and drink that ye know not of," "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," etc.

4. *Christ's hatred of successful and wealthy people.*—"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," and his criminal and blasphemous parable about Lazarus and the rich man.

5. *Christ's priestcraft and adroitness in humbugging his poorer dupes.*—The parable of the widow's mite.

6. *Christ's charlatanism.*—The parable of the sower. The whole scope of this parable is to flatter those he succeeded in duping, and to throw scorn and contempt upon those who rejected his teaching.

7. *Christ's distempered fanaticism and excessive self-conceit.*—The flogging of the unfortunate dove-sellers out of the courts of the temple, and his cool assumption that the place belonged to him.

8. *Christ's complete indifference to animal sufferings and contempt for animals generally.*—His contemptuous allusion to dogs generally, and those under their master's table particularly; the miracle of the Gadarene swine; and his contempt of that most charming part of animate creation, bird life. All the Son of the Creator of it all has to say is: "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." A Protestant once rebuked a Neapolitan priest for letting a small boy torture a linnet by pulling it to pieces while it was alive. The priest retorted: "Poor little fellow; he must have something to amuse him." He might very well have quoted the Son of God's words about the sparrows, which quite convey the orthodox view. This idea was afterwards expanded by Paul into: "Do good unto all men, but especially them that be of the household of Faith." In other words, "Rob outsiders right and left to enrich the Church." This precept and the one about war are two of the very few of the Messiah's saws that the Latter-day Saints have carried out with zeal—but they generally assume *themselves* to be the Church.

9. *The fundamental dirtiness of Christ's mind.*—If a follower ultimately has common sense enough left to reject the Messianic ravings, the source of them—the Light of the World, the only begotten Son of God—has not self-restraint enough to express his regret like a gentleman, but howls out, as if possessed: "The dog has turned to his vomit again and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." We hear little of the effect of nature upon the divine mind. On one occasion, however, it was brought face to face with some beautiful lilies, and its first instinct was to compare them with the silk stuffs on the person of a king. One cannot help thinking, after this, that Christ must have served his time as shop-boy in some pawnbroker's who dealt in cast-off silks. His habit of mind in comparing at once the glories of nature to the—to him—greater glories of shoddy, is precisely that held up to ridicule by Pope and Swift in their inimitable *Martinus Scriblerus*. The creative mind instinctively compares the lower to the higher, the mountain to the cloud, the cloud to the seraph; the upholsterer type of minds—to which Christ's belongs—in seeing some natural object of beauty, at once compares it to some sordid object of human use, a turret of rock to an English Sunday hat, a bracken-covered brae to a lady's furbelow, and so on.

A word or two more ought, however, to be said about the dirtiness of Christ's mind. The fondness for dwelling upon vomit and other kindred substances is closely connected with latent homicidal mania, and explains how this Son of God *da strapasso* went about shrieking hysterically, "Verily I came not to bring peace but a sword," and his criminal emasculation of the Chinese Golden rule, which, if carried out in its original negative form would render the crime of war impossible. A religion with the motto, "Do good unto all men, but especially them that are of the household of Faith," is essentially the religion of a class, a clique, a *camorra*; it is not, and can never be, a world religion; and it is a very funny kind of Prince of Peace guaranteed to bring peace on earth and goodwill towards men who goes shrieking about hysterically, "Verily I came to bring not peace but a sword."

W. W. STRICKLAND, B.A., Trin. Coll., Cam.

### Correspondence.

#### THE "CLARION" AND DETERMINISM. A PLAIN QUESTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Hitherto neither your friends nor your enemies have suspected you of lacking either a sense of humor or the ability to discriminate between a paragraph written in a facetious vein and one intended to be taken seriously. I do not care either to discuss or defend your shortcomings in this direction—I merely deplore them; although it is just possible that your not conforming to some standards of wit may be anything but uncomplimentary. A Scotchman's defence of his countrymen's alleged inability to see a joke was that they were English jokes. In this particular instance of Mr. H. M. Thompson's humor your slowness of comprehension was certainly shared by many others. Mr. Thompson confesses to having received *three* letters from correspondents unable to detect the facetious nature of his paragraph, and if he inquires he will, I think, find that a much larger number must have miscarried after leaving the postman's hands at the door of the *Clarion* office.

On a question of humor or sarcasm it would be presumptuous of me to enter into any sort of competition with Mr. Thompson. When a writer has to explain to his readers which of his paragraphs are witty and which are not, it is obvious that we are dealing with a writer whose wit is not of the common order, but which belongs to that super-subtle category which even Swift himself never aspired to. But as there should be some reason for the penning of the most facetious paragraph, or for the mildest dose of chaffing, I beg to put to Mr. Thompson a perfectly plain question, in the hope of getting a perfectly plain answer.

Mr. Thompson says: "I mildly chaffed the author [G. B. S.] for ignoring Blatchford in his discussion of Determinism." Now, unless Mr. Thompson thinks that Mr. Blatchford ought to be mentioned by any writer discussing Determinism, there seems to be no reason whatever for "mildly" chaffing anybody. And if Mr. Thompson really thinks the ignoring of Mr. Blatchford a serious matter, I really should be greatly obliged if he would give his reasons for so concluding. I am but a poor wit, and so I say quite plainly, but seriously, and I believe with absolute accuracy, that Mr. Blatchford's contributions to the subject of Determinism are of no greater importance than my own expositions, say, of the meaning and character of Natural Selection. Both, I believe, have their value in popularising certain truths, but are of no importance whatever to any person discussing either theory. Determinism was a very, very old subject long before Mr. Blatchford awoke to its existence. One aspect of it—the power of environment—had been over-emphasised, as it was again by Mr. Blatchford, by Robert Owen, and others, long before the editor of the *Clarion* had written a line on any subject. And the folly, even the wickedness, of the ordinary notions of punishment, had been pointed out by the French eighteenth-century Freethinkers, and by many of the English ones of that century and later. All of us were pleased when Mr. Blatchford used his pen to popularise Determinism—although many of us would have wished that the position had been more carefully and accurately stated. Still, we were pleased to see a new recruit to the ranks, and to recognise a fellow-worker along substantially right lines. But, really, to hail him as a discover or a lawgiver to anybody but himself—or apparently to certain of the *Clarion* writers—was to make one ridiculous in the eyes of all well-read individuals.

In all seriousness, then, I ask, Why does Mr. Thompson think G. B. S. ought to have mentioned Mr. Blatchford in a discussion of Determinism? It seems to me that the only reason for such a conclusion is that, in his opinion, ignoring Mr. Blatchford while discussing Determinism is like ignoring Darwin and Spencer while discussing the theory of evolution. If he does not think this, then it seems to me that in his paragraph he "mildly chaffed," not Mr. Shaw, but Mr. Blatchford.

Mr. Thompson says that he had never seen the *Freethinker* until "this week." I deplore the fact—for his sake; but to all who accept his avowal it will explain things. May I be permitted to assume, as a charitable and substantial explanation of Mr. Thompson's "chaffing," an equally extensive non-acquaintance with the whole literature of Determinism from the Greeks down to the present time?

C. COHEN.

#### "AN EDUCATION SETTLEMENT."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A recent issue of the *Westminster Gazette* contained a leading article headed "An Education Settlement." It says:—

"One of the most satisfactory accomplishments of the new Transvaal Government has been the introduction of an Education Bill, which, according to the reports thus far received of it, has been accepted as fair and just by all the races and of religious denominations of the community. This, in view of our own difficulties, is so considerable a feat that the text of the measure, which the mail has now brought us, is worth a rather careful examination."

This "Education Settlement" contains the following clauses dealing with religion, which the *W. G.* quotes:—

"24. In every public school (1) the school day shall begin with prayer; (2) save as is hereinafter provided instruction in Bible history shall be given for not less than two and a half hours in each week in the English, Dutch, or any other European language; and, whenever possible, such instruction shall be given during the first half-hour of each school day, provided that nothing in this sub-section contained shall apply to schools established or maintained primarily for children of non-Christian parents unless there be in attendance at any such school children of Christian parents, in which case provision shall be made at the request, in writing, of the parents of such last-mentioned children for their instruction in Bible history; (3) no children whose parent has notified in writing to the principal of the school his desire that such child shall not receive instruction in Bible history shall be compelled to receive such instruction; (4) no doctrine or dogma peculiar to any religious denomination or sect shall be taught in any public school; (5) no instruction in Bible history shall be given during school hours by any person other than a teacher on the staff of such school; (6) no principal teacher, nor any assistant teacher, who is responsible for the general progress and welfare of a class or division or department, shall be admitted to, or retained on, the staff unless he is prepared conscientiously to give the instruction in Bible history required by this section."

The *W. G.* comments: "We may translate these sections into the language of current controversy in this country by saying that they establish universal Cowper-Temple teaching, subject to a conscience clause for parents, with a highly characteristic kind of Cowper-Temple test for teachers."

Can this be regarded as a final settlement of the eternal religious controversy? The school day is to begin with prayer, yet "no doctrine or dogma peculiar to any religious denomination or sect shall be taught in any public school." Is not belief in the efficacy of prayer the most stupendous dogma of all? And what is Bible history? Who would rely on the "history" contained in the Bible? And who would go to the Bible for science? Is it not about time that the *Westminster Gazette* ceased its egg-dancing and faced the issue frankly. The Christian beliefs are either true or they are not. One might well ask with Shelley, "If God has spoken, why is the world not convinced?" Is there any "God" to speak? The word "God" is meaningless and unthinkable to us. We believe that the Christian religion is the biggest hoax that the world has ever known, and that there will be no peace until the whole educational system is completely secularised. The fact of the matter is, that the Press is tied by the spirit of commercialism which underlies it. The biggest materialists are those responsible for the conduct of the *Daily Mail*, who have a commercial interest in the sale of religious papers propagating lies and legends as though they were facts. The editor of the *Daily Mail* is shrewd enough to know that it is skimmed by all classes, and lately its magazine page has been conducted with considerable ability. It seems that it is afraid to deal with the religious difficulty frankly, but is not averse to doing so obliquely.

The *Sunday Companion*, one of the Harmsworth journals, might reproduce some of the letters that the *Daily Mail* has recently published. The proprietor of the *Daily Mail* can

certainly claim to be a champion double-dealer. In the *Sunday Companion* a cartoon was recently published depicting a man walking across a plank which had snapped. Beneath were appended the words, "the pathway of infidelity is the way to destruction." But many of the *Daily Mail* readers are evidently unbelievers. Most of the people in the prisons are Christians—more or less. Some of the greatest of men have been unbelievers, and their followers will increase. The Press, speaking generally, is a sham. But it will be forced to treat Freethought and Freethinkers with respect.

J. A. REID.

#### PUSHING THE PAPER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I quite agree with Mr. Pack that copies of the *Freethinker* can be sold if the right methods are adopted by the literature-seller at outdoor meetings. Outside the Marble Arch on Thursday and Sunday evenings, after frequent mention of the paper from the platform and a taste of "Acid Drops," I have sold during the month of June, 537 copies of the *Freethinker* and six dozen copies of Parts I. and II. of your *Bible Handbook*.

May I request the Freethinkers of Hyde Park, on Thursday and Sunday evenings, to purchase their copies and pass right on, otherwise the sales, and possibly the saleswoman, may suffer?

A curious incident occurred last Thursday evening, when a gentleman tendered half-a-sovereign for a paper while about a dozen others were waiting to be served. I am yet unable to decide whether it was want of thought on the part of a Freethinker—who should know that giving change to that amount would cause the obstruction that we are anxious to avoid—or whether it was a ruse on the part of a Christian. He was not served.

MAY BOULTER.

#### THE THEORY OF NATURAL SELECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Waudby invites me to assent to the proposition that every species is closely adapted to its environment. Most certainly not. It was all very well for God to turn round and find the world "was very good," or for Paley to contend that "the parts of animals have all of them a known and intelligible subserviency to the use of the animal." Helmholtz had not then convicted God and Paley of being incompetent observers; he had not then pointed out that the human eye, for instance, is most imperfectly adapted to its work. Surely Mr. Foote has been devoting his whole lifetime to altering man's environment; in humbler ways I, and many others, are trying to do the same.

Mr. Waudby says my statements are misleading. Obviously in a letter I could not give any detailed evidence, hence I invited my fellow Atheists to look into the New Biology for themselves; to study the work of the younger but front-rank biologists. Hans Driesch, who wrote the article on Embryology in the last edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, states that "Darwinism belongs to history like that other curiosity of our century, the Hegelian philosophy." Fleischmann, Professor of Zoology at Erlangen University, who, as he says, was suckled on Darwinism, analyses the theory step by step, and concludes: "My examination showed me that the Darwinian theory is nothing but a fable." Be it observed that these are not the views of neo-Lamarckians.

I am well aware that such heretical views are not current in English popular scientific books. There are, however, welcome signs that a younger school of biologists, under Mr. Bateson, at Cambridge, are shaking off the Darwinian fetters and returning to experiment and observation. The former statement they will doubtless deny, but I ask students to watch the development of the Mendelion school during the next few years.

M. D. EDEL.

He that attends to his interior self,  
That has a heart and keeps it; has a mind  
That hungers and supplies it; and who seeks  
A social, not a dissipated life,  
Has business; feels himself engaged to achieve  
No unimportant, though a silent task.  
A life all turbulence and noise may seem,  
To him that leads it, wise and to be praised;  
But wisdom is a pearl with most success  
Sought in still water, and beneath clear skies.

—Cowper.

## 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 and 6.15, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Religion and Reform." Brockwell Park, 3.15, J. Kellard; 6.15, F. A. Davies. "The Religion of Shakespeare."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N.S.S.: Ridley-road, 10.30, J. W. Marshall, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.: Outside Maryland Point Station (G.E.R.), 7, W. J. Ramey, "The Curse of the Cross."

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, Monthly Meeting. All Freethinkers invited.

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DEWSBURY: Market-place, 7, C. J. Atkinson and G. Whitehead.

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