

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXVII.—NO. 37

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1907

PRICE TWOPENCE

You will see that most men's minds are indeed little better than rough heath wilderness, neglected and stubborn, partly barren, partly overgrown with pestilent brakes and venomous wind-sown herbage of evil surmise; that the first thing you have to do for them, and yourself, is eagerly and scornfully to set fire to THIS; burn all the jungle into wholesome ash-heaps, and then plough and sow.—JOHN RUSKIN.

Ingersoll and His Times.

BY DR. JOHN EMERSON ROBERTS,

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THE advent of a thinker changes the world. Every geography became obsolete when Magellan furled his sails. Columbus with a compass extended the horizon. Galileo with a telescope expanded the heavens.

Copernicus, like a god, led forth Arcturus and his sons. These men made a new heaven and a new earth. The intrepid Humboldt, from intellectual heights no feet but his had dared to tread, saw, wide and far, the ordered change of season, climate, animal, and vegetable, men, and things, and sublimely said, "The universe is governed by law." Thenceforth prayer became the function of hirelings, and special providence the subterfuge of hypocrisy or the delusion of ignorance.

Voltaire looked and laughed at the absurd, ridiculed the stupid, denounced the unjust, and hurled lightnings at the sanguinary and atrocious. He is still unforgiven by the faithful.

Darwin pondered over the phenomena of life, growth, variation, change, and decay, and above the mists of metaphysics and the fogs of revelation there rose the postulate of evolution. Straightway the foundations of every religion trembled, and all the Bibles began to hedge.

Thought is a force sleepless as gravity, resistless as the dawn, pitiless as the sea, imperturbable as the tomb.

The brain is the sun. Civilisation is its light. Thought is the mother of progress. The mother must be free in order that the child may be well born.

The few think. The many believe. The less one thinks, the more he believes. When thought abdicates, faith ascends the throne.

Thought is inseparable from doubt. The beginning of knowledge is to know one does not know. The beginning of morality is to be honest with one's own thought. No man can keep faith with gods or men who lies to himself.

The cherished attitude of faith is upon its knees—that is, abject; with eyes closed—that is, with light shut out. Reason neither bends the knee nor blinds the eyes.

Religion is the substitution of the candle for the sun, the priest for the teacher, the consecrated wafer for the bread of industry, the guesses of the dead for the discoveries of the living, the follies of the foolish for the wisdom of the wise, the badge and brand of slavery for freedom, fear and trembling for mental poise and intellectual self-hood.

From all the past there has come no saying more true than this: "Ignorance is the mother of devotion."

The age of the cathedral is the age of night.

The school-house is the mother of the dawn.

Progress is accomplished by alternating periods of delay and advance. The long night, and then the startling renaissance, are the habit of history. Humanity is a paradox of the reflective and the radical, of the cautious and the bold, the indolent and the energetic. There is no inertia so appalling and monstrous as that of intellect, and there is no power so resistless and august as that of intellect aroused.

The great collective energies of mankind, lying dormant, gather force. Like a volcanic sleep, the inaction presages the eruption. So slowly does the tide of circumstance rise, that generations of men live and die becalmed waiting for the tide that comes not. Meanwhile, within the vast mysterious deeps unslumbering forces brood.

The nineteenth century was one-third upon its way when Mr. Ingersoll was born. It was rounding to its close when he died. From 1833 to 1899 were the years—years of hesitancy, doubt, caution, cowardice, compromise, and infamy.

The new world had grown from colonies to a nation. From suppliants and dependents, to sovereignty. The nation had grown rich, and with wealth had come the timidity of conservatism and the adoration of tradition and precedent. The children of the patriots had become money-changers.

Our constitution made freedom depend upon the color of the skin. The flag of the free floated above the slave-pen and the auction-block. We had achieved success at the cost of conscience. Statesmen and clergymen alike were poisoned with prosperity. The utmost hope of the most advanced was to prevent slavery from spreading. Kansas must be kept uncontaminated. No one dreamed that Alabama could be redeemed. No great inspirations swayed the heart or directed the intellect in those halting times. It was a period of cold calculation, of commercial prudence, of the wisdom of the counting-house and the stock exchange. Every argument that reason could concoct—every compromise that ingenuity could devise—every alternative that fear and selfishness could invent came from the fevered brain and servile conscience of a depraved and apostate people. Here and there a Quaker, whom the Church had outlawed, protested against the crime of slavery. The mob answered with insult and outrage. Whom did the mob represent? The men of position and power. The men of wealth and renown—the judge on the bench and the priest before the altar. Of the disease that destroys the moral life of nations, the fatal stage has been reached when the teachings of religion, the interests of wealth and the authority of courts of justice enter upon an alliance with the frenzy of the mob.

Frightful and menacing as may be a hypocritical priesthood and a corrupt magistracy, they are yet minor evils when compared with the hypocrisy and corruption of the people. The mob, as the instrument of hypocrisy in high places and justice debauched, becomes itself debauched. But when it scorns robed hypocrites, and defies depraved authority, the mob becomes glorified. Stone by

stone, with unclean hands, the Bastille was built by magistrate, noble, and priest. It fell by the hands of the mob. The mob was the conscience of France.

The Bastille of the new world, more enduring than battlements of stone, was built with tradition, precedent, statutory law, federal guarantees, buttressed by wealth, arrogance, respectability, sentinelled and defended by the priest at every altar and the Bible of every creed, while within its hopeless depths toiled and despaired three million human beings. Our God was the white man's God, and Mammon was his Prophet.

The mob of Paris fought and destroyed their Bastille. The mob of Boston, Philadelphia, and New York fought that their's might be preserved. They no doubt thought if they destroyed the divine institution they would offend God, to say nothing about reducing the collections.

But men arose—men—whose altitude, seen in the perspective of history, is as the mountain—calm, inclusive, aggregate, inviting, formidable, and kind—men who were great enough and good enough to despise a religion and defy a God that defended slavery.

The people were aroused as from a stupor—miserable compromises were swept aside—swift indignation drove the money-changers from the Temple of Justice—ignored the altars in whose fires chains had been forged for the limbs of men—rescued slave and master from their mutual degradation, and once more the flag, battle-torn and stained with blood, thrilled the happy air.

A moral condition, exactly parallel, prevailed in religion.

Seventeenth-century creeds had crossed the seas. Geneva was transplanted to New England. John Calvin was succeeded by Jonathan Edwards.

The new world was terrorised by the old God. The promise of liberty was kept to the ear and broken to the heart.

The right to worship God according to the dictates of one's own conscience meant simply that you must worship God and worship him according to the creed.

It never occurred to these defenders of liberty that the principle implied the right to worship any other God or none.

An ecclesiastical tyranny grew up more searching than the spies of the Inquisition, as relentless as the rack, and fierce as the fagot's flame.

Because he exercised the right of freedom of thought and speech, Thomas Paine, despite his unparalleled labor and sacrifice for liberty, was outraged living and slandered dead.

A meaner slander was circulated about Abraham Lincoln. The Church said he was a Christian.

The reputation of no man was safe if he spoke his honest thoughts.

The pulpit was supreme; the press subservient. If a man were known to disbelieve the Bible, to deny the existence of hell, to doubt the miracles, or to think that baptism was not essential to salvation, he was pointed at, isolated, and shunned. If he was in business his patronage fell away. If a professional man his clients deserted him. He was pursued across the threshold of his home. His family was looked upon as polluted. His wife and children were denied social recognition and courtesies. On the lips of the Church the word "infidel" was a synonym or the monstrous.

The Church was absolute and relentless. In other lands and times it had grown ferocious shedding blood. It had listened with rapture to the groans of victims on the rack, and seen with joy the flames enwrap the martyr at the stake. It was the same Church still. There could be no doubt about hell. If hell means hatred, malignity, vindictiveness, if it means to be blind to justice, deaf to suffering, brutal and pitiless, then the Church was hell.

The Church had now become rich and powerful. It controlled the colleges, academies, of all the universities and most of the public and private schools. The preacher was ubiquitous, and where he could not go he sent a colporteur or despatched a missionary.

(To be continued.)

The Blight of Belief.

JOURNEYING from Holyhead the other day, I observed one of my fellow passengers engaged in reading Zola's *Truth*. As most *Freethinker* readers will be aware, the book is written around the Dreyfus Affair, in which Zola himself played so magnificent a part. As we were sitting close together—rather too close to be comfortable, owing to the compartment being crowded—we soon fell into a conversation on a variety of subjects, and finally on the book itself. My fellow traveller expressed a great admiration for the book, and was particularly impressed by the manner in which Zola depicts the intrigues of the priests against the Jewish schoolmaster, with the dual object of shielding the guilty member of their own order, and of discrediting the civil or communal schools. He felt that Zola was quite right in denouncing the priests and their methods as inimical to the welfare of France and of the progress of humanity, and wished that everyone in England would read the book and take its lesson well to heart. So far, good. His constant use, however, of the qualifying phrases "Roman Catholicism" and "Priests" aroused my suspicions, and I was not long in discovering that he was quite blind to the larger lesson of Zola's book. He agreed with all that was said against the Roman Catholic Church, because he happened to be a Protestant. And, had I pressed the matter, I daresay he would have found a cure for all the evils depicted by Zola in the adoption by the French State of Protestantism.

Now I could have cordially agreed with this gentleman that the Roman Catholic Church is inimical to the welfare of a nation whenever and wherever it possesses power. Only I should have carried the argument a little further than he would. While in Ireland recently I picked up a little book, *Economics for Irishmen*, which I have no hesitation in recommending as one of the best I have seen that will give an outsider a sane view of one aspect of Irish distress. In it the writer has a striking chapter on "The Economic Influence of Religion." In the course of this chapter the writer—a Roman Catholic—makes it clear how completely the Irish peasant is under the thumb of the priest, and how thoroughly the influence of the priest leads to continued demoralisation and increased inefficiency. The priest is the only one who could, if he would, give the people useful lessons. Politicians dare not. It would cost them their seats. The priest could, but he won't. The priest, in his parish, lays down the law "on all things for patrician and plebian together, dictates his fees to the doctor, his voting to the citizen, their opinions to the public." The man in business or the farmer who falls out with the priest, is doomed. The priest is king, and his influence is in the wrong direction.

As in Ireland so in other Catholic countries. So it is in Spain, so it was in Italy while the Papacy ruled, so it was, and is, in France. But why is it that people do not set themselves to the task of discovering why there should be this universal evil consequence following from the dominance of the oldest, the strongest, and, on the whole, the most logical form of the Christian faith? There must be something more than a mere accident—something quite independent of this or that particular man, or this or that particular country to account for so general a phenomenon. If only this inquiry were seriously undertaken, it would be found that the evil lies deep in the nature of religious belief as a whole, and that it is local circumstances that may modify it here to a condition of comparative harmlessness, or develop it there until it threatens the welfare of an entire people.

In Zola's *Truth* the narrative portion of the book turns upon the atrocious murder of a boy by a Catholic priest, with the attempt to fix the crime upon a Jesuit schoolmaster, and the creation of a feeling of resentment against the secular schools.

The priest's superiors are aware of his criminality, yet he must be shielded in the interests of religion. This particular crime may not have occurred; but it is certain other offences have been committed, and have been dealt with in the same manner. There is no need to travel to France for an illustration. Not long ago the evangelist Torrey was "starring" the country. And if ever there was a convicted liar before the public, it was he. A plain demonstration of his character by the Editor of this journal was without effect, so far as the clergy was concerned. But when Mr. Stead took up the matter, more might have been expected. But what was the result? The religious press, well aware of all that was going on, continued booming him as a force for righteousness.

Now, is anyone able to say what, if any, is the difference between the conduct of the French priests in Zola's work and that of the English clergy in relation to Torrey? The Roman Catholics circulated innumerable lies in order to preserve their Church from disrepute. But this is the common policy of all Christians in the face of attack. Torrey, after all, was only repeating the lies that several generations of Christians had fabricated and circulated. What is the meaning of all the lies about the immorality of Freethinkers, the recantations on death-beds, etc., but that they are stories deliberately fabricated in defence of religion? It is true that in the instance cited from Zola it is the case of a murder, whereas the other actual case was slander. It may even be that the English clergy would not deliberately shield one who committed robbery or murder. But then, I happen to have a conviction that the worst kind of crimes are not really those that land a man in the criminal dock. The most dangerous offences are those which the law cannot deal with at all—or, at least, only indirectly. The man who steals or who murders is bad enough; but his offence usually stops with the victim of the assault, and he can be guarded against; but what protection is there against the man or men who, by circulating slanders against their fellows, by a disregard of truth and justice, and by their influence over others, poison the whole moral atmosphere in which we live, and thus vitiate the whole of social life? Such men are infinitely more dangerous to life than those who are officially branded as criminals. The one is a danger to property—or, at most, to the existence of an individual. The other is a danger to life itself, or to all that raises life above the level of mere brute existence.

Very skilfully Zola shows how the French confuse the national sense of right and wrong, and create artificial vices and virtues. But this, again, is a common feature of all religions. It is, indeed, of the essence of a religion that it should act thus. For religions are primarily and essentially concerned with man's supposed relations to certain supernatural powers, and the table of religious vices and virtues are constructed and modified with a view to this end. In a Catholic country it may be concerned with attendance at Mass, or with some other peculiarly Catholic function. In Protestant countries it assumes a more variable character—belief in witchcraft, biblical infallibility, observance of Sunday, or so forth. For long enough in Protestant countries to indulge in harmless games on Sunday was treated as a crime. Even to-day the feeling in this respect is not dead. Church attendance is, again, very often used as a method of estimating one's character. And at present we have bishops and archbishops denouncing as immoral marriage with a deceased wife's sister—as though there could be any more reasonable objection against marrying one sister than against wedding the other.

The truth is that all morality that does not rest upon a basis of individual and social utility is bound to issue in confusion and danger. For in the absence of this clarifying standard, there is no solid basis on which the moral judgment can rest, and no means by which it can gain in clearness of expression. The will of God becomes the standard of morals, and the

will of God varies with each individual or organisation, without any underlying principle of unity by means of which these differences may be reconciled.

In civilised societies religion cannot help being demoralising. It is true it does not teach any direct infraction of the Decalogue; it may, on the contrary, teach all the virtues that are ordinarily inculcated; but its influence is bad notwithstanding. For when it comes to championing the interest of religion the ordinary rules of decency and civility lose much of their force. People who are fairly truthful in ordinary affairs serve as the vehicle of the vilest slanders when their religion is in question. Men who would not be countenanced otherwise are patronised and made much of in the belief that they are able to assist the cause of religion. Social development, now in the schools and now out of it, is obstructed in the interest of religion. Intelligence is looked at askance, and stupidity praised, so that religion may be benefited. Honesty of conviction and sincerity of intention counts for nothing when religious interests are at stake. And the intelligence that is confused in relation to religion reacts disastrously in relation to all the other affairs of life. People grow up mentally slothful, ethically indolent, while we see the results in the moral weakness and mental insincerity of contemporary life.

C. COHEN.

The Heaven-Renouncing God.

WE are all aware that the history of the idea of God is one of the most intensely interesting and instructive studies within our reach. It accurately reflects the growth and development at once of man's intellectual and moral faculties. All the gods ever heard of have been in the image and after the likeness of their creators. To trace a nation's evolving character all that is required is an adequate knowledge of its deity. No God is immortal save in literature. In point of hard fact, every divine being has his day and passes away forever. Jehovah is unknown to-day apart from the Old Testament; and even within the covers of that ancient volume he is perpetually changing his character. The same law of development applies equally to the Christian object of worship. Look at him as the mirror of history represents him, and you will perceive that he has never retained his identity for two centuries running. In one age he is a person of infinite dignity and majesty, whose honor must be protected at whatever cost; in another, he comes before us as the absolute monarch of the Universe, who resents all affronts and insults and offences with devouring indignation, and who never forgives or overlooks wrong-doing until his righteousness is amply compensated by means of some costly expiatory sacrifice; and in another, we see him as a tender-hearted and compassionate Heavenly Father who delights in mercy. At one time he is depicted as incapable of feeling of any description, and at another as being all feeling, as a very ocean of passibility. The present tendency, perhaps, is to portray him as an almighty Philanthropist, whose crown of glory is that he never experiences a moment's happiness as long as there is any pain or misery in his creation. He is the eternal love that will not let us go.

Let us examine this conception of God as expounded in a brilliant sermon recently delivered by the Rev. G. A. Johnston Ross, M.A., and published in the *Christian World Pulpit* for September 4. The cleverness and originality of this address are quite refreshing. The subject is the Transfiguration of Jesus ("Jesus was transfigured before them."—Matt. xvii. 2). Of course, as it stands, the story of the Transfiguration is unbelievable. Mr. Johnston Ross is himself aware of this, for he says:—

"May I say this by way of preliminary? I frankly admit that as you hear that story read it is very difficult to understand it, and it is very hard to believe. It were much the easier course, if we could only crush our reverence, perhaps just to make sport of a story of this

kind as incredible. May I, before we go further, beseech anyone here who is inclined to scepticism about the story, in the interests of a mere studious caution and the quest of truth, not to run after these denials of a story of this sort, all which lead to nothing whatever?"

"If we could only crush our reverence," the most natural thing to do would be to disbelieve this narrative, or to regard it as purely legendary. But is there no such thing as artificial reverence, a reverence into which people have been dogmatically trained, or a reverence the objects of which owe their existence to the same training as itself? The highest reverence known to us, before which all other reverences should give way, is the reverence for truth, for fact. To present-day unprejudiced scholars nothing is more patent than that the Gospels are chock-full of myths and legends, among which must be classed this story of the Transfiguration.

Mr. Johnston Ross's reverence, however, is not for a historical Jesus, but for the full-blown Christ of the orthodox Church. To him Jesus is not a mere man, but God incarnate; not the son of Joseph and Mary, but the only begotten of the Eternal Father; and the central contention of the sermon is that in Jesus we always have a credible representation of God. He lived and died on purpose to make known to us what the Deity is like. Now, altogether apart from the credibility of the incident under consideration, as such, or, if you like, on the assumption that it did actually occur, does it afford us a credible representation of the Divine Being? Let us see.

The elements of the glory of the Transfiguration, according to Mr. Ross, were these three: the blending of the Heavenly life and the earthly life, the communion with the great saints of the past, and the reassuring Voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son." But what strikes Mr. Ross most powerfully is not the glory witnessed on the Mount of Transfiguration, but the renunciation of the glory. At this point the sermon becomes enormously interesting, and equally absurd at the same time. Jesus was the Sinless One, and over him death, which is the wages of sin, had no dominion. Death was foreign to his nature; and he could never die except vicariously. "It was his right to enter into the glory and blessedness of immortality without death, its pains and its humiliation." And now, here he was transfigured on the Mount, and heaven's door stood wide open to receive him:—

"And as He offered Himself with the completeness of His life to God, offered Himself there on the Mount of Transfiguration, the choice appears to have been given to Him. The glory of the higher mode of existence budded upon His person; but, had He entered Heaven then, He must have entered it alone, and the golden gates must have closed upon Him. And so, as a French writer says, He turned His back on the arch of triumph, and resolutely decided upon the pathway of shadows and of grief that led to glory through the grave. And why? Because He loved men, and could not even go to Heaven alone."

That is theology, not history; an imaginative sketch, not a description of a veritable incident. With all our heart do we admire altruistic service rendered from a philanthropic motive; but the self-sacrifice of Jesus as here described is fantastic and visionary, and much too dramatic in form to be of any real benefit to the world. But, taking this wondrous act of renunciation on the part of Jesus as real, Mr. Johnston Ross discerns in it a credible representation of the life of God, which is, likewise, a life of perpetual renunciation. Having enlarged on what he conceives to have been the renunciation of Jesus on the Mount, Mr. Ross says:—

"My brother, do you see in all that anything like a credible picture of God? I beseech of you to put into your thoughts of God, if you want to know what God is like, this first: that He is a Heaven-renouncing God who is amongst us. It is all very well for an Italian flower-girl, all very well for Pippa to sing: 'God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world.' But if God were in His Heaven only, and if His Heaven were far away from here, then all would be wrong with the world.

God has renounced a Heaven of distance; He has renounced a Heaven of tranquil alienation from human needs, and He is here amongst us."

Such is Mr. Ross's "credible picture of God." It may be rhetorically a very beautiful and fascinating picture; but credible it certainly is not. Doubtless it comforted poor Pippa, on her annual day off, to sing—

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

But it was comfort sucked from a horrible lie, and in her inmost heart she knew it. Mr. Ross's lie is a much bigger one, for it represents God as being in the very midst of the world with which, in spite of such presence, all is wrong, from Mr. Ross's and God's point of view. Think of it. This is God's own world; he made it; he rules it; he dwells in the heart of it, and yet all is wrong with it at this very hour. Think of it. This God-dwelt world is up to its neck in the slough of sin and shame and sorrow and pain, and God's infinite heart bleeds with pity and love and yearning towards it; and yet the world is not rescued. Mr. Johnston Ross has very little sympathy with the New Theology; but if you must believe in the Divine Immanence, he says, "remember that it is the painful, distressed, and distressing nearness of One who is kept near to us by His love, but into whose heart, at every moment men sin, there is shot a shaft of unspeakable pain. It is not too daring to say that the Holy Ghost, who is the last expression of the tender anguish of our God, is saying to-day, 'Oh, faithless generation! how long shall I bear with you, how long shall I be with you?'"

Pippa's gospel was sad enough, but Mr. Ross's is infinitely sadder. No God at all is better than one crushed by the Devil, and driven out of doors by the creatures of his own hands. Such a picture of a Divine Being is the very opposite of credible; it is a hateful, detestable, odious thing that ought to be swept out of the way as quickly as possible. A god that cannot do a god's work, a god that weeps, and sorrows, and grieves, and suffers in sheer impotence, fills one with contempt and disgust. We can understand a man like Henry Drummond, after spending an evening with Edinburgh University students, and listening to their sorrowful confessions of lapses from virtue, saying to his host, "I am sick of the sins of those men; I am sick of the sins of those men;" but we cannot possibly understand a God of boundless love and omnipotent arm dwelling in the midst of a lost and ruined world and helplessly crying over it. Such a sight would be too ghastly to gaze upon. Pessimism is sufficiently depressing when exhibited by man, but pessimism in an Almighty God would be an intolerable anomaly.

Mr. Johnston Ross is an exceptionally able man, and he is certified as sound by the guardians of orthodoxy; and for the Gospel, as he conceives it, he has doubtless made as good a case as can be made; but it is an inherently bad case, and it follows that the more competent its advocate the worse it looks to candid judges. The truth is, that no form of Theism is defensible. The lack of perfection throughout the Universe is an unanswerable argument against the existence of a perfect deity. A God who everlastingly craved after man and failed to secure him, would be a person of whom we would be justified feeling heartily ashamed; and such is the God so eloquently described in the sermon under review.

J. T. LLOYD.

Men such as Homer and Dante (and, in an inferior sphere, Milton), not to speak of the great sculptors and painters of every age, have permitted themselves, though full of all nobleness and wisdom, to coin idle imaginations of the mysteries of eternity, and guide the faiths of the families of the earth by the courses of their own vague and visionary arts: while the indisputable truths of human life and duty, respecting which they have all but one voice, lie hidden behind these veils of phantasy, unsought, and often unsuspected.—*John Ruskin.*

Creation's God.

Who rides the whirlwind and directs the storm?
 Who made this world of wonders, chief whereof
 Are life and mind? Who rules the sea's mad waves?
 What hand sublime launched forth the orbs
 That wander midst the starry hosts of heaven?
 Who framed that solemn firmament afar
 And lights and guides therein the system'd suns
 Whose glittering star-dust gems the eternal vault
 Of darkling space and silent night supreme?

Why question thus? 'Tis as a bee should ask,
 "What insect queened the universal hive?
 What mandibles sublime extracted light?
 What wings conveyed on high the glow-worm stars?
 What mighty bee, or ordered swarm of bees,
 First gathered all the plastic wax whereof
 Earth's honeycomb is built and moulded fair?"

So dream old beavers, pondering their dam,
 Transferring custom'd thoughts to earth and sky,
 Seeking therein foundations midst the floods,
 And structures strong with interlacing ties.
 Thus might they ask if they but thought as man:
 "Who planned this universal frame of things
 That bears the clouds aloft and stems the floods
 That else would sweep the earth in useless wrath?
 Who gnawed the timbers with his pearly teeth?
 Who deftly plastered them with mud divine
 And smoothed them bravely with almighty tail?
 Sure, beavers are his favored race on earth,
 In his own likeness made—our Father he.
 Supreme this goodly Spirit-Beaver formed
 A watery world of spreading lakes and brooks
 Solely that we his children there may dwell
 And multiply and flourish, glorying in his work
 Who dams eternal tides as we dam streams."

Might not the tiger ask in ecstasy:
 "Who made this wondrous world of living things
 For us to rend and feed on day by day,
 Glutting our appetites for butcher's sport?
 Who shaped these splendid teeth for tearing flesh,
 These claws for seizing terror-stricken prey?
 What bounteous hand fills up our cup of blood,
 Till speechless gratitude thrills through the hearts
 Of all the tiger race for these sweet gifts?
 His tender mercies on us well bestowed.
 He multiplies our race and sends us forth
 To scourge and decimate the wicked world.
 We are his children, for he made us all.
 Nay, 'twas in his own image we were made,
 Therefore we praise and bless him evermore
 And hope for everlasting joy to come,
 Where ready prey shall ever shriek and die
 To give new rapture to our grateful souls
 In heaven transcending all our present joy."

Words stand but for known things and facts,
 Or else ideals are unrealities,
 Elusive playthings of the misty mind,
 Mere Jack-o'-lantern gleams and symbols vain.
 "Who" stands for persons, being limited,
 Of form defined and human qualities.
 No "he" or "she" or "made" the world, or could.
 Who says 'twas made repeats in vain small thoughts
 In wider realms, and magnifies small facts,
 Of meaning purely relative (none else)
 To infinite size and scope, mere visioned myth
 As meaningless as infinite particle,
 Or pre-beginning or an endless hour.
 An infinite person is an infinite fraud,—
 Man minus man plus everything that is
 And everything that can be, and yet more;
 An all-shaped triangle, an all-hued tint,
 A solid surface, an unfeatured face,
 Absolute relative, an infinite point,
 Some actualities transformed by faith
 Till inconceivable to reasoned thought;
 A silly, solemn paradox run mad.
 An infinite One indeed is All in all,
 Is everything and everywhere at once,
 And is the Devil himself as much as God.

And whoso'er, ill-trained, must dream of Gods
 To pacify his empty mind with myths,
 Let him unbias it—if he hath faith
 In honest truth as his supreme ideal—
 Let him survey the universe of ill,
 The awful evils and the agonies
 That ever prey on universal life.
 Then let him ask who makes, or who permits,

The misery with which creation groans.
 Who blesses and sustains the world-wide reign
 Of cruel strength and treachery and blood?
 Who planned the horrid shark's rapacious jaws,
 The ghastly opening to a living tomb?
 Who deftly shaped the eagle's blood-stained beak?
 Who pours the poison through the serpent's fangs?
 Who made the scorpion all in bounteous love,
 And beasts of prey as monarchs o'er all gentler kinds?
 Who sends the famines and the plagues?
 Who speaks in loud volcanoes, and the roar
 Of thunders triumphing o'er stricken dead?
 Who sends abroad his arrows drunk with blood,
 And revels in dread earthquakes, storms, and death?

What peace, what comfort, to have such a God?
 What hope, what joy, what help for human needs?
 Judge calmly for yourself in peaceful thought;
 Then plan life's course without the senseless aid
 Of phantasies surviving from the times
 Of man's dark ignorance and wild conceit—
 The ideal idols of his youthful years,
 Ideals that grow more human, real, and true,
 While merging into moral faith and warmth,
 Humanity's fair dream and man's best hope,
 The sterling steadfast loyalty to all
 Whose signs are reason, justice, love, and truth.

W. P. BALL.

Acid Drops.

The *Academy* returns to the subject of the "dulness" of Freethinkers. In two long, laborious paragraphs it replies to a short paragraph of ours. We do not choose to rejoin in the same long-winded fashion. What we wish to draw attention to is the fact that our list of Freethinkers—including Swinburne, Hardy, Meredith, and even Shakespeare, as well as Voltaire, Paine, and Ingersoll—is not challenged by the *Academy*. All it can do is to remind us that some Freethinkers are not all Freethinkers; which is too obvious to need emphasising; but some are good as far as they go, and the list could be indefinitely prolonged.

Nothing could be more ridiculous than applying the word "dull" to Freethinkers. They have been accused of many vices, but rarely of that. Wordsworth, who was not a humorist, alluded in the *Excursion* to Voltaire as that "dull scoffer." Charles Lamb, who was a humorist, in writing to Wordsworth, asked him "Why dull?"

The *Academy* advises us to "study Whately's little book on Logic." The book is not so "little"—but let that pass. It is a very good book in its way; Whately had a penetrating and sagacious intelligence—and he detested the religion which is now maintained in the *Academy*. But his book belongs to the early literature of Logic. Mill, Bain, Jevons, De Morgan, and others have treated the subject since. Still, we allow the merits of Whately's performance. The book is a good one, and the *Academy* writer perhaps might study it with advantage. But it is easy to attach too much importance to such studies. Logic is more a natural gift than an acquirement; as Locke recognised when he said, in his homely and pointed manner, that God did not give man a mind and leave it to Aristotle to make him a reasonable creature. When grammar makes a great writer, logic will make a great reasoner.

The *Academy* prints "Another Complaint," and seems very proud of it. An anonymous correspondent praises it highly, and adds that though he "ranks himself among the freethinkers" he is "far enough from the rabid crew who have soiled that noble designation with all ignoble use." Really! Perhaps, if the gentleman gave his name and address, it might be ascertained how far he had adorned the "noble designation" which others have "soiled." As for the *Academy* (in printing such a letter) it must be very soft, or think its readers so.

The *Methodist Recorder* is naturally concerned about the growth of Sunday labor. It gravely discusses whether Sunday harvesting is at all admissible; and, while it cannot pronounce against it altogether, decides that it would be painful to see Methodist farmers gathering a load of hay on the Sabbath. The remedy, however, would seem to be simple. Let all Methodists pray to the Lord to keep the weather stationary from Saturday night until Monday. This would do away with at least the necessity of gathering it on Sunday. The matter will thus be left in the hands of Pro-

vidence. And there should be give and take in this matter, as in others.

Nothing like hope. Dr. Robertson Nichol says that the Church ought to draw into its service the best intellectual men of the day. That is all. We are of opinion that the Churches will have to do as they have been doing for some time past—put up with the best they can get, and watch the "best," getting steadily poorer.

The Baptists want to erect a chapel at Clacton-on-Sea, and are making a public appeal for the modest sum of £4,000. The appeal is bound to be eminently successful, because it is "commended by the Divine Blessing [whoever he may be] and also by well-known ministers"—a ghostly and therefore holy partnership.

The Trades Congress passed a fairly straight resolution against the "sweating" which prevails at the Salvation Army depot in Hanbury-street, London. We are glad to see the Trades Congress has plucked up the courage to do this, but it ought to have been done long ago, for the "sweating" carried on by the Salvation Army, and also by the Church Army, has for many years been a glaring scandal. Several delegates wanted to bring the Church Army within the scope of the resolution, but this was not agreed to. When it comes to laying profane hands on religious institutions, even the working-class Britisher is a timid animal.

According to the *Daily News* special reporter, whose account of such a matter ought to be taken with a good deal of salt, the debate on Salvation Army sweating was marked with "sweet reasonableness," and "not a bitter word was said about its aims and methods as a whole," while "General Booth's name was heard with something akin to affection." We do not believe this, but if it be true it only shows that working-men have still much to learn concerning the Salvation Army, its methods, and its leader. They will learn it some day, and perhaps not in the very distant future. Meanwhile, we are pleased to note every sign that "William the Conqueror" is being found out.

Mr. Samuel Stennett, the secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, sticks to his guns, and gives a flat denial to the statements made in the reply of "Commissioner" Nicol, of the Salvation Army. Mr. Stennett takes particular exception to the statement that the Army depot is for reclaiming carpenters and joiners who have fallen by drink. The men are simply "down on their luck" through circumstances over which they have no control; and he repeats that the Army "takes advantage of the poverty and destitution of the men to abstract an abnormal profit from their labor." Mr. Stennett is prepared to give plenty of cases, and he rightly declares that these are far more important than vague general repudiations.

Bishops are expensive luxuries. They are going to set up one in Essex, and £48,355 has already been collected towards the bill of costs, yet they are still crying for "More!" The Gospel is "without money and without price"—in the pious prospectus. It is very different in the actual market.

Mr. John R. Mott, one of the speakers at the recent Northfield Conference, is a brilliant Christian jewel. He says that the whole world could be won to Christ in this generation, if all his followers were only in earnest. But this is the sheerest nonsense ever heard. Christian missionaries have forced their way into China and Japan, but both countries dogged decline to adopt Christianity. Intellectually and politically Japan is already wide-awake, and China is rubbing its eyes. But to what country does China look for help to rise? Not to Christian Europe, but to Heathen Japan. Mr. Mott himself tells us that to-day there are 16,000 Chinese students in Tokio, where they are not at all likely to pick up Christianity.

But Mr. Mott's vanity is colossal. Accompanied by the Holy Ghost, he went to Tokio to worry the 16,000 Chinese students. He went there, he tells us, "in obedience to the dictates of strategy." He opened a campaign among them, and "at the end of a meeting three and a half hours in length," he had the unspeakable felicity of seeing one hundred and fifty-eight of them "bow for the first time before the Jehovah of the Bible." It was too much, it quite turned the poor man's head—this spectacle of 158 Chinese students, at his bidding, professing faith in Christ. Well, it

would have been a miracle if in a crowd of 16,000 there had not been at least 158 sufficiently weak-minded to be victimised by a trained soul-saver like Mr. Mott. Why, Madame Blavatsky made thousands of converts, and so did Dr. Dowie. The marvel is that there were so few fools among so many Chinese students at Tokio. Of course, all this is hidden from the humble-minded Mr. Mott!

Mrs. Pearson, a lady of property in Preston, should have been on her guard. A man introduced himself, pretended to have business in the town, and was entertained at her house for a week. His piety seems to have made a great impression on her. He sang "Lead, Kindly Light," and other well-known hymns. After dinner he would go to the piano and play Sankey's holy songs. One of his favorites was, "Lord, I care not for riches nor gold." Suddenly he disappeared, and several valuable articles disappeared with him. Mrs. Pearson is now sadder and wiser.

"G. C. T." has sent the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts the sum of £1,000 for its work in Western Canada. Some people and their money are soon parted.

"Labor not for the meat which perisheth," said Christ, and this is a Christian country, yet big advertisements are paid for in the newspapers by persons who offer to sell "something in a bottle" to reduce corpulence. Funny, isn't it?

The *Church Times* bemoans the evident and universal decay of religion which characterises the present day. It admits sorrowfully that "the Church numbers barely six per cent. of the population among her communicants," and that "of the secularised urban masses only a small minority are attendants at Christian worship in any form." What puzzles our High Church contemporary is that among these lapsed, non-religious masses, "examples of helpfulness, kindness, endurance, and self-sacrifice are constantly met with." It never occurs to the *Church Times* that these "examples" furnish a practical demonstration of the ancient truth that the moral life is in no true sense dependent upon the religious.

Our contemporary admits and deplors another significant fact—namely, that "in the face of the appalling problems of to-day the ordinary pastoral and parochial system of the Church is, to a great extent, helpless." Now, it is claimed that behind "the pastoral and parochial system of the Church," animating and energising it, are the all-loving Father in heaven, the blessed Redeemer acting as an ever-present Intercessor with the Father, and the Church-filling Holy Ghost; and yet it is tearfully confessed that the system thus supernaturally backed "is, to a great extent, helpless" to keep religion alive in the land.

The *Church Times* labors under the vain delusion that a revival of monasticism would put a stop to this general falling away from religion. Monks would succeed where the Holy Trinity so signally fails. There are already "quite four thousand women in religious communities of the Church of England, but scarce five score men." More monks, and yet more monks, and England will return to Christ! But will she? We shall see—what we shall see.

Speaking at Aberdeen recently, Dr. Robertson Nicol exclaimed: "But our religion is supernatural, and our hope is in the Holy Spirit of promise, and that hope maketh not ashamed." We laugh at the adjective "supernatural," because of its exceeding harmlessness, and we are highly amused by the expression, "of promise," because of its perfect aptness. The "supernatural" in Christianity has always been conspicuous by its chronic condition of complete inertia, and the "Holy Spirit" enjoys the distinction of being perpetually "of promise," and never once of fulfillment. Well, if hope fixed on such a person "maketh not ashamed," all we can say is, it ought to.

The vicar of St. John's, Darwen, is a very old-fashioned clergyman. Writing in a late number of his Parish Magazine, he celebrates the glories of Christian marriage—that is, being tied up by a parson, for the usual consideration. With this part of his article we have no quarrel; it amuses him (and his friends), and doesn't hurt us. But we must enter our protest against his poaching outside his own preserves. When he says that we "ought to disapprove of marriage at a Registrar's office," and suggests that "the State" should not "acknowledge such marriages," he is simply trying to play the part of a bigot and a persecutor.

Churchmen may be a law to themselves; they have no right to be a law to other people. —

The other day a couple presented themselves at a Somersetshire church for marriage. There was nothing doleful about their appearance, but the vicar started off with reciting the Burial Service. On being remonstrated with he paused, and then began anew with the service of baptism. Finally another clergyman was brought, who performed the service in a satisfactory manner. The Bishop of Bath and Wells is instituting an inquiry into the conduct of the vicar. He was probably drunk. —

Commenting on the Eden Phillpott's gift of Freethought books to the Carnegie Library at Torquay, to which reference was made last week, the *Christian* is astonished that Mr. Phillpott does not include among the scientific writers selected the works of Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge. It thinks Mr. Phillpott is blind to those outside "his own section of unbelievers." The truth is, we believe, that Mr. Phillpott was anxious to place within reach of all who use the library books that the ordinary library committee would boycott. The writings of scientific men in defence of religious beliefs are certain to be placed in a prominent position; it is the writings on the other side that would be banned. If honesty were only an essential part of the religious character, Mr. Phillpott's action would have been unnecessary. As it is, Freethought books are more or less banned in public institutions all over the country, while mental cowardice and hypocrisy are sedulously fostered in the interests of "religious truth." —

The vicar of Babbacombe, we see, has protested against "flooding" the library with Freethought literature, on the grounds that "Rationalism places reason against revelation." The Bible, he says, "interpreted by human reason, ceases to be the revelation of God." With which we heartily agree. —

Evan Roberts has been staying at Davos Plats for the benefit of his health. He may resume his evangelistic work in October. But why on earth could not the Lord have kept his selected instrument well enough to go on with the work he called him to? But it is so like Providence to pick out a man for a particular mission, knock him over before he has finished, and then expect people to pray to it for his recovery. —

Dr. Andrew Wilson's article headed "Theology on the Beach" in a recent number of the *Daily Chronicle* was excellent and timely. He was especially severe on the Children's Services that are held at so many seaside places during the summer. For his part, he said, he preferred "to see the bairns building sand castles and paddling in the sea, to being made to sit forenoons and afternoons in a dismal circle while they are prayed over and preached at, and made to feel themselves very miserable sinners indeed." Dr. Wilson's study of seashore theology has led him to "the conviction that in many cases the preaching is a simple means of raising money." "The foreshore," he adds, "may be given up to gospel enterprise, but I know it is a place where a good deal of money is collected." —

This year's Church Congress is to be held at Yarmouth early in October. That great man, the Bishop of London, will be absent in America; but seventeen other Bishops will be present, and it will be a big show. The tickets are 7s. 6d. each, with the usual reduction for quantities. Yarmouth promenade will be darkened with soul-savers, who will help to purify the town after the races. Perhaps it is a pity that the Church Congress and the Race Week do not occur together; for some of the parsons might like to patronise the double event. We say this because a big temporary building has been erected on the front for their accommodation, and a local caterer has applied for the necessary licence so that he may supply their flagging souls with disembodied spirit. The wonder is that, while he was applying for a drink licence, he didn't apply for a dancing licence too. —

It may be asked, "Whom could the parsons dance with?" Well, there are plenty of ladies who could help them out of the difficulty, and some of them would readily come to Yarmouth for the purpose. Besides, the Scotch fisher-girls will be there by then, and would no doubt oblige. This would be very appropriate; for the parsons cure souls and the Scotch lassies cure horrings. —

The Church Congress posters announce the meeting on the tabled days with the qualification of "D. V." This

looks pious, but is it necessary? The parsons won't all travel in one train, so it is difficult to see how the Congress could be prevented by an accident. And "D. V." only means "barring accidents." —

Exquisitely beautiful and profoundly true is the parable of the Good Samaritan as it stands in Luke x. 29-37, and a truly orthodox and elegantly polished High Church preacher is the Rev. Canon Newbolt, who was in residence at St. Paul's Cathedral during August. But it seems that a good preacher must spoil a good parable by stripping it of all its natural signification. This parable serves as an apt illustration of the real meaning of the word "neighbor." "Who is my neighbor?" asked the lawyer. "He who ministers to you in your need," answered Jesus. Canon Newbolt *spiritualised* the parable, and, by so doing, rendered it utterly nonsensical. To him, the Good Samaritan is Christ, and the priest and the Levite become simply would-be social reformers. —

But by spiritualising the beautifully simple parable, the Canon landed himself in endless illogicalities, contradictions, and absurdities. Take one sample. In the character of a Good Samaritan *spiritualised*, Jesus is altogether impossible. Canon Newbolt tells us that, *spiritually*, we have all fallen among thieves, been stripped and beaten, and left half dead. Humanity has been in that grievous condition ever since Adam and Eve stole the apple. How is it, then, that the Good Samaritan has not come to the rescue? Has he, too, passed by on the other side? Why has he not "proved neighbor" unto us, and "shown mercy" on us? Lister, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, to Canon Newbolt's answer: "Because he respects our free-will; because he asks for our trust and co-operation with him." How on earth can sensible people patiently listen to such idiotic twaddle? And yet it is to such inane preaching that Freethought is largely indebted for its present victorious position. —

A correspondent says that our articles on "What Price God?" recalled an incident in his recent experience. A consumptive friend of his (our correspondent's, not God's) has been laid up for some weeks, and his little daughter, who has been taught to say her prayers by her mother, was advised one night, in praying to God, to ask him to make her dad better. To the mother's surprise, the child looked up and said, "No, I won't ask him any more; next time the doctor comes I'll ask *him* to try and make dad better." The child had more sense than many of her elders. —

Here is a discovery! The Rev. E. Boccock recently visited all the public-houses in Leeds disguised in "an old suit, a colored tie and cloth cap, and smoking a clay pipe." The result of his investigations is the discovery that the public-house, as an institution, has a greater hold on the people than has the Church. We are not surprised. But if people had been brought up on something better than church or chapel, the public-house would in all probability not be so great an attraction as it is. When Mr. Boccock dons his ordinary clothes, perhaps he will try and discover what part the English Sunday has played in making the public-house so attractive. So soon as the old Sunday sports were abolished in the early seventeenth century, there were complaints of an increase of drunkenness. And, since then, religious and other causes have operated to perpetuate it. —

For fifty years there has been daily prayers offered in a church in Fulton-street, New York, on behalf of purity and holiness. The result is—the government of New York. Special prayers are to be offered in celebration of the jubilee. —

Unscientific beliefs die hard—particularly when they are useful as buttresses to religion. In the *Contemporary Review* Sir William Ramsay revives the thesis that savages do not represent a relatively primitive humanity, but are a case of degeneration. His chief authority appears to be St. Paul. Of course, it may well be that some races of savages were once more civilised than at present; but to picture the whole human race as commencing perfect, then degenerating, with savages representing the last stage of the process, is the wildest of delusions. Still, when religion is to be buttressed all things are possible. —

A religious paper complains that for every shilling spent on foreign missions, forty shillings goes on drink. Well, it does seem silly, from one point of view. For if the whole of that forty shillings went on missions, there would be openings abroad for the consumption of a much larger quantity of drink than can be purchased in England for the money. We beg to call the attention of those clergymen who hold shares in breweries and distilleries to this fact.

The Bishop of Carlisle is dead against "the grovelling superstitions that have so long passed under the name of religion," and he defines superstition as "the child of ignorance." Are we to infer that Dr. Diggle no longer believes in the Christian religion? Some years ago, while still in Birmingham, he referred to its history as that of "a dismal failure." And yet—and yet his lordship was ordained to teach, and is still in receipt of a handsome salary for teaching, these identical "grovelling superstitions"!

The Bishop's heart is breaking because so few people go to church. Does he not realise that the people too—even simple country folk—are at last finding out what he himself has discovered, namely, that Christianity is composed of "grovelling superstitions," and that superstition is "the child of ignorance" and consequent fraud?

Those theologians who have inconsistently accepted evolution speak of man as the Creator's masterpiece. The ladder of progress is straight and continuous, and on the highest rung stands man, the crown and glory of the climbing process. Of course, every creature is perfect, of its kind; but man is a perfect creature of a perfect kind—God at his very best. Unfortunately for this beautiful theory, it isn't true. There is no straight ladder of progress, and of no product of Nature can we boast perfection. The Universe teems with flaws and defects and even failures. Worse than all, after producing his masterpiece, the Creator took to making lice, and tape-worms, and microbes—mischievous parasites which delight in murder, and which man is doing his utmost to exterminate.

The Rev. W. L. Watkinson defies the critics, great and small, because he has made up his mind to believe God's Word in spite of them. He told a Manchester audience the other day that "God prepared Palestine for Israel, and Israel for Palestine," and that "all this is going on to-day." Reason flatly contradicts such a statement, but Mr. Watkinson despises reason, and leans on his cherished faith. Facts are against him; but facts must go when beliefs are at stake. Commonsense mocks his teaching; but commonsense must be drugged when it discredits religion.

The Rev. F. Partridge, vicar of St. Clether, Cornwall, has given notice that "in consequence of the passing of the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, by which the law of the State is now in opposition to the law of God and the Church," he the said vicar, "will never knowingly celebrate any such so-called marriage," nor allow any other priest to do so in his church, and, furthermore, that he will refuse the Sacrament to all who are guilty of contracting such a union." Poor, deluded soul, his day is past, and his anathemas cannot hurt.

The *Church Times*, while "dismayed" at the losses sustained by the Church, finds "consolation in the thought of a diffused Christianity." Well, it is certainly getting diffused. Perhaps "evaporation" would be a more accurate term.

The Bishop of Durham, who converted John Stuart Mill, thirty-four years after his death, takes his name from a city which stands third on the list of drunken towns in England. Evidently the bishop's duty lies nearer home than Avignon.

It is curious that cathedral cities have generally more drunkenness and prostitution to the square yard than other centres of population. We wish the Church would explain this phenomenon

Dr. Clifford is very anxious to have the State building and conducting Training Colleges. So are we; but we are not in such a hurry as he is. He simply wants to see Training Colleges taken from the control of the Church of England and handed over to the control of Nonconformity. He denies this, of course; but we judge by his proposals, not by his protestations. We want to see Training Colleges controlled by the State on purely secular lines. If religion is to remain in them, it may as well be Archbishop Davidson's religion as Archbishop Clifford's religion. The change from one to the other isn't worth making.

To-day the members of Christian Endeavor Societies will be told that Joshua, the barbarous exterminator of the aborigines of Palestine, was "a man of robust faith," whose "trust in God was unflinching," that he was "a splendid Altruist, and that under his "influence Israel served the

Lord all his days." He was an exceptionally pious, godly man, and his piety showed itself in either slaughtering or making abject slaves of the native population. Brought up on such teaching, no wonder Christendom is cut up into so many armed camps. This explains everything—the conquest of the Matabeeles, the South African war, the British rule in India, and many other things of a similar character.

The same sort of poisonous stuff is being forced down the throats of Sunday-school children this Sabbath Day. They are assured that as the Israelites, while in the wilderness, were instantaneously cured of deadly snake-bites by looking unto the serpent of brass set upon a pole, so will they be delivered from all their sins, and sufferings, and sorrows by looking at the Crucified One. That is salvation on the cheap, and without personal exertion, which is no salvation at all. That is a splendid specimen of Christian immorality, as against the high morality of self-reliance, self-education, and self-culture leading to the grandest species of social service.

If Mr. R. J. Campbell is wise he will forthwith retract his denial of the Virgin Birth. We have it on the authority of the President of the Welsh Baptist Union, the Rev. J. W. Maurice, of Dinas Croes, that the Angel Gabriel, Joseph, the husband of Mary, and the Evangelists are much more reliable authorities than ignorant and presumptuous New Theologians of the twentieth century. The inclusion of Gabriel among the authorities is a specially fine apologetic hit, and is bound to tell. Even Dr. Warschauer must confess himself beaten now. A mere man no longer counts.

The "occult" adventuress is one of the peculiar products of the United States. The latest instance is that of Mrs. May Pepper (ominous name!), the Spiritist medium, who captured the tremendously wealthy old Edward Vanderbilt. First, she got him under her "spiritual" control, then she married him, and finally she induced him to make a will in her favor, to the exclusion of all his children. They, in turn, are moving the courts to declare him incapable of managing his affairs.

WHY HE WAS HAPPY.

"My good man," said the professor of sociology, "you seem to be happy; would you mind telling me the reason of your happiness?"

"Oi wud not, sor," said the Irishman. "Oi hov just done three good deeds, an' anny man who has performed three good deeds has raisin to be happy."

"Indeed he has," said the professor; "and may I ask what three good deeds you have performed?"

"Well, as Oi was coming past the cathedral this morning, Oi saw a wumman wid a wee bit infant in her arms, cryin' thot hard it wud melt the heart av a shtone. Oi asked her phat cud be the matter. She answered that for the want av five shillin's to pay the fees she cud not get the doctor and medicine for the child, an' it was a sickly child at thot, an' liable to die soon. Oi felt thot bad for her Oi pulled out the only sovereign Oi had, an' tould her to go an' get the child what she needed and bring me the change. She went inside rejoicin', an' soon returned wid her face all smilos, give me my change, an' went away hapin' blessin's on my head. Now ain't thot enough?"

"That's good," said the professor; "now, what were the others?"

"Others?" said the Irishman; "that's all."

"I understood you to say you had performed three good deeds."

"And so Oi did, don't you see? Oi dried the widow's tears—thot's one; Oi saved the child's life—thot's two; an', lastly, Oi got fifteen good shillin's for a bad sovereign, and if thot wouldn't make you happy thin you are hard to please."

JUST AS HE WAS.

A Richmond minister not long ago was asked to perform a marriage ceremony by a young negro couple. As he had employed the groom for a year or two, he consented, knowing what prestige would come to the couple by reason of having been married by a white minister. At the appointed time the happy pair arrived, and the ceremony proceeded.

"Do you take this man for better or for worse?" the minister asked.

For all her shyness, the bride spoke up bravely.

"No, sah; ah don't," she said. "Ah'll take him just like he is. If he was ter get any better I's 'fraid he'd die; an' if he was ter get any wuss, ah'd kill him myself."

—Harper's Weekly.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September 29, Stratford Town Hall.
 October 6, Glasgow; 13, Manchester; 20, South Shields; 27, Leicester.
 November 3 and 10, Stanley Hall, London; 17, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

THE TOUZEAU PARRIS FUND.—Sixth *Freethinker* List:—Mrs. G. Conly, 2s.; F. H. Whitehouse, 2s. 6d.; A Friend, 1s.; A. Fagg, 5s.; Herbert E. Dobson, 5s.; M. Barnard, 1s.; Paul Rowland, 10s.; P. Castillo, 2s.; F. H. H., 2s.; H. B., 1s.; J. E. Stapleton, 2s. 6d.; A. S. Vickers, 2s. 6d.; H. Porter, 1s.; R. T. Nichols, £1; M. G., 5s.; J. V. Caunter, 5s.; R. Gibbon, 3s. 3d.; T. Hopkins, £1; Joseph Bryce, 1s. 6d.; Mountain Ash Friends (per G. Garrett), 5s.; Miss Baker, 2s.; J. Reeves, 2s. 6d.
Per Miss E. M. Vance:—T. J. Thurlow, 2s. 6d.; F. Hermann, 5s.; G. B. F. McCluskey, 10s.; W. Leat, 2s. 6d.; Camberwell Branch (per T. Theakstone), 6s. 6d.

L. H. LABONE.—Your letter to the Christian Brothers, of Waterford, anent the bazaar (lottery) tickets they sent you was fairly strong. We don't suppose you received a reply, but if you did you might let us see it. Pleased you find the *Freethinker* "bright, healthy, and vigorous."

F. H. WHITEHOUSE writes: "I take this opportunity of again expressing my keen appreciation of the *Freethinker*. It is crammed full of good things every week, and fits my taste exactly."

HERBERT E. DOBSON says: "As one of the younger generation of Freethinkers, to whom you appeal in your note on the Touzeau Parris Fund in the *Freethinker* for September 1, those who knew not the Old Guard but profit by their glorious victories, I have pleasure in enclosing my subscription."

M. BARNARD.—There is no complete English translation of Spinoza, but you would probably be most helped by Sir F. Pollock's book if you could get hold of it; and there is the large selection in two volumes (we think) in Bohn's Library (Bell & Co.). If you read French, there is the fine Saisset edition in three volumes.

PAUL ROWLAND.—Mr. Foote is keeping tolerably well, but is still haunted by his old enemy, insomnia. Glad you have such pleasant recollections of Mr. Parris as lecturer and writer. The gentleman you mention was not related to Mr. J. M. Robertson.

GEORGE JACOB.—The man referred to does not spend all his time at one spot. That would not be so judicious as visiting different spots during the week. The spot he most affects, perhaps, is Ludgate-circus, but he is to be seen at Lombard-street and elsewhere at times.

C. A. FELTON.—Glad you are able to distribute so many of the Salvation Army tract to advantage.

F. H. H. "always thought Mr. Parris one of the very ablest of lecturers."

THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—C. A. Felton, 1s. 6d.

F. P.—*Social Gazette* received, but too late for this week; probably next. Thanks.

JAMES E. STAPLETON congratulates us on "the continued excellence of the *Freethinker*." "It was always good," he says, "and I have taken it for twenty years, but it is now better than ever."

H. PORTER.—No one should refrain from a good act because it is so small. Life is mostly made up of small things. Wordsworth noted as the best part of a good man's life "the little unremembered acts of kindness and of love."

J. W. (Aldershot).—Glad to have your appreciation and good wishes. Thanks for your trouble in the other matter, but we do not notice the person or his publications. You will doubtless see, on second thoughts, that both are contemptible. With regard to the statement that Charles Bradlaugh "did not die an Atheist because he was a Monist," we can only say that the author of the statement must be an ignoramus or an imbecile. That Christians can listen to such incredible silliness with approval only shows their intellectual poverty.

J. CHAMBERS.—Always glad to receive cuttings.

T. V. WILLIAMS.—Sorry you had such difficulty in obtaining the *Freethinker* during your visit to London. You ought not to have had difficulty in finding our office. If you had remembered that our Newcastle-street is near Farringdon-street, you would have been directed easily. Our office is two or three minutes' walk from Ludgate-circus.

W. SMITH.—Your letter in the *Southend Echo* should do good; it is a town that wants a lot of shaking.

W. P. MADDEN.—We shall deal with that *Tribune* stuff about Shelley in our next issue.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings, etc.

W. A. PRETTY, newsagent, Battersea-park-road, supplies the *Freethinker* and other Secular literature, and delivers same to his customers. Local "saints" who have any difficulty in getting this journal will please note.

J. ORAM.—Thanks for your successful efforts to promote our circulation. If all our friends would bestir themselves, the *Freethinker* would soon be in a satisfactory financial position.

H. G. FARMER.—Cannot deal properly with it till next week. Thanks.

L. H. W. MANN.—People are past that sort of thing over here.

Bad as they are in England, they don't worry about the Pope's visions.

W. AINSLEY.—Will be useful.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Always pleased to get your "bits."

W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always very welcome.

RICHARD MORRIS.—(1) John Morley's *Compromise* is out of print, and could only be obtained (if at all) second hand. (2) Secularist burials are as legal as any other burials in the unconsecrated (non-Church of England) part of any public cemetery. (3) Write to the N. S. S. secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, for a copy of Burial Service.

J. J. WALKER.—Shall be sent.

J. BROUGH.—Glad to have your thanks for introducing you to James Thomson's translation of Leopardi.

J. K. SYKES.—Glad to hear you are "still pegging away" and young, though sixty.

T. HOPKINS says of Mr. Parris: "Few men have served in the ranks like him or with a kindlier spirit."

E. A. BAILEY, who is "delighted" with the *Freethinker*, regrets that he did not know of its existence till August.

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

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

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

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

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

For once in a way Mr. Foote does not write the first article in this week's *Freethinker*. He intended to do so, but other things have eaten up the time he had mapped out for it on Tuesday. The "place of honor" this week is therefore filled by the first instalment of a splendid tribute to Ingersoll by a distinguished American lecturer, Dr. John Emerson Roberts.

Mr. Foote's articles on "What Price God?" were forwarded to Mr. John Davidson, who wrote a very interesting letter in acknowledging them. We have his permission to print the letter in the *Freethinker*. It will appear in our next issue, with some comments from Mr. Foote's pen.

The new special course of Sunday Freethought lectures in the fine Stratford Town Hall—under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited, with the co-operation of the West Ham N. S. S. Branch—opens this evening (Sept. 15), when Mr. J. T. Lloyd will lecture on "Religion and the Joy of Life." Local "saints" will, of course, do their best to secure a big audience. Mr. Cohen lectures the following Sunday evening on "A Search for God," and Mr. Foote winds up the course with a lecture on "The Paradise of Fools."

Stanley Hall, near the "Boston," North London, has been engaged for Sunday evening Freethought lectures in November. Mr. Foote takes the first two Sundays, Mr. Lloyd the third, and Mr. Cohen the fourth. Mr. Foote will be lecturing at Queen's Hall in December.

The Freethought Demonstration at Parliament Hill Fields on Sunday afternoon was a gratifying success. There was a large meeting and a good sale of the *Freethinker*. Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and Davies were the speakers. Thanks are due to Mr. E. Wilson for once more supplying a brake (with pair of horses) for platform.

Mr. B. G. Brown, 18, Montague-hill, Bristol, the secretary of the newly-formed N.S.S. Branch, writes that Mr. Wishart's "mission" there has been very successful. His open-air meetings were large, orderly, and attentive, and Mr. Wishart made a very favorable impression on all who heard him; in fact, they want to hear him again as soon as possible. Branch meetings are now being held on Sunday mornings at 11 in the Independent Labour Party's hall, 21, King-square-avenue; and on Sunday evenings (out-door) at 7.30 in the Haymarket. During the winter it is hoped that Mr. Foote and other lecturers may be brought down from London. We hope the local "saints" will all support this effort.

Mr. Wishart is now Aberdare, in South Wales, successfully; and we shall report the progress there next week.

The Leicester Secular Society is having another Bazaar to raise money for its work. It will be opened on Saturday, October 12, by Sir Edward Wood (the Mayor). Gifts of toys, books, pictures, fancy articles, clothing, china, glass, etc., are earnestly invited, and should be sent to Mr. F. J. Gould, Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate. We hope that "saints" all over the country, or some of them, will be able to assist this very meritorious enterprise. We are sending a small gift ourselves—*pour encourager les autres*.

The Paris correspondent of the *Times* reports that M. Sully-Prudhomme, the eminent French poet just deceased, told a friend some time before his death that he was not a Christian, but the friends around him at the last would probably be Christians, and he should not prevent their burying him as they would. It would make no difference to his opinions, and it might make a difference to their feelings.

The Trade Congress reaffirmed its adherence to the policy of Secular Education, and by the usual overwhelming majority. What nonsense it is, therefore, on the part of political leaders to say that Secular Education is the logical and just solution, but "the people will not have it." There is no evidence whatever that they will not have it, and the Trade Congress vote is strong evidence to the contrary.

The voting by card at the Trade Congress on Secular Education was as follows:—*for*, 1,239,000—*against*, 126,000. Rather more than ten to one.

Mr. Charles Rosher, formerly architect to Sultan Abd-el-Aziz, contributes an interesting article to the *Manchester Guardian* on "The City of Fez." He denies that the Moors are essentially cruel. They do not want their religion tampered with by the Christians, nor do they want them to "introduce alcohol and other things as harmful." Moreover, they "know that the European wants to exploit them and their country for personal gain." "They have excellent cause to suspect and mistrust him," Mr. Rosher says, "and they will keep him out as much and as long as possible." Of course, it is the old game. When a European country wants to exploit a heathen one, it gives the said country a very bad name, as a serpent covers its victim with saliva before swallowing it. Our sympathy is with the heathen.

Another interesting article in the *Manchester Guardian* is by a Jewish lady, Mrs. M. J. Landa, protesting against the policy, and even the existence, of the Jew-converting societies, which spend between them some £100,000 a year. She asserts, from personal experience, that the money is used to pauperise and demoralise Jewish children in East London. Jewish children are "pauperised by the missionaries," and they "attend solely for the cakes, the sweets, and the entertainments," while little Christian slum-children stand and watch the proceedings "with eyes glowing with envy." Mrs. Landa evidently considers the whole thing a curse.

Fifty years ago one day last week (Thursday, September 5) died the man whom Gambetta called "the greatest thinker of the nineteenth century." This was not Huxley's opinion, but we venture to think that Gambetta was a better judge; which we might well say without necessarily endorsing his judgment in its completeness. Auguste Comte was certainly a very great thinker—and a seminal thinker. He was, as Fuseli said of Blake, damned good to steal from. Ever so many later writers have been indebted to him without acknowledgment. The *Daily Chronicle* was good enough to sneer at Comte's enthusiastic prediction that the Religion of Humanity would be dominant in the Western world in fifty years; and backed up the sneer by remarking that the Religion of Humanity, at any rate in England, has only "a struggling existence in a few temples situated in the larger cities and towns." But this is a very superficial sort of criticism. As an organised thing the Religion of Humanity, in Comte's conception of it, is a very small thing still; but as a permeating influence it is already dominating Europe. Christian churches everywhere can only exist by minimising theology and maximising ethical and social development. The spirit of Humanity is the most powerful spirit to-day. And how much of this change is due to the great French thinker, who proposed to reorganise society, without God, by the systematic Cultus of Humanity! We desire to pay our own tribute to a great intellect and a great character.

Believe or be Damned.

CHRISTIAN ministers are showing a disposition to fight shy of the second half of the last chapter of Mark, where Jesus is represented as saying to his apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Some of them tell us to look at the Revised Version, where we shall see in the margin that this portion of the chapter does not exist in the earliest manuscripts; and they innocently expect that Freethinkers will therefore quietly drop the offensive passage. Oh dear no! Before they have any right to claim such indulgence they must put forth a new edition of the whole Bible, showing us what they desire excised, and what they wish to retain and are ready to defend as the infallible word of God. We should then discuss whether their selection is justifiable, and after that we should discuss whether the amended Bible is any diviner than the original one. But we cannot allow them to keep the Bible as it is, to call it God's Word, to revile people who doubt it, and to persecute people who oppose it; and yet, at the same time, to evade responsibility for every awkward text. This will never do. The clergy cannot have the authority of inspiration in their pulpits and the ease of eclecticism on the platform and in the press.

Besides, although the text in Mark is the most striking piece of impudent bigotry, there are many passages of Holy Writ that display the same spirit. The Jews were expressly ordered to kill heretics in this world, and the victims only escaped eternal damnation because the chosen people knew nothing at that time of future rewards and punishments. A glance at the first few pages of *Crimes of Christianity* will also show that the earliest apostles of Christianity were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of persecution. Paul smote Elymas with blindness for opposing him, and even "the beloved disciple" said "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Paul tells the Galatians, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." These passages plainly imply that the unbeliever is to be shunned like poison, and that the teacher of unbelief is a devil. What difference is there between this and the passage in Mark? As a matter of fact, all the Christian Churches, from the beginning till now, have taught that faith is necessary to salvation; and this historic consensus of opinion justifies the Freethinker in regarding bigotry as of the essence of the Bible.

Now what is belief? It is an automatic act of the mind, over which the will has absolutely no power. The will might, indeed, turn the eyes from regarding evidence in a particular direction, or the entire mind from attending to the subject at all. But given the evidence before you, and your own powers of thought, and your judgment is a logical necessity. You cannot help believing what your intellect certifies as true; you cannot help disbelieving what your intellect certifies as false. If you were threatened with everlasting torment for believing that twice two are four, you could not, by the most tremendous effort of volition, alter your conviction in the slightest degree. You might be induced to *assert* that twice two are five, but whatever your tongue might utter, your belief would remain unchanged.

The effect of threats, therefore, is not to change belief, but to produce hypocrisy. Yet this much must be allowed. The threats may succeed *if they are carried out*. Fear will make multitudes *profess* without *investigating*, and as liars often come to believe their own lies, habitual profession produces a state of mind that has a superficial resemblance to real belief; and, on the other hand, if the threats of future punishment are supplemented by penal laws

against heresy, there is a process of artificial selection by which independent minds are eliminated, while the slavish survive. Even when penal laws are relaxed, social ostracism will have a similar, though perhaps a weaker, effect. Prizes offered to one form of opinion, and losses inflicted on others, will necessarily make a difference in their relative success. How slowly Christianity advanced during the first three centuries, when it was under a cloud! How swiftly it progressed when Constantine gave it wealth and privileges, and used the temporal sword to repress or extinguish its enemies!

Nothing is truer than that the religious belief of more than ninety-nine hundredths of mankind is determined by the geographical accident of birth. Born in Spain they are Catholics; both in England they are Protestants; born in Turkey they are Mohammedans; born in India they are Brahmanists; born in Ceylon they are Buddhists; born in the shadow of a synagogue they are Jews. Their own minds have not the smallest share in deciding their faith. They take it at second-hand, as they do their language and their fashion of dressing. To call their "faith" belief is absurd. It is simply a prejudice. Belief, in the proper sense of the word, follows evidence and reflection. What evidence has the ordinary Christian, and has he ever reflected on his creed for five minutes in the whole course of his life?

Philosophically speaking, men think as they can, and believe as they must; and as belief is independent of the will, and cannot be affected by motives, it is not a subject for praise or blame, reward or punishment. Religions, therefore, which promise heaven for belief and hell for unbelief, are utterly unphilosophical. They are self-condemned. Truth invites free study. Falsehood shuns investigation, and denounces that liberty of thought which is fatal to its pretensions.

There is a not too refined, but a very true piece of verse, which was first published more than a generation ago in a pungent Freethought journal, and we venture to quote its conclusion. After relating the chief "flams" of the Bible, it says:—

"And when with this nonsense you're crammed,
To make you believe it all true,
They say if you don't you'll be damned;
But you ought to be damned if you do."

G. W. FOOTE.

A Visit to the Ingersolls.

A Letter from an English sea-captain to a friend at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

s.s. *Isle of Kent*, New York,
June 10, 1907.

MY DEAR N—,

Oh, what a glorious day I had yesterday! It will be a red-letter day in my life.

I was out visiting the family of the late Colonel Ingersoll, and if I had been the King from the throne I could not have been treated better. Their kindness was the more remarkable because I was a complete stranger, with no introduction to the family.

Many years ago I had made up my mind that if I should have the good fortune to be in the States, and within one hundred or even two hundred miles when Colonel Ingersoll was lecturing, I should go and hear him; but, unfortunately, he died before I had the chance of either seeing or hearing him. Nevertheless, when I arrived here, I made up my mind that I would at any rate see his home and the urn in which his ashes repose; and I had that gratification yesterday. Yes, and I had also dinner with the family before I left. I neither expected nor hoped that I should have such an honor, but you may be sure I shall remember it all the rest of my days with satisfaction and pleasure.

In the first place, Mrs. Ingersoll (the widow), her two daughters Eva and Maud, and Mrs. Farrell (Mrs. Ingersoll's sister) gave me such a hearty welcome that I felt quite at my ease at once; the *bonhomie* was so natural and kind, without any fuss or superior airs.

They have got a charming house with about forty acres of wooded land round it, plenty of horses in the stables, while the inside of the house is like fairyland with beautiful pictures and objects of art, not to mention easy chairs of

all kinds. A verandah goes right round the house. The house itself is built in the form of an old feudal castle, with a solid square tower. It was owing to that tower that I found my way to the house, because when I caught a glimpse of it through the trees in the distance, and was told that was Ingersoll's, I made up my mind to steer a straight course for it; but alas! I landed myself into all sorts of queer places. You see, to keep a straight course, I had to trespass over other people's grounds, and I daresay many of the people about were wondering who the man was in the box hat and frock coat, who kept jumping over their hedges and boundary walls. Perhaps they thought it was old Pickwick come to life again, or a maniac at large! After a good deal of this kind of work, I came upon a mansion where two little girls were playing croquet; so I beckoned one of them to come and tell me where Mrs. Ingersoll lived, as I had lost the bearing of the house by this time. "Right across here," she said, and led me over to the house; so I was all right at last. I walked up to the house and found the door open. A lady's cloak was lying on one of the chairs in the garden, but there was not the sign of anyone about the place. I knocked and made a noise on the verandah, but no one responded. I began to think the place must be deserted. I hunted round a bit, and heard someone talking underneath me; so I went down into the kitchen and came upon two negro women. They seemed to think I was the Holy Ghost, as I had come upon them so suddenly. However, I asked them if Mrs. Ingersoll was at home. "Yes," they said, and told me to go upstairs and they would tell their mistress. It was not long before Mr. Brown (Mrs. Ingersoll's son-in-law) came and asked me my business. I told him I was a pilgrim to the shrine of Ingersoll. That was enough. He told me to "sit right down there" and make myself as comfortable as I could while he brought some of the ladies down.

Presently Mrs. Ingersoll, with her daughters and sister, came down and gave me a cordial welcome; made me sit in an easy chair; while Mr. Farrell gave me a cigar. Then we chatted away just as if I had been one of the family. Of course, I had merely intended to see the house and urn; but they insisted upon me staying to dine with them. In the meantime I was taken round the place and shown all the finest views from the best points through the trees; we saw all the surrounding country—the mountains across the river, the various historic spots in connection with the War of Independence; several little jokes were made about the Americans beating the English—all in good spirit. They showed me a large cannon-ball that had been dredged from the River Hudson, which they keep as a relic, with an inscription upon it.

What a charming family they are! Mrs. Ingersoll took me to the room where the late Colonel died, and told me all about the death; how he had been laughing just a few moments before he suddenly collapsed and passed to the bourne whence no traveller returns. I had to turn my head away while she was talking, or I would have cried like a school-girl; as it was, the tears were in my eyes until I had got out of the room again.

After dinner they got out the carriage, and Mr. and Mrs. Brown drove me to the station, where I caught my train, and reached my ship at 11 p.m., quite joyful and happy over my trip.

There are many things I would like to tell you about the Colonel, but we must wait until we meet, when I daresay you will have a hearty laugh over my temerity in so light-heartedly visiting strangers.—Yours sincerely,

G. B. TAYLOR.

People canvass up and down the value and utility of Christianity, and none of them seem to see that it was the common channel towards which all the great streams of thought in the old world were tending, and that in some form or other when they came to unite it must have been. That it crystallised round a particular person may have been an accident; but in its essence, as soon as the widening intercourse of nations forced the Jewish mind into contact with the Indian and the Persian and the Grecian, such a religion was absolutely inevitable.—*J. A. Proude.*

Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To give his virtues room;
Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good man's barge.

Nature, with equal mind,
Sees all her sons at play;
Sees man control the wind,
The wind sweep man away;
Allows the proudly-riding and the foundering bark.

—*Matthew Arnold.*

Correspondence.

ARE ATHEISTS THINKERS?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Goethe, I think it was, who said that "man is born, not to solve the problem of the universe, but to find where the problem begins, and to restrain himself within the limits of the comprehensible." Now, the Christians transcend this limitation and claim, like the *Gnostic* of old—though in a modified form—knowledge of God and all his mysterious attributes. They arrogate to themselves the possession of a certain *Gnosis* anent the incomprehensible future. With marvellous celerity and sleight-of-hand they presume to disentangle the enigmatical knots of cosmological riddles. They impose as dogmas on the unreflecting multitude that the will is *free*, and that the soul is immortal—dogmas evidencing well the infinite supply of fallacious corrolaries the theologians are able to draw from the fountain of *petitio principii*. Furthermore, theologians assign to their own precious individualities certain *prerogatives*—*e.g.*, a spiritual "discernment faculty," which evolved itself out of the inner consciousness of a venerable archdeacon. Such metaphysical hallucinations are beyond the ken of critical science.

The evolution of theological apologetics are, *per se*, significant indications of the evanescent and transitory character of frail man and all that existence involves. Everything is sentient and ephemeral in the eternal music of physical causation. The stars and the astronomer, the theologian and his Bible, are but withering manifestations of the instability of the wonderful immensity we call the universe. They appear once, to disappear again into that *something* from which they came—that vast alone, that silence that has no end.

Paleolithic man, with inchoate ganglion in the economy of his brain, unable to account for the myriads of Nature's manifestations—accountable through *fear*—postulated what was to his rudimentary understanding explanatory causes for phenomena, and eventually deification was inaugurated. This philosophy was good in its time, and was indubitably improved upon in the Mesolithic and Neolithic ages. Then we have the historical epochs, with the gods of Homer and the metaphysical abstractions, and the philosophy of the negation of negations of Taoism—the harbinger of the Hegelian school of metaphysics. Again, we have the Hebraic tradition, with its borrowed cosmology from the Hindoo *Vedas* and Babylonian legends. Then followed the Christian era, with its recapitulations of the doings of Krishna, the incarnation of Visnu and Sakaya Muni—an era when a man, one Jesus of Nazareth, propounded a religion, homogeneous and without pomp or ostentation, based on humanitarian principles; as Camille de Renesse says, "a religion of the open air"—a religion which was the direct antithesis of what the so-called disciples of the Founder preach to-day. This rough compendium will mayhap suffice to demonstrate that religion, like every other branch of the tree of phylogeny and ethnology, is mutable, and subject—like every other natural phenomenon—to metamorphosis. Consequently, why should dogma be imposed? Why should any "ology" claim finality in cosmical interpretation?—and especially that *logos* which is euphemistically called theology. Are questions like these warranted? As far as the *empiricism* of Science is concerned, we must obey her dictum; otherwise, we are free to draw our own conclusions—from the *data* already furnished—on everything that is hitherto to Science "behind the veil."

Now, Mr. Editor, I have no desire to "metaphysicise on metaphysics," as De Quincey would say. But what I want is to convert you from the fallacy of Atheism to *Theism* and my way of thinking. You will observe that I am as iconoclastic as you are in the realm of reactionary subterfuge, and I am as broad a *Freethinker* as your correspondent, Mr. Theakstone, is, who answered my letter on "What is Atheism?" which appeared in your journal about six months ago. Still, I am a stubborn Theist, and I hope not a dogmatic one. However, let us revert to our interrogation which figures as heading to this letter, "Are Atheists Thinkers?" To your readers it will assume the form of an irrelevant question, but to my view a very appropriate one. And, speaking for myself, I will emphatically answer in the negative. *Atheists are not thinkers*, or if they thought they would no longer maintain that attitude of *mind* which—let us grant—is *privative*, and not *negative*, to *Theism*.

As a Theist, I believe—I have faith—in God. I do not claim *knowledge* of God—because, as Tennyson sings—

"We have but faith, we do not know,
For knowledge is of things we see."

Before we can have any *knowledge* of God, we must see him; and to *see him* is to destroy his Godhood—if I may coin a word. And to see the *absolute* is an axiomatic

impossibility, because the *see-er* and the seen implies relativity with God—which is no God at all—reduced into an absurdity. Even God the Absolute does not know that he is God, inasmuch as self-consciousness implies limitations. Before God can be able to say that this is "I" he must also be able to say that this is not "me," and accordingly demarcate himself from what he is not. Self-consciousness implies locality, and locality implies plurality, and plurality implies not absolute, and not absolute is tantamount to not being God. The Christian God—the vindictive God—is virtually *anthropos*, because he is a *microcosm*, and the *macrocosm* is here implied as existing apart. God the *Microcosm* is related to the external *macrocosm*, and is palpably an anthropomorphic abstraction from the external world. Even the absolute has limitations. God cannot make a clock strike less than one. Let me try and put my position plainer. Conditioned limitation being the only possibility of thought, in thinking of God we condition him; we call him into existence with our minds; we mould the concept as we feel inclined; we treat the abstraction as if it were a plastic dough. In thinking of the absolute we make him relative, and it is not of God we are thinking, but of something that has limitations—hence its relativity. The relation between the diameter and circumference of a circle will always remain the same. If this relation is broken, it remains no longer a circle. Likewise with God: we alter the relation of the circle when we make him relative—and he remains God no longer. Perhaps I had better explain at this juncture the relation of axioms to things that are transitory. I have said that everything in nature is transitory—of course, I mean everything that is in the *concrete*, in contradistinction to the abstract. The geological records are instances of the concrete, whereas mathematical and other axioms are permanent and eternal in so far as there exists percipient *egos* able to appreciate them. Two and two will always make four—now and for ever. The calculation of an eclipse does not err. A concrete analogy may prove wrong. We harbor a stronger faith in the *abstract* than we do in the concrete. You believe that there will be a thousand or more years hence with a degree of certainty, but you are not certain that man will be alive then. We trust in natural law; and, as Frazer said, trust in natural law is "faith in God in germ." The orderly symphony of the stars soothes to happy sleep a faith in God.

Kant said that "time and space are merely forms of perception"—perception without a negation. Has time a negation? Only in a word. Time and space existed before the mammalian God of the Christians. But to me time and space are everything—are God. Some have defined God as "the Eternal Force which eternally transforms matter." But this, again, is only an abstraction from time and space, and has, consequently, limitations. Let me define God as "Whatever is." But do I *condition* in saying so? Not at all. It is he (if that pronoun is logical) that conditions me. I live in time and space, and I am conditioned by these fundamental factors. Now, what is an Atheist? "A man who is without God"—a man like our Editor. A happy negative, indeed. A *denial* of God is incongruous, because, on their own showing, there must be a God for them to deny; for how could they deny him otherwise? An Atheist, being without time and space (without God) and all that they entail, is—a veritable lunatic. And time and space and *whatever is*—is God. Granted that our immaterialists and materialists were to extend spirit and matter throughout space—that "circle whose centre is everywhere, whose circumference is nowhere"—and annihilate *time*. The Eternal Now will mean my God nevertheless. There exists something above man, anterior to man, stronger than man, encircling man—that something I call God. That something which no man is without, whether he thinks it or not. The apparent inconsistencies of this letter will be cleared up in another effusion that will follow; if the Editor will kindly permit. This is already too long.

HAW MENAL.

[We insert this correspondent's letter in proof of our respect for free discussion. It is very good of him to wish to convert us to his way of thinking. But what *is* his way of thinking? His letter reminds us of what Voltaire said of a certain author, that his writings showed plenty of leaves but no fruit. Perhaps the other "effusion" promised will make amends, and give us arguments instead of personal opinions; otherwise we are afraid we shall be unable to find room for it.—EDITOR.]

CONCERNING DR. CLIFFORD.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Last week's *Freethinker* contained a very pertinent paragraph commenting on a letter Dr. Clifford wrote to the *Church Times*, in which, it appears, he contends that "anything is better than hypocrisy." You have frequently called Dr. Clifford a humbug and a hypocrite. Some correspondents of the *Church Times* seem to think so too. I think

they are quite justified in doing so. Dr. Clifford is not a Christian now; at least he has admitted that he does not accept Christian dogma. In a paragraph in the *Daily Chronicle* some time ago reference was made to an article in the *Book Monthly*, in which Dr. Clifford confessed that Emerson had opened his eyes regarding theology. That one can well believe. Emerson was one of the greatest of thinkers, psychologist and idealist; and, I should imagine, an Atheist. Is it not about time that Dr. Clifford ceased playing a double game? I listened to a sermon of his on a phonograph the other day. It was a humbugging rignarole, and I shocked a lady for saying so. Not long ago the *Daily Mail* (which, by the way, is curiously responsive to the Free-thought movement) published a report of an address Dr. Clifford gave at the City Temple, in which he practically admitted they had made a mistake. Why not frankly say so? Fourteen years ago, if I remember rightly, the *Daily Chronicle*, then edited by Mr. Massingham, who now controls the weekly *Nation* (formerly the *Speaker*), published a voluminous correspondence, "Is Christianity Played Out?" started, I think, by the late Robert Buchanan. I remember remarking to a son of Dr. Clifford that I thought it was. I wonder what he thinks now.

J. A. REID.

Matter knows nothing of decadence, a word
Corrupt with spirit: only chance and change,
Power and imagination. Let me speak—
The war with Persia, Marathon, Salamis,
Battles and victories by land and sea,
Revived in Attic bosoms, Attic brains,
Profound regard for things of Attica,
With ardent interest in the Universe
Whereof it felt itself the heart and soul.
In England next after two thousand years,
The most instructive people in the world,
The mightiest and the freest, having undone
With axe and fire the strangling Roman creed,
That like a caul about their fancy clung,
Forthwith despatched to hell the rivalry
Of Spain, redeemed the seas, began to stretch
Their giant limbs in isles and continents,
And take the measure of the quartered globe.
Thus the imagination of these lands
Became one living cord, whereon were strung
All story, legend, lore; and like a birth
Miraculous, divine dramatic art,
Which to be truly great demands a great
Impassioned people for an audience, rose
From out the loftiest minds and shaped itself
The mirror of a master people's pride.
And now a greater England, about to break
The husk of Christendom, as in its youth
It sloughed off Rome, begins the world anew.

—John Davidson, "The Theatrocrat."

The Good News.

READERS of Reado give answer,
Remember ye Denys the brave?
Fighter of various battles,
Fair women's gallant slave.
'Twas he who brought us the good news,
His message so blithely said—
Was "Courage, oh courage! dear comrades,
The Devil is dead!"

Mark how the joyous tidings
Has spread from sea to sea,
Human hearts lift in gladness,
From trembling fear set free.
No pain shall come hereafter,
Hell fires no longer red,
But cold; so "Courage, good people,
The Devil is dead!"

Hark ye, all ye that sorrow,
With heavy care oppressed;
The sunrise of the morrow
Shall lighten again each breast.
Soldiers who fought for freedom
Not vainly have they bled.
Courage, oh courage, dear comrades,
The Devil is dead.

Dazzling is the day dawn—
The Dawn of Liberty.
Our golden bugles are singing
Paeans of victory.

For now a message more welcome
Than ever we bring to you;
Great news from the front of battle—
God is dying too!

His bones are old and useless,
No longer Lord of Hosts;
His feeble carcass soon will join
The legions of the ghosts.
Take heart, ye brave reformers,
Your wars are almost done
For God and the Devil together
Are going—

Are going—
Are gone.

HENRY STUART.

After such years of dissension and strife,
Some wonder that Peter should weep for his wife:
But his tears on her grave are nothing surprising,—
He's laying her dust, for fear of its rising.

—Tom Hood.

When poor pa died, and went to heaven,
What grief mamma endured!
But, ah! that grief was soon assuaged,
For pa he was insured.
And when ma went there—oh, how funny!
The office paid her all the money.

The sophist sneers: Fool, take
Thy pleasure, right or wrong.
The pious wail: Forsake
A world these sophists throng.
Be neither saint nor sophist-led, but be a man!

—Matthew Arnold.

Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done with fears;
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years.
Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine!

—Matthew Arnold.

Why is it thought to be so very wicked to be an unbeliever? Rather, why is it assumed that no one can have difficulties unless he be wicked? Because an anathema upon unbelief has been appended as a guardian of the creed. It is one way, and doubtless a very polite way, of maintaining the creed, this of anathema. When everything may be lost unless one holds a particular belief, and nothing except vulgar love of truth can induce one into questioning it, common prudence points out the safe course; but really it is a vulgar evidence, this of anathema.—J. A. Froude, "Nemesis of Faith."

Poor is he who desires death; poorer is he who dreads it.

The conviction of the martyr that the stake is the gate of Paradise, diminishes the dignity of the suffering in proportion to its strength.—J. A. Froude.

Obituary.

ON Monday, September 9, about noon, Mr. W. H. Holyoak died at 45 Humberstone-gate, a few doors away from the Secular Hall, in the foundation and work of which he had taken so lively an interest. Born in 1818, he passed through all the struggles of Freethought in Leicester, helping to found the Secular Society in 1852, reading papers at its meetings, acting as secretary to the Secular Hall Company, selling books at the Freethought bookshop, and assisting in the movements for Sunday bands, Sunday opening of museums, etc. He enjoyed the friendship of G. J. Holyoake for more than half a century. To the last hour he remained a sturdy, honest, and enthusiastic follower of the Freethought movement. The cremation was fixed for Thursday.

F. J. GOULD.

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.

STRATFORD TOWN HALL: 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Religion and the Joy of Life."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.30, Mr. Wishart, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, Brockwell Park, 3 and 6, F. A. Davies.

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, J. W. Marshall, "Born Again: a Pythagorean Myth."

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

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S.: Beresford-square, 11.30, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

BRISTOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Labor Party's Hall): 11, Members' Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

BRISTOL BRANCH N. S. S.: Horsefair, 7.30, B. G. Brown, "Why I am a Freethinker."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, a Debate; The Mound, 7, meets for Discussion.

ADVANCED THOUGHT LECTURES.

- "Christianity Reconsidered." "Thomas Paine."
 "Jesus: An Atheist's Appreciation."
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