

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*For mortal men,  
So thou but strive, thou soon shalt see  
Defeat itself is victory.*

—A. H. CLOUGH.

## Mr. John Davidson's Position.

My two articles on Mr. John Davidson's *Theatrocrat* were forwarded to him, and a few days afterwards he acknowledged them in the following letter, which I have his permission to print with my own comments:—

"DEAR MR. FOOTE,—

Many thanks for your two articles.

Concerning *Atheist*.—Atheist, as Christian was at first, is a word of contumely. If those who deny that God ever existed (except in the mind of man as the most baleful delusion on record) accept this name, I would have them note that the Christian precedent is full of omen. The first Christians were in their day and way advanced freethinkers. They gloried in their contumelious nickname, with the result that their adoption of it limited them, diverted them, spoiled their growth. They could not grow except in depravity, and soon became the purple cancer of Christianity which we know. If we accept the name *Atheist*, we limit ourselves, we distort our growth; we will become depraved, we will develop a cancer or a wen. The power of a name when the name stands for a tenet is incalculable, and the effect of its adoption is always disastrous; because a name is adopted only when the tenet is ripe and ready to decay. Consider, for example, Conservatism and Liberalism; the moment they were named and known they began to putrefy. I think the time has come for Freethinkers to rise above theism and atheism, to come out of it altogether. There is the word, Man, a virgin word, a zero. Let us call ourselves Men, and begin all things over again as if the world had never dreamt of a drunken deity.

Concerning *Christ*.—There are two Christs spoken of in my writings: the Christ of the Christians whom I dislike, and a Christ known to me out of the New Testament, as I know Hamlet or Don Quixote: a most impressive person who went his own way and suffered for it. His limitations, of course, are evident: he had no humor, he would say a smart thing for the sake of the temporary triumph, as in the quibbling repartee, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's'; and he was undeveloped on the human side. If Christ had only had a wife and children! But he died too soon. His early precocity was evidently followed by a long period of hebetation; and at the end of his brilliant three years of publicity he needed the wilderness instead of Jerusalem for further meditation and development.

I am,

Sincerely yours,

JOHN DAVIDSON."

This is an interesting letter; and, coming from a man of Mr. Davidson's intellectual distinction, it is also important. With some of its contents I agree, but I differ from others; and both my agreement and my difference will appear in the following criticism.

It will suit my purpose to reverse Mr. Davidson's order. I will take "Christ" first and "Atheist" afterwards. The order of these two subjects is a matter of no special importance to either of us. It is merely one of convenience.

It does not seem to me that there are *two* Christs in the New Testament. There appear to be many Christs. This has often been noticed. And the explanation is, I think, that the New Testament is a very composite production; moreover, it is not so much history as dramatic fiction. George Eliot well said that the materials for a real Life of Christ do not exist. If there ever was a religious carpenter called Jesus (the Greek form of Joshua—or rather Jeshua), who preached and got into trouble under Pontius Pilate, we can never know what he actually was, for the Christians have buried him under a mountain of legendary and mythological matter, from which he cannot now be extricated. The Christ of the New Testament is a multifarious personage, because the ideal character therein depicted was a reflection of all the aspects of the early Christian imagination.

"The Christ of the Christians" is presumably the Christ of Christian theology; the Christ of the Trinity, the Christ of the Virgin Birth, the Christ of the miraculous career, the Christ of the Resurrection, the Christ of the Atonement. Mr. Davidson rejects and dislikes that Christ. But he rather likes "the Christ of the New Testament" whom he knows as he knows Hamlet or Don Quixote. What is this, however, but saying that the Christ of the New Testament is a dramatic or fictional creation? Shakespeare created Hamlet, Cervantes created Don Quixote, and the early Christians created Christ. For this reason I cannot quite follow Mr. Davidson in his pregnant remarks on Christ's "limitations." The limitations are those of an imaginary character, not those of an historical personage. Christ could not have been more developed on the human side; he could not have had a wife and children; he could not have ended his public career in any other way than he did; for all these things would have been in contradiction to the spiritual, the superhuman, conception from which the Christ of the New Testament is a perfectly logical development.

Christ will have to go altogether. He who has once been a God can never be a man. His place is in the Pantheon. Moreover, when you come to think of it, the Christ of the New Testament is a compound of sayings and actions; the sayings being the common possession of the East, and the actions being nearly all miraculous; indeed, a purely natural Life of Christ, collected from the Gospels, would make a very meagre obituary notice in a newspaper.

Mr. Davidson refers to the long and barren interval between Christ's arguing with the Rabbis at the age of twelve and the beginning of his public career at the age of thirty. But was this really a period of hebetation? Are not the incidents to be otherwise accounted for? Horus likewise was heard of at twelve and again at thirty. Why? Because twelve in Eastern countries is the age of puberty, and thirty was the age of legal manhood. We are not dealing with biography at all, but with religious drama.

It may be argued that the Christ of the New Testament could not be entirely an invention. John Stuart Mill, who was ill-informed on this particular subject, said that the fishermen of Galilee were not equal to such an effort. Of course they were not. But what has this to do with the case? The invention was the work of five or six generations. We do not know the names of the inventors; neither do we



know the names of the men who built the Gothic cathedrals. It is admitted that the fine story of the woman taken in adultery is an interpolation. Somebody invented that. And other persons could have invented all the other parts of the Gospel story.

Mr. Davidson will understand, therefore, why I go a step farther than he does. He gets rid of the Christ of Christian theology, and I get rid of the Christ of the New Testament; these two being, at bottom, precisely one and the same. I cannot take Christ either as a model or as an inspiration. I repeat that he belongs to the Pantheon. He must come out of the Biographical Dictionary.

With regard to the word "Atheist," I admit that it is a word of contumely. So was the word "Christian." But each word has a meaning of its own, independent of contumely or flattery. A Theist is a person who believes in God, and an Atheist is a person who does not believe in God. This I set forth in my two articles. I also argued that if Theism disappeared, Atheism would still exist; but, of course, it would be latent, and the word would cease to be used—for all such words are purely relative. It sounds odd, but if we were all Atheists we should cease to call ourselves Atheists. And in this way there is force in Mr. Davidson's summons to Freethinkers to "rise above atheism and theism, and come out of it altogether." We should then be Humanists. And we do, even now, oppose the idea of Man to the idea of God. It is for the sake of natural human welfare that we try to dispel the illusions of supernaturalism. If we must have a religion, as some contend, it will certainly be the Religion of Humanity. But we cannot escape from the pressure of relativity in the meanwhile. Theism occupies the ground; it is in possession of all the advantages; it has wealth, prestige, and authority, and it perpetuates itself by its control of public education. We are obliged, therefore, to war against it, in order that our own freedom may be extended to our fellow men. And I take it that Mr. Davidson plays a brilliant part in this very warfare. There is a wealth of indignant scorn in that phrase of his about the "dream of a drunken deity." Indeed, his play (the *Theatocrat*) and its strongly-written Preface are a direct challenge to the religious world. He is a brave soldier in the great war of the Liberation of Humanity.

The name "Atheist" is as temporary as the name "Theist." I have no fanatical love for it, but it honestly denotes a certain mental attitude. It is open to misrepresentation, but so is every name that can be proposed. Whatever we call ourselves, we shall be misconceived by the prejudiced and misrepresented by the malicious. The odium that clings round one word to-day would cling round any other word to-morrow.

I do not admit that calling ourselves Atheists will "deprave" us; it may possibly "limit" us and "distort our growth." But this is the necessary condition of all human activity. Shakespeare himself, to do anything in the world, had to choose a channel, and he naturally chose the theatre; yet in doing so he limited himself, and we know he complained that he was "subdued to what he worked in," like the dyer's hand. It is the universal law of life. We cannot escape from it. Everybody who does anything limits himself. The only choice we have is between doing something and doing nothing. If we apply our faculties and energies in one direction, we have so much less for other directions. This is true. But it is also a truism. It is the inevitable result of our finitude.

My own devotion to Freethought has prevented me from giving the time I could wish to literature and art and sociology, though I have not neglected them; and in this way I have "limited" myself and "spoiled my growth." But I am still as all-round as most of the people I see, and I willingly pay the price of my calling. There is no good in the world unmixed with evil, and the recognition of this fact is the first step in sound philosophy.

G. W. FOOTE.

## What is the Use of God?

THE belief in God—or gods—believers are never tired of assuring us, is one of the largest facts in human history. Large it certainly is, although some object might be urged against its being awarded a premier place. But it is an ever-present fact. It meets us in savage and civilised times; in all countries, and under all conditions. The belief in Deity controls or influences a large part of human history, and in the service of the gods man has stinted nothing of labor or of sacrifice. He has covered the earth with temples in their honor, sacrificed his own flesh and blood to gain their favor, devastated nations to protect them from affront. Armies of men have been withdrawn from productive labor to serve as their attendants; contemporary and future generations saddled with burdens so that the gods might be fittingly honored. Noting all that man has done for God, one asks what has God done for man? In return for all this labor and attention, what has the race to show in return?

A complete answer to this question would be, Nothing. And it would be easy to show—what many modern believers admit—that the belief in God has been the one constant force in human affairs that has held man back from effecting those reforms that are the logical resultants of increased knowledge. It is not, however, from this point of view that I wish to deal with the subject. But it may at least be said that earlier generations of believers had, from their own point of view, an adequate answer to the question. They believed that God did actually interfere in human affairs, directing natural forces to the injury of one or the benefit of another; and man, therefore, received benefits from Deity of either a negative or a positive character. Touched by their devotion, God either refrained from harming them or else conferred upon them special benefits. But the validity of the answer was dependent upon a certain conception of God and nature. That is, it was only good so long as natural forces were thought of as so many separate things under the direct and personal control of Deity. When that conception is given up, the force of the answer disappears. If people believe that the laws of Nature are invariable, that the rain really does fall upon the just and unjust alike, that our actions carry with them certain unavoidable consequences, and that neither belief nor disbelief can affect—save in terms of natural causation—natural forces, obviously the particular providence which alone gives validity to religious beliefs no longer exists. What, then, under such conditions, is the use of God?

Now, it is precisely this question which the champions of the New Theology have to face. With all the scorn of the religious superior person they look down upon those belated believers who continue to believe that God really does interfere with "natural law"; they declare that all such beliefs are relics of a pre-scientific age, and have no place in an up-to-date religious faith. The truth is, we are told by one of the leading exponents of the New Theology that "the Divine will expresses itself through unfailing law," and that man's business is to get as intelligent a comprehension of these laws as is possible.

For example. The other day an American preacher in London told a wonderful story of a sailor-boy whose ship had gone down, but who was saved from the wreck, apparently in answer to his mother's prayers. The mother called on a certain minister and told him, before the news came of the wreck, that in answer to her prayers God had rescued her son. Later came the verification of the belief, and also the news that the boy was the only survivor. Of course, the incident as stated never occurred. It is just one of those pulpit lies—and there is really no greater breeding-ground for falsehood than the pulpit—which preachers acquire the habit of telling and congregations acquire the habit of pretending to believe. Indeed, in his comments on the tale, the



Rev. J. Warschauer calls it a "tall story," and wonders at preachers eking out their sermons by such means.

But Dr. Warschauer has more to say on this story, and this brings me to my point. He asks whether we are to believe that God shows favoritism in this manner? Whether the one who was saved was really more important than the hundred who were drowned? Or whether we can believe that God specially intervenes to save someone from fire or storm or disease because of prayers said, or because one person is dearer to him than another? He says such a belief is absurd, and insists that natural law operates on all, and for all, alike. We develop, he says, by understanding the forces of nature, and we can have no other help than that derived from a wise control which will make them subservient to human needs.

Now these are not opinions with which readers of this journal are likely to quarrel. They have been commonplaces with us far too long for that. But while such opinions do not disprove the validity of the belief in God as such, they do absolutely destroy its utility. Natural forces are, so far as man is concerned, supreme. Given certain conditions, they will express themselves in one way, and in one way only. The saint who goes into the water without learning to swim will be drowned. The sinner who can swim will reach the shore safely. There is no more "Providence" in one man being rescued from a wreck than there is in the rest of the crew being drowned. God has nothing to do with the saving of the one or the drowning of the other—except so far as one believes that he called natural forces into existence. But once created, they follow their appointed path; crushing those who are ignorant, sparing those who are wise.

The New Theology thus evades the criticism which would make God responsible for disaster. But it also relieves man of the task of thanking him for benefits. In fact, it leaves God with no direct influence on human affairs, with nothing to do save to see the world "go." He is a spectator, bound by the conditions of his own existence not to interfere. Juggling with such phrases as "the immanence of God" cannot get rid of this plain implication of the theory. As a matter of fact, they are far more the product of confused thinking than aught else. The issue, cleared of all confusing phraseology, is simple. Either God does interfere in human affairs or he does not. If he does, the old believers are justified; nature does not express invariable laws—they are subject to modifications by the direct action of Deity for the benefit or injury of worshipers. If he does not interfere, then is it of any real importance whether there is a God behind nature or not? Man cannot get beyond nature, nor is nature modified by a controlling power in his interest. Man's welfare is all along dependent upon his knowledge of natural forces and his ability in making them subservient to his welfare, and this is absolutely independent of any belief in God whatsoever. Of what use, then, is the belief in Deity?

As with the disciple so with the master. As with physical so with ethical matters. Mr. R. J. Campbell, who in the "sloppy" prayers that preface his sermons, is always asking God to give them this, that, or the other—as though a "gift" of a mental or moral character would not be as much an infraction of natural law as pulling a drowning man off a wreck in answer to prayer—can yet say:—

"You will hear theologians cry out from time to time that so-and-so is destroying the sanctions of morality. Do not be afraid. No one can destroy the sanctions of morality; the good sense of the general public, religious and non-religious, will take care of that."

Exactly; morality is fundamentally social, and although social modifications may produce corresponding changes in moral forms, nothing short of the destruction of human association can destroy it. If natural law is invariable, God no more interferes in matters of morals than elsewhere—Mr. Campbell's begging prayers notwithstanding. A man's char-

acter, like the career of a tempest, is the result of all the antecedent causes that produced it. Mr. Campbell's reasoning on this head is good enough; so is Mr. Warschauer's in another direction; only between them they leave God Almighty with not a single thing to do with which to fill up his time.

The New Theology, then, adopts the conception of invariable natural law in mind and matter. It does not believe in a special Providence, and consequently there is no valid use for prayer. Prayer becomes a species of self-induced hypnotism. If people pray, believing beforehand they will be spiritually refreshed by the exercise, they will find comfort in the process. It would be strange, indeed, if this did not hold good of a fairly large number of cases. But man must purchase development by knowledge and obedience. He must know nature, and rule by obeying its laws. Well and good; but, once more, God is ruled out. Man is wholly and solely concerned with the forces, and what lies beyond matters naught. If only the New Theologians were logical they would see that their arguments leave religion without any social justification whatever; that the true philosophy of life is "to make remote things tangible, common things extensively useful, useful things extensively common, and to leave the least necessary to the last." And in this world "God" is surely to be counted as among the least of the least necessary things.

C. COHEN.

### Christ's One Test.

MR. BOOTH-CLIBBORN has just published a book, *Blood Against Blood*, in which he condemns war as absolutely anti-Christian. With the argument conducted in the little volume the present article does not pretend to deal. The position of the author is perfectly clear. He takes the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," as of universal application, binding on communities, governments, and monarchs, as well as on individuals. He accepts the Sermon on the Mount as it stands, and scorns all interpretations and commentaries which tamper with the plain literal meaning of the words. On this point we are in close sympathy with him. We maintain, quite as firmly as he does, that if Christ is to be chosen as our authority, he must be adopted as such on his own terms, and not on our own. If his words are entitled to obedience on the part of his disciples, surely they are so entitled as he uttered them, not as differently expounded by opposing schools of theology. He claimed that the commandments he issued were commandments he had received from his Father (John x. 18; xii. 49, 50), and he declared that obedience to his commandments was the essential condition of true discipleship (John xiv. 15; viii. 31). Well, accepting Christ's authority on Christ's own terms, Mr. Booth-Clibborn denounces war as a positive violation of the essential condition of Christian discipleship. This is the passage in the Sermon on the Mount upon which the anti-war argument is made to rest:—

"Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil, but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away" (Matt. v. 38-42).

Now, in the leading article in the *British Weekly* for September 12, Dr. Robertson Nicoll disputes the soundness of Mr. Booth-Clibborn's reasoning, and justifies resistance to evil in certain circumstances. Before we consider Dr. Nicoll's own position, let us refresh our memories as to what Jesus meant by discipleship. It signified, in his mind, vital union with himself, and, through him, with the Father (John xvii. 23). His disciples were under the Father's protective care; and although their loyalty to him would cause them to be "hated of all men," they were not to fear or falter, because the Father would



be ever with them (Matt. x. 28-31). Furthermore, Jesus emphasised the fact that his disciples were not citizens of this world, but subjects of the kingdom of heaven; and it was for their guidance in the latter capacity that all his commandments were uttered. The kingdoms of this world were almost at an end; there was absolutely no future for them; they were even then in the act of passing away; it was the kingdom of heaven alone that was heir to the coming eons. Such was the situation as Jesus understood it, and as his first apostles understood it. He was legislating for the subjects of the kingdom of heaven: he was at once Law-giver and King. We know that his whole teaching was founded upon false premises. The kingdoms of the world are still with us, while the kingdom of heaven remains an unrealised dream. But the strange thing is that Christians still persist in calling themselves subjects of the kingdom of heaven, and in claiming Jesus as their king. It is their boast that they are not of the world though in it, and that it is their special privilege as well as bounden duty to execute the will of their Sovereign Lord. They say: "I am come to Christ that I may ascertain his will. I do not come as an equal; I come as a subject to ascertain the will of my Lord." Their Sovereign Lord, their infallible King, now in glory, is the Jesus who was born of a virgin and rose from the dead, and who embodied his will in a series of commandments now to be read and known of them all in the four Gospels. But no sooner do these wonderfully loyal and devout Christians stand face to face with the document which, according to their own most fondly cherished creed, contains their Master's will, than they begin to pull it to pieces and to quarrel among themselves as to its correct interpretation. Mr. Booth-Clibborn holds that the document means just exactly what it says, and that our only duty is to obey. Dr. Nicoll as vehemently argues that it means something else.

"Resist not evil." Dr. Nicoll asks: "Are these words to be taken in the fullest integrity of their possible meaning? It is dangerous work to dilute the precepts of Christ, but can anyone take them in a completely literal sense?" Dr. Nicoll believes that these words were spoken by a Divine Being, by the God-man, by whom all things were made, and in whom all things consist; and yet he calmly asks, "Can anyone take them in a completely literal sense?" Are not all things possible to them who believe? Do they not receive grace to do what to other people is utterly impossible? The testing clause, according to the editor of the *British Weekly*, is this: "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away"; on which he observes: "There can be no doubt about the literal sense, but would Mr. Booth-Clibborn adopt it? Would he give to everybody that asked him, and lend to everyone who would borrow from him?" But Dr. Nicoll completely misses the point, which is, not what Mr. Booth-Clibborn would do, but what Mr. Booth-Clibborn and all other professing Christians ought to do. Dr. Nicoll is thinking of the consequences of literal obedience. He knows that if he observed the Master's rule to the letter he would be penniless in a day. Speaking of the Society of Friends, he says: "All the money of the richest among them would be exhausted in a day if it were known that they were prepared to render a literal obedience to this command." Very probably; but then they would be thereby laying up treasures in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal"; while in possessing riches at all on earth they are guilty of setting their Lord's will at naught. "We still wait to hear," continued the Doctor, "of anyone who practices such obedience." True; but that only proves that there are no Christians in existence, not even one.

At the time of the Crimean War the Peace Society issued a manifesto in which occurred these words: "Who told you, my brother, that these precepts were not to be strictly and literally interpreted? If you can produce any hint or suggestion, however

slender or remote, from the language of our Savior or his apostles to warrant this assertion, I will throw up my case." No such hint or suggestion can be adduced, and no one ever attempts to produce it. Just here we see Dr. Nicoll at his weakest and worst. It is almost impossible to believe that a man of his intelligence and scholarship could have written the following sentence: "Let us make no mistake; if the Sermon on the Mount is to be interpreted literally, we must take it as forbidding the acquisition of property, or the laying up of money, or the providing for the future, or resistance to unjust law-suits." *But what is there to show that Jesus did not intend it to be interpreted literally? Did he himself acquire property, lay up money, provide for the future, or resist an unjust law-suit? And did he not say then, and, according to Dr. Nicoll's theology, does he not say to-day to all would-be disciples, "Follow me, imitate me, walk in my steps"?* And here is a sillier sentence still, if possible: "Till we see these principles acted out in life we must refuse to believe that anyone really holds that the Sermon on the Mount is to be taken absolutely as it stands without modification from other precepts of Scripture." What about Tolstoi? What about the Rev. Mr. Gledstone, whose book on the subject was so much debated in the columns of the *British Weekly* a couple of years ago? But this is not the point. The only question is, Did Jesus mean what he said, or did he not? Was he in dead earnest, or was he merely trifling? Dr. Nicoll is a man of the world, after all, who must lay up money, and hold property, and resist unjust law-suits, and provide for the future.

The *British Weekly* leader only serves to emphasise the truth that the religion of the Carpenter of Nazareth is dead, that it passed away with its founder, and that those who have called themselves Christians from that day to this have been such only on their knees, not on their feet; merely in outbursts of unregulated emotionalism, not in actual contact with the world; simply in empty profession, not in full-orbed reality; solely in an ecclesiastical sense, never in that of Jesus.

We have been arguing on the assumption that Dr. Nicoll's theology and Christology are true. To us they are the very opposite of true; and this is also the verdict of history. On the supposition that Jesus ever lived, we can only think of him as a sublime visionary, as an interesting but impossible dreamer, as a member, or as one who had caught the spirit of the Ebionite sect, the motto of which was "Blessed be poverty." It is impossible to regard him as a practical moralist. While many true and beautiful sayings are attributed to him, his teaching as a whole must be pronounced impracticable. And, as Dr. Nicoll himself admits, those who love him most, and swear eternal fealty to him, promising to follow him everywhere, those whose emotional worship of him knows no bounds, those who are forever singing,

"Jesus, my Shepherd, Husband, Friend,  
My Prophet, Priest, and King,  
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
Accept the praise I bring,"

even these habitually ignore his sayings, and live as if this world were their all in all. What does this indicate except that the profession of love and devotion and submission to Christ is the emptiest cant imaginable, or the veriest hypocrisy possible? And is not this the real meaning of the words ascribed to Jesus, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments?" The worship of the heart is sheer mockery when it is not backed up by the obedience of the life.

J. T. LLOYD.

## "O'er Moor and Fen."—II.

WE have seen how the Atheistic characters in Mr. Hocking's novel furnish a sufficient reply to his insinuation of the disastrous moral results which follow in the wake of Atheistic beliefs. And the



apologetic effort of his book is further nullified by his Christian characters, who certainly do not exhibit any of those superior moral qualities which are claimed as the especial product of religion.

One of the principal modern arguments used in support of Christianity, especially in Methodist circles, is that of "changed lives." We are constantly being told of the magical effect of the acceptance of religion in transforming sordid and evil lives into examples of moral purity and spiritual excellence. And undoubtedly this argument appeals to the moral sentiment of many persons whose critical faculty is not their strong point. In *O'er Moor and Fen* we are afforded an opportunity of putting this claim to the test; as the characters therein portrayed may be considered as representative of a religious body of great numerical strength. One of the important figures is the Circuit Steward, into whose mouth Mr. Hocking puts the story. He was brought under the influence of religion in his early years, and had filled every office open to a Methodist layman. He boasted that Methodism was as dear to him as life itself; and of him it might truly be said: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." In the long course of his spiritual career he must have listened to some thousands of sermons for the edification of the faithful, so that we might not unreasonably expect to find in him a person of superior intelligence and moral cultivation. We find him, however, of the very narrowest type of mind, his every act indicating that his individual and social sympathies must have been strangled at his spiritual birth. According to the story, his officious, tyrannical spirit manifests itself at the very outset of his dealings with the new minister of Wesley Chapel. He is sorely displeased because the young man declines to accept the lodgings which he had engaged for him without consulting his wishes. And his angry feeling is so little under control that, instead of presenting himself in the vestry on the first Sunday morning to formally welcome his spiritual guide, as was the custom of his office, he "took his seat in the chapel as though he were an ordinary member." His frame of mind during the service may be imagined; and at its close he somewhat unceremoniously informs the minister: "You go with me to dinner." The minister, however, much to the Steward's chagrin, had so far ignored Methodist custom as to accept an invitation from the pastor of an Independent Chapel, thereby adding fuel to the flame of Caleb's wrath. And when he tells us that he arrived home in anything but a good temper, we may well believe him.

When this neglect of Methodist usage is followed by the minister's failure to conform to the narrow limits of Methodist theology, the "displeasure" of the Steward gives place to feelings of indignation and anger. And in this philosophic frame of mind he accuses the minister of "being a traitor and a false prophet, and of taking God's money to do the Devil's work." Such is the gentlemanly language with which one Christian is ever ready to greet another whose theology does not accord with his orthodoxy. The Circuit Steward's brotherly affection, however, does not end there. His relentless spirit of persecution knows no rest until it has its victim arraigned before the Executive Council on charges connected not only with his teaching, but also on the more delicate matter of his love affairs. (The "seventeen young women who got new dresses in view of the minister's first Sunday at Wesley," were all likely to have had their trouble for nothing; the irreligious Cupid giving the preference to the maiden of Atheistic tendencies.) Had the Steward lived in the days of the rack and the thumbscrew, we may be quite sure that Bernard Hawthorne's despatch would have been a speedy one.

Another of the virtues which the Steward's spiritual education had developed is that of Ingratitude, of which he is a shining example. We all know, of course, that Christians are but pilgrims and strangers here, and that they lay not up for

themselves treasures on earth; but still, the Christian Society, of which Caleb was a shining light, "estimated people by the money they'd saved." They spoke of a person as "a £30,000 man, or a twenty-five thousander." And, while the £40,000 and £50,000 men looked down upon Caleb as a very small man, he had saved enough to retire comfortably. But by-and-bye his financial circumstances suffer a serious reverse, and he is likely to become a bankrupt. Owing to the kind intervention of the minister, however, whose father is a fairly wealthy man, he is saved from humiliation, and enabled to retain the much-prized office of Circuit Steward. But, so little generosity is there in this man's nature, that he is distrustful and suspicious of the motives which prompt the kindly act, while his antagonism towards his theological enemy is more bitter than before. His fanatical religious hatred has eradicated every lovable feature from his composition. One of his Church brethren said that "his owd lass must ha' a hard time to live wi' him"; and the glimpses of his home-life occasionally seen in the novel do not lend much support to the domestic argument alleged in favor of Christianity. Indeed, the religious atmosphere in which he has all his life lived and moved and had his being seems to have developed the worst aspects of his nature. And if bigotry of the narrowest and worst type—stagnation of the sympathies, a volcanic temper, and a suspicious mind—be evidences of the "changed life" so triumphantly appealed to by the Christian apologist, then Caleb Sutcliffe is an excellent specimen.

Another of the "saintly" characters in the novel is that of old Abel Bowyer, who, though he had been drunk regularly every Saturday night (besides other nights in the week) for about fifty years, had never missed being in his pew on the Sunday morning. Old Abel was far from being satisfied with Caleb's spiritual attainments, and frequently endeavored to spur him on to higher efforts. Meeting the minister and the Steward in the street one day, with brotherly candidness he summed up the latter's character thus: "Thou'rt a whitewashed owd Pharisee, Caleb, aw know. Thou'rt class-laidder and praicher, and Circuit Steward and all thet, but thou'rt a Pharisee." And the spiritual beauties of the Steward's character are further illustrated when, in justification of his charge, old Abel asks, "What abaat poor owd Betty Scott what lived i' one of thy cottages better nor fifteen year, an' paid her rent reg'lar, and then when the poor owd lass wur took poorly, and could not pay her rent, tha' kicked her aat?"

Such, then, are the superior characters which Mr. Hocking exhibits as triumphs of Christianity; from which it will be seen that the "changed lives" of the apologist are very largely imaginary. One of the truths which the modern study of psychology has emphasised is the close relation existing between the sexual and the religious emotions. And here, again, Mr. Hocking—unconsciously, of course—confirms the finding of psychology. Very shortly after Bernard Hawthorne is stationed at Lynford, he begins to receive from an unknown lady correspondent (who turns out to be Mary Clitheroe) a series of letters mysteriously dated from the Strand, London. What adds to the mystery is, that the lady is conversant with the doings at Wesley Chapel, one of his sermons which she professes to have heard being the pretext for her first letter. In them she speaks "of her loneliness, of her sorrow, of her longing for sympathy, and of her craving for companionship." Religion, she says, attracts her, but she is disappointed with his sermon. "Are tears wiped away? Are aching hearts eased?" she asks, as the result of such sermons. And to Bernard Hawthorne the letters, while they show no great faith, exhibit the longings of an intensely religious nature. But the point to be noted is, that all these sexual cravings for affection and companionship, and the vague religious longings to which the letters give expression, all find their realisation in—Bernard Hawthorne.



Such, then, are some of the artistic aspects of *O'er Moor and Fen*; for even the Methodist maiden may justly be angry with Mr. Hocking for marrying the handsome young minister to an *Atheist* lady. The purpose of the novel, however, is the same as all apologetics—viz., the distortion of facts and the suppression of knowledge; and the cowardly silence of the pulpit with regard to the truths of Evolution and the results of Biblical criticism is not more contemptible than Mr. Hocking's insinuations of the actual truth of Biblical stories and Christian dogmas, which even intelligent Christians have long since ceased to believe.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

### Acid Drops.

Armageddon seems coming in sight, and it is all owing to Christian insolence. Christian nations have gone hectoring and buccaneering all over the globe; for three hundred years they have been playing that game, and for the last hundred years with surprising vigor. But now they are receiving a check, and this is only the beginning of the end. One of the Asiatic nations has organised itself splendidly for defence, and its organisation is also good enough for attack. We have seen Russia—the Power that all Europe was afraid of—smitten down with amazing speed and completeness by land and sea. Japan is no longer a target for the shafts of "Christian charity." She is a "heathen" nation, but she can take care of herself—even against the worshipers of the meek and lowly Jesus. That was the great lesson with which the twentieth century opened. And long before this century closes other Asiatic nations, including vast and populous China, will have followed Japan's example. The disciples of the Prince of Peace will consequently be stopped from further aggression. They may even have to defend themselves before the play is over.

The Japanese are not going to take insults meekly, or assaults lying down. They are like a certain animal in the French story, of which it was said that "this animal is so vicious that when it is attacked it defends itself." The "heathen" have had to put up with Christian arrogance; they could not resent it successfully, either in their own country or in foreign parts. But all that is changing now; certainly it is so in the case of the Japanese. They refuse to put up with Christian arrogance even in the United States or the Canadian part of the British Empire. During the recent rioting at Vancouver, the white mob thought it was going to have everything its own way, as usual, but it was very much mistaken. The Japanese soon showed fight. When their property was being destroyed, and their lives threatened, they thought it was time to assert themselves; and they did so to some purpose. They rushed into the street armed with sticks, bottles, and knives; they charged the mob, shouting "Banzai," and in less than five minutes they were chasing the fleeing whites. Yes, *chasing* them. The whites ran away. And when they came back, later on, they found the Japanese ready for them, being armed with clubs, long knives, and revolvers, and ready to do battle with their aggressors. They even threatened to use bombs if they were attacked. This was *very* vicious; the Christian mob was indignant—it was also "disheartened." We like that word. It adds a comic touch to the sordid tragedy.

We are always pleased to acknowledge indebtedness to a lady. There is an article by Marilla M. Ricker in the *New York Truthseeker* on Thomas Paine, from which we learn a certain fact about President Roosevelt. That gentleman—if we may strain a point in his favor—wrote a *Life of Gouverneur Morris*, in which he referred to Thomas Paine as a "filthy little *Atheist*." The book was published in 1896, and Roosevelt was plentifully reminded that Paine was not "filthy," but fastidious about his person until he became practically helpless by old age and disease; that he was five feet ten, well formed, and handsome; and that, so far from being an *Atheist*, he wrote eloquently and forcibly against *Atheism*, and concluded his *Age of Reason* with the declaration that "The creation we behold is the ever-existing word of God." But the great Roosevelt cannot admit that he was ever mistaken. His motto is, "What I have said I have said." So he let the libel on Thomas Paine stand. It still stands in the last edition of the book published in 1906.

When a Christian libels a Freethinker, nothing ever brings him to his senses but the lash—and "Teddy" is notoriously thick-skinned. We daresay Roosevelt will carry those three

lies in three words to heaven (or the other place) with him. Meanwhile we may note Marilla M. Ricker's statement that "Teddy" is five feet five. That is the height of the man who calls a five feet ten man "little." But perhaps he was thinking of bulk. "Teddy" is bigger than Thomas Paine sideways.

We have found Marilla M. Ricker's article very interesting, and we congratulate her on an excellent piece of work. But there is one flaw in it which so intelligent a lady will pardon us for pointing out. She argues that Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* "made a nation," and she adds that this nation is "to-day the greatest on earth." This may be perfectly true; we are not called upon to admit it or dispute it. But the inhabitants of "the greatest nation on earth," whichever it is, would be well-advised to let the inhabitants of other nations pay them the merited compliment. And we venture to suggest that Freethinkers, above all, should not fan the fire of national vanity. Thomas Paine said, "the world is my country." In view of that fine sentence, the American lady should not have struck a provincial note.

Mr. Charles Alexander, of the *Glory Song* fame, seems to be a prime favorite of the Holy Ghost. Mr. Alexander went to China; so did the Holy Ghost. In Hong Kong there were about 6,000 ungodly Europeans, and Mr. Alexander held a special meeting for them in the theatre. Mr. Alexander appealed to them, and the Holy Ghost backed him up by "grasping that whole congregation." There are no ungodly Europeans in Hong Kong now.

"At last he became a Secularist, and practised free love." Such is a *John Bull* reviewer's account of the hero of a novel by Mr. Richard Free. And soon after the bad-tempered himself. We haven't read the novel, and are not likely to. Mr. Free may "know his East-end well," but he doesn't know Secularism well. At least, we hope so—for we like to be charitable when we can.

"Well, William James," said the class leader, "what has your soul-experience been lately? Have you had pleasant dealings with your dear Savior?" James answered: "I am sorry to say that for a whole week he hasn't spoken a single word to me. I have called and called to him every day, but he hasn't taken the least notice." "How very sad," said the leader. "How do you account for this long silence? He is very sensitive, you know; he is easily offended—have you done anything to grieve or displease him?" James, scratching his head, made this mournful reply: "Well, just exactly a week ago to-night, being specially fagged out after a day of specially worrying duties, I fell asleep without having my usual talk with him; and since then he has not been once near me, and my heart is breaking." Fancy the Savior of the world taking the huff like that, and sulking for a whole week!

Is it possible for a Christian journal to tell the truth when the opposite will serve better the interests of Christianity? It may be so, but instances are rare. Last week we referred, in "Sugar Plums," to the death of M. Sully-Prudhomme, and his reasons for permitting himself to be buried as a Christian. In the *Christian World* for September 12 there is also a reference to the eminent poet—whom it calls "a profound thinker"—which, without informing its readers of the fact of the poet being a Freethinker, concludes by saying "he calmly contemplated the prospect of death, and said: 'I have made arrangements for my death as if I were a Christian.'" Put in such a manner, the paragraph can have only one object, and that not a creditable one. In order to prove this, and also to show that M. Sully-Prudhomme died as he had lived, a Freethinker, we give the whole of the passage, of which the above sentence is a part. The statement was made to a friend, M. Raoul Aubry, and is to be found in the *Times* for September 10. Here is the passage:—

"My spiritual belief is not at all the same as the Catholic faith. Yet I have made arrangements for my death as if I were a Christian. At the moment of my death my physical frame will have become so weak that I shall be incapable of doing anything. My consciousness, lulled to sleep, will already have departed. I have near me persons whom I cherish, and who are filled with an ardent Catholic faith. I shall not have the sublime courage of causing them such pain as they would suffer were I to dispose of myself in the manner I should prefer if I were alone. Sometimes, it is true, I have said to myself that there was an example which it was necessary to give. But then I considered all the pain to those who devoted their whole lives to me, succoring my distress, and I murmured, let it be as they wish—my spirit remains free. My conscience absolves me."

One would imagine that, with so plain a statement of the reasons why a religious funeral was permitted, misrepresented



tation would be impossible. But the Christian capacity for telling or suggesting falsehood is as unconquerable a thing as there is on the face of the earth.

More of the same kind. A correspondent of the *British Weekly* writes asking that the Christian churches should combine to send efficient speakers wherever they find Secularism to be gaining ground. We have no fault to find with the request; Christians are quite justified in taking all reasonable steps to protect their faith, and Secularists are the last to object to straightforward attacks. But the correspondent, who naturally does not give his name, goes on to report a conversation between a Secularist and a Christian, which is—well, thoroughly evangelistic in style. In response to a question put, the Secularist, we are informed, said there was nothing in a man spending what he pleased on drink, so long as he went to the public-house round the corner and kept the smell away from the children. Whereupon our Christian inquired whether he would not do better to give the money to his wife, and carry out the promise he made on marrying her. And this wonderful Secularist replied, "No; he had his own business to look after."

Now here is a really remarkable Secularist, of a kind with which we must confess ourselves to be quite unacquainted. We do know Freethinkers who are not teetotallers; we also know many who are; and we venture to say that in the average Secular Society there will be found more teetotallers in proportion to numbers than in any Christian organisation or Church where teetotalism is not a condition of membership. A Secularist who openly avows that it is more in accordance with his principles to spend his money in the public-house than give it to his wife for domestic purposes is one that we should not mind meeting—he would be such a curiosity. Really one wonders what editors are thinking of when they give such rubbish the hospitality of their columns. For, after all, Secularists do not bulk very largely amongst those charged with neglecting their homes, nor even among those locked up for drunkenness. Happily, there is one good feature about even this remarkable Secularist. He did believe in keeping the smell of drink away from the children. A great many Christian drunkards have not even this saving virtue.

Rev. Canon Joseph Jonathan Dent, of Hunsingore, Wetherby, Yorks, left £34,481. Poor Christite.

A business like that of the aforesaid poor Christite is not going to be given up in a hurry. We are not surprised, therefore, to see a statement in that veracious and profound publication, the *Daily Express*, that Egyptologists have found an inscription telling how the Nile failed to rise for seven years in succession, and how a long and terrible famine was the result. This is said to "confirm the famous Bible story" of Joseph the dreamer. Well, drowning men catch at straws, and a dying Church will clutch at anything to stave off the day of judgment. On the face of it, the story of the Nile not rising for seven years is perfectly incredible; but, even if it were true, it would not prove the story of Joseph the dreamer. It would only prove that the Jewish writers knew of the wonderful incident in Egypt—which, if it happened, would be known far and wide and never forgotten.

The Rev. A. J. Waldron himself, or one of his fluent romantic friends in the Christian ministry, must have written or inspired three paragraphs in last week's *M. A. P.* Mr. Waldron is represented as a "magnificent preacher," a man of "immense originality," and the "most effective speaker the Church of England at present possesses." This will be news to a good many Churchmen, but as it concerns them more than it does us we shall leave them to look after it. But when Mr. Waldron is described as "the most powerful and accomplished foe unbelievers have," we feel entitled to indulge in a satirical smile. The description does not merit any further criticism.

Mr. Waldron, we are told, has been the victor of "many a hard-fought and sometimes even a bloody field"—for "when he tackles a blasphemer he hits hard" and "a free fight has more than once followed upon his fiery denunciation of a foul-mouthed blackguard." He has "had to use his fists—and he can use them." Perhaps so. But the only unbeliever we ever heard of his attacking was a frail, elderly man who was selling the *Freethinker* in the street; and on that occasion he was supported by several clergymen and "a howling mob" of his own followers.

Several Freethinkers who are not elderly or frail would have been rather pleased to give the "sturdy, muscular"

Mr. Waldron an opportunity of demonstrating his pugilistic prowess a little more courageously. No doubt his selecting that frail, elderly man was a mark of his "immense originality."

We are told that Mr. Waldron was educated at Oxford University, that he "early came under the influence of Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Annie Besant," that "at one time there was probably no greater sceptic in England," that he "could find no real happiness in scepticism," and that "he made one of his first appearances as a public speaker as the opponent of Bradlaugh." Thus is history written! Christian history, we mean.

The first date given in Mr. Waldron's wonderful career is 1899 (nine years after Bradlaugh's death!) when he was ordained deacon by Dr. Talbot. Mr. Waldron always does his best to destroy the traces of his Christian activity before he joined the Church of England. Why doesn't he state what he was doing in the Lord's vineyard prior to 1899? Must it be done for him?

The Rev. Peter Welsch, of the Bristol Wesleyan Mission, has a very poor opinion of the hearts of the people of East Ham. Preaching at the Central Hall a few Sundays ago, he said: "If it were possible to take a photograph of your heart, to develop and expose it," you would be so frightened at its blackness and ugliness that "you would be constrained to cry out, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'" We wonder how the congregation took the insult, or whether the reverend slanderer escaped with his life.

One would hardly expect subtlety in *Plain Truth*, the monthly organ of the late Mr. Aked's chapel at Liverpool. No, no; that's wrong. We mean the late chapel at Liverpool of the Rev. Mr. Aked. But we scarcely expected to encounter such dense dullness. We see it stated that the man in the street is quite wrong in fancying that Mr. John Morley is an Atheist. Two proofs of this are offered. The first is that "Mr. Aked told Mr. Morley to his face just before the outbreak of the South African War that he was the only Christian left." That settles it. But the second proof makes assurance doubly sure. One of Mr. Morley's admirers, during his Chief Secretaryship for Ireland, was the late Mr. W. S. Caine. Mr. Caine was a pious Christian, and, in answering his congratulatory private letter, Mr. Morley wrote: "After prayer comes praise. Pray for me, as I am sure you do, in this tangled piece of business." How the right honorable would have smiled if he could have foreseen that this friendly bit of correspondence would some day be printed, and that his douce adaptation to Mr. Caine's attitude of mind would be cited in proof that he shared Mr. Caine's religious opinions! Only a Christian is equal to these things.

One day last week—we could not deal with it at the time—the *Tribune* devoted a column to the letters that Shelley wrote from June, 1811, to June, 1812, to Miss Hitchener. This collection of letters has now fallen as a gift to the British Museum. Shelley was less than nineteen at the date of the first letter, and less than twenty at the date of the last. What his opinions were then is naturally not a matter of infinite importance. We know, however, that he was an Atheist; and we also know, as Trelawny honestly insists, that he never ceased to be an Atheist during the great period of his poetical productions, from March, 1818, when he left England for ever, to July, 1822, when the waves stilled the "heart of hearts" for ever in the Bay of Spezzia. A period of four years and three months, during which he poured forth an astonishing succession of masterpieces. He was an Atheist all that time; and this is vastly more important than whether he was an Atheist or not in 1811-12. But, as a matter of fact, he was always an Atheist; and the *Tribune*, in thinking otherwise, is talking nonsense.

"One thing appears clearly in the [Hitchener] letters," the *Tribune* says, "and that is that while Shelley persisted, after his Oxford experience, in his opposition to formal religions of all kinds, he was not an Atheist, for he declares explicitly his belief in God and is enthusiastic on the subject of the immortality of the soul." Now it would be odd if this were true; for Shelley was expelled from Oxford for writing a pamphlet on Atheism only three months before these Hitchener letters begin, and he was an Atheist when he published *Queen Mab* in 1813. The *Tribune* asks us to believe, therefore, that Shelley reverted to Theism for some time between June, 1811, and June, 1812. Well, what is the evidence? All the *Tribune* adduces is a passage of a letter to Miss Hitchener in which Shelley says: "I think I can prove to you that our God is the same." But this may simply mean—and probably did mean—for Shelley was a



great proselytiser at that age—that he wanted to convince the lady that her Theism and his Atheism were very much alike at bottom. He did sometimes use the word God, as some Ethicists and Positivists do now, without intending to express a belief in a personal deity. Perhaps we had better give the whole paragraph in which the passage in question occurs:—

"I have much to talk to you of: Innate Passions, God, Christianity, etc., when we meet. Would not 'coexistent with our organization' be a more correct phrase for passions than innate? I think I can prove to you that our God is the same. If every day takes from the fervor of my opposition to Christianity, it adds to its system and determinedness, it adds to the perfect and full conviction I feel of its falsehood and mischief."

The whole tone and temper of the context appears to us to be dead against the *Tribune's* assumption.

Canon Scott-Holland grants that London is cruel, heartless, and godless, and yet claims that the Master-Builder of it is God. What a humiliating confession—so far as God is concerned. "Here in London," says the reverend gentleman, "He is at work laying stone to stone. There is a fair city coming together in the silence behind the noise." That is good news, but where is that fair city? Show it unto us, and it will suffice us. Alas, if God is the builder of London, we are very sorry for him, for he will never get another job!

The Salvation Army published the *Social Gazette*, and in the number dated September 7 it is stated, in opposition to Trade Union critics, that there is "an abundant supply of good food" at the Hanbury-street workshop. And how does the reader think this is proved? By printing the official bill of fare. There must be a subtle humorist on the *Social Gazette* staff.

Rev. D. J. Hiley, of Broadmead Baptist Chapel, Bristol, has accepted a "call" to succeed the Rev. Archibald Brown, at Chatsworth-road Chapel, London—that gentleman having accepted a "call" to become co-pastor with the Rev. Thomas Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Mr. Hiley's announcement to his congregation that he was going is reported in the *Western Daily Press*. It was at the end of his morning sermon on the second Sunday in September. In a voice broken with emotion, he declared that he had been praying about the "call" to London for two months, and he felt sure it was from the Lord. Here are some of the reverend gentleman's very words:—

"I have tried to put myself absolutely, as far as I could, at the disposal of God's Spirit, so that God might register His mind in mine, and on my soul and on my heart, and as a result of it all, I believe it is the will of the Great Head of the Church that my ministry should close in this beloved church. I know that this will cause you—all of you, I believe—a great and sharp pain. It gives me pain. My heart grieves at the very core. It may be contrary to the judgment of nearly every one of you. I rather think it is. But I believe the will of God for me is that I should go hence, and can do no other, so help me, God."

Thus the reverend gentleman takes up his heavy cross, and carries it, in submission to the divine will. But the exact weight of the cross cannot be determined without a knowledge of the conditions. And amongst them is the stipend. It would be interesting to know the figures.

Professor C. A. Windle, of Queen's College, Cork, addressing the Catholic Truth Society's Conference, said that a scientific hypothesis was not a scientific truth. We reply that he was simply talking nonsense. He couldn't have dared to talk in that way to a scientific assembly. Professor Windle (it looks as though a letter had got dropped out of his name) also said that, "Theories come and go, but God goes on for ever." Well, assertion can be answered by assertion; and we venture to say that the day is coming when God will go off for ever.

The *Christian World* notes that, at a recent meeting of the Southwark Guardians, a member "wanted to know why an advertisement for a ward nurse had not been inserted in the *Freethinker* as well as in the *Christian World*." The Guardian addressed replied that, "He really could not say, except that it had been the practice for years. The paper was found to be a good advertising medium for such nurses." Another Guardian inquired, "Do you think you could get the people we want from the people who read the *Freethinker*?" Certainly they could not, if they want *pious* nurses, as is generally the case. Skill, courage, and honesty all take back seats as against religious qualifications.

Ellesmere Port Primitive Methodist Church issues a *Monthly Visitor*, in the September number of which there is

an ancient story (date 1753) of a woman named Ruth Pearce who "wished she might drop down dead" in support of a lie, and was killed by God on the very spot. We don't wish to dispute it; 1753 is too far behind for satisfactory investigation. What we wish to say is that lots of liars have said the same thing since with perfect impunity.

The *London City Mission Magazine* for September opens with an article on "The Spiritual Needs of Woolwich and Plumstead," which includes some reports by Mr. Hall, the missionary recently at work amongst the Royal Horse Artillery. This gentleman indulges in the usual brag of how he discomfits "infidels" in argument, and how his victories excite their anger. He also tells the customary lies about the "infidels" using "filthy language." But even a man of this kind tells the truth sometimes, and we may believe him when he says that "Perhaps the most distressing cloud of all has been the somewhat sudden and rapid appearance of Atheism amongst some of the soldiers." That distressing cloud is likely to grow bigger and heavier.

A similar wail comes from "the missionary located in Burrage Town," a part of Woolwich. He admits that Atheism has "obtained considerable attention and favor," and also that "Freethought lectures have been delivered on Sunday mornings to large audiences, which is quite a new experience."

An American professor, writing to a veteran friend of ours in England, says that Philadelphia is now again controlled by the "Gang" of Roman Catholics, which has held the city in thrall, with slight intervals, for eighteen years. "This was accomplished," he says, "by means of the vast voting power of the 390,000 Roman Catholics from Italy, Poland, etc., who have settled in Philadelphia and who vote solid as they are directed by the Roman Catholic cardinal. Thus the regular Democrats and Republicans are both overruled by the vast slump vote, and this city of 1,375,000 inhabitants is utterly in the grasp of the Jesuits, whose only policy is to rob all other people. Were the Protestants united, as the Catholics are, they might be on top; but they are hopelessly split, so we are ruled and robbed by Rome. Indeed, I am convinced that this power of Jesuitism is the real curse of all our U.S. cities and of all politics here, and it is one of the biggest evils that this civilisation has to grapple with in the near future."

Girard College is also dominated by the Roman Catholic "Gang," and only a small part of the trust-fund income goes to its maintenance. Only such teachers are appointed as are agreeable to the Roman Catholics, and the orphan boys selected are those of Roman Catholic parentage. Girard's own regulations cannot even be inquired into, much less enforced. "Ministers" are excluded, according to the terms of his will; but this only means Protestant ministers now, and Catholic priests and nuns pass freely in and out of the enclosure, dressed in ordinary clothes. Thus the Girard College is "serving a purpose diametrically opposed to the desires" of its founder, who wished it to be kept entirely secular. Altogether, it is a splendid object-lesson in the value of Christian "honor."

Here are a couple of small fry gone to the great frying-pan. Rev. John George Derrick, of Cheltenham, left £10,334 12s. 5d.—and the Rev. Robert Marks, of the Vicarage, Norton, Gloucester, left £4,615 0s. 8d.

Exeter Bible Christians have insured their minister, the Rev. M. J. Lark, under the Workmen's Compensation Act. What a lark! This is Christianity up to date. Prayer is answered, but it pays to "hodge."

The Religious Tract and Book Society of Scotland (what-ever it is) dates from 99 George-street, Edinburgh. One of its publications—it may be the only one, for all we know—is a pamphlet by John (not Sandy) Macpherson, who is in all probability a Caledonian product, and certainly he has the national taste for bad theology and windy metaphysics. He offers (for twopence) what he evidently considers a triumphant refutation of the Evolution theory and vindication of "The Bible Account of the Origin of Man." And to do all this in a few pages requires a considerable amount of genius. But we, for our part, don't hold that Macpherson has succeeded. His pamphlet, to speak plainly, seems to us trash. We give him credit, however, for a gleam of penetration and a modicum of honesty. "If the Bible account is true," he says, "the theory of evolution must be false." That's right, anyhow.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

September 29, Stratford Town Hall.  
 October 6, Glasgow; 13, Manchester; 20, South Shields; 27, Leicester.  
 November 3, Stanley Hall, London; 10, Liverpool; 17, Birmingham; 24, Stanley Hall, London.

**To Correspondents.**

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—September 22, Stratford Town Hall; 29 (morning), Woolwich; (evening) Parliament Hill. October 6, West Ham; 13, Aberdare; 27, Glasgow. November 3, West Ham; 10, Stanley Hall, London. December 1, Birmingham.

F. HITCHIN-KEMP.—We don't see the utility of a formulation of "G. B. S.'s" beliefs by another person. His books are accessible, and it is his fault if they are not intelligible; though, for our part, we don't find any particular difficulty in understanding them.

G. F. DUPLAY.—We did not "extend Mr. Davidson's text"—at least, in the direction you indicate. His view is that man is matter, from beginning to end. When you say that "unconscious matter cannot become conscious matter," you are begging the question with a personal dictum. Nor does Mr. Davidson affirm, any more than we do, that man is the only conscious product of nature. Obviously many other products of nature are conscious, and we know not how far down the scale of existence it may go. But what Mr. Davidson said was, that man was the Universe become conscious and self-conscious. You have overlooked the second clause.

A. T. LOVETT.—Mr. Bertram Dobell, of Charing Cross-road, London, W.C., publishes James Thomson's masterpiece, *The City of Dreadful Night*, with a considerable selection of his next best work, in a neat volume at 3s. 6d. The complete poems are published, also by Mr. Dobell, in two volumes at 12s. We have often thought of collecting our own articles on Thomson in a small volume, with added biographical and critical matter; but we should have to find an outside publisher for it.

G. F. COWAN.—We never heard of the noble Van der Kemp before. It is probably all rubbish. Glad to hear we have several readers at Port Elizabeth.

THE TOUZEAU PARRIS FUND.—Seventh *Freethinker* List:—W. P. Adamson, 2s. 6d.; J. H., 2s. 6d.; R. Wood, 2s. 6d.; A. Lamont, 2s.; R. Taylor, 5s.; J. Ogden, 6d.; J. H. S., 1s.; J. W. T., 2s. 6d.; N. S. S. Executive, £5.  
*Per E. M. Vance*:—S. H. Munns, £1 1s.; E. Harrison, 2s.

J. BROOK.—We did not see it last week, so we missed the statement that "The ethics of Socialism are identical with Christianity." Strange! As you say. Thanks for cuttings.

W. P. BALL.—Always pleased to see your writing on the envelope.

HAROLD ELLIOT.—Better have them distributed nearer home—say through the Manchester Branch. Thanks.

GEORGE JACOB.—The object of our sending a man into the streets to sell the *Freethinker* is not to supply old customers but to find new ones. We cannot do more than that at present. Our means are too limited.

J. F. C. FULLER.—No room this week, anyhow.

A. LAMONT.—Pleased you are "still enjoying the *Freethinker*."

W. HUNT.—All's well that ends well.

A. R. HARTLEY.—It is impossible to say whether Freethought propaganda will reach your locality in the near future, but it will be possible to throw more activity into the propaganda generally, so you need not be altogether without hope.

L. W.—Never believe a Christian Evidence lecturer when he pretends to be reading from the *Freethinker*. Men of that ilk have generally lost any capacity for truthfulness that they ever had. For some time past, Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, has been trying to bring the Christian Evidence Society to book for allowing its lecturers to declare that the N. S. S. has a hymn-book containing a song in praise of drinking whisky; and a more slippery set of scoundrels when they are asked for "proofs" can hardly be imagined.

J. CHAMBERS.—Thanks for cuttings.

F. R. THEAKSTONE.—No room this week; in our next.

F. TREMLETT.—Shall be sent. Thanks.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Yes, there have been immense strides during the past fifty years, as you say. Thanks for good wishes. Glad to have your cuttings.

P. W. M.—Already overset this week.

J. BLUNDELL.—Next week.

H. E. DOBSON points out that John Morley's *Compromise* is included in the collected edition of his works (Eversley Series), published by Macmillan at 4s. per vol.

G. ROLEFFS.—Cuttings are welcome.

J. W. T.—You will see that Mr. Foote is paying Liverpool another visit in November. Pleased to hear that, although you got into trouble for reading the *Freethinker*, you liked it more and more, and now feel uneasy till you get it.

THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—C. A. Felton, 1s. 6d.; S. H. Munns, 5s.

JAMES NEATE.—Thanks for the good news.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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

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

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SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

**Sugar Plums.**

Mr. Foote begins the new season next Sunday (Sept. 29) with a lecture (the last of the course) at the Stratford Town Hall. His subject is a striking one—"The Paradise of Fools."

The very fine weather a little interfered with Mr. Lloyd's audience at the Stratford Town Hall on Sunday evening. It was a very good audience in the circumstances, and Mr. Lloyd was in excellent form. His lecture was much appreciated. Mr. Cohen delivers the second lecture of the course this evening (Sept. 22), and the meeting will no doubt show an improvement, especially if the local "saints" do some advertising on their own account.

The world *does* move. The Bethnal Green Board of Guardians has passed a resolution in favor of Secular Education. Dr. Farebrother, who moved the inclusion of the word "secular," is a well-known, outspoken medical man. Most of the other members are Church or Chapel workers. It must be a dreadful blow for poor old George Noakes, the Chairman, whose many years' mission-work has won him the *sobriquet* of the Bishop of Whitechapel.

A few Southend-on-Sea "saints" are going to try to form an active Branch of the N. S. S. For this purpose there will be a meeting this evening (Sept. 22) at Mr. Sykes's, the veteran advanced newsagent, corner of West-road, Prittlewell, from 7 to 8 o'clock.

The *Aberdare Leader* of September 14 gave a good deal of space to the visit of Mr. Wishart on behalf of the National Secular Society. Mr. Wishart addressed "a fairly large crowd" in Victoria-square, and answered questions after his lecture. One auditor asked him, "When and where did you pay your Trade Union subscription last?" We are told that "this caused considerable laughter," but "Mr. Wishart promptly gave the desired information." The next night's lecture at Black Lion-square was also followed by several questions. A debating group lingered on the spot, and some Salvationists came up and argued with some of the Secularists. A female Salvationist reproved a Secularist for knowing too much. "You don't understand my old man, I am sure," she said. "I have slept with him thirty-four years, and I don't know him yet." "The Salvationists," the *Leader* said, "seemed to enter into the controversy with great vigor, but their earnestness seemed to lose its effect in the laughter and levity which was introduced." One little Christian convulsed his auditors by saying that "London is fast becoming a continental city." The next night there was an uproar, and if the meeting had not been closed to make room for the I. L. P. meeting at the same spot "the chaos would probably have developed into a violent riot"—which shows that South Wales wants educating in the principles of free discussion. Mr. Bibbings, of the I. L. P., while disclaiming all connection with Mr. Wishart, expressed his "regret that any public speaker should not be allowed perfect freedom of speech"—and the regret does him credit. Mr. Bibbings is a Christian, and a debate between him and Mr. Wishart is being arranged to take place at Aberdare in November.



Mr. Wishart is working Mountain Ash and probably Cardiff this week. Possibly he will be sent on to Leeds afterwards, and it may also be possible for him to visit Nottingham and Northampton before the weather gets too cold for open-air meetings.

Freethinkers at Plymouth, who are willing to co-operate in forming an active Branch of the N. S. S., with a view to carrying on a Freethought propaganda in the Three Towns, are requested to write to the N. S. S. general secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

The Brixton Independent Labor Party has unanimously passed the following resolution: "That in view of the serious charges of sweating brought against the Salvation Army at the Trades Union Congress at Bath this meeting, whilst acknowledging the disinterestedness and devotion of many of the rank-and-file of the Army, is of opinion that it is highly desirable that a public inquiry should be held to examine thoroughly the working of the various 'Social' establishments controlled by the Salvation Army."

General Booth lets the cat out of the bag sometimes. Speaking on Commissioner Booth-Tucker's visit to India, he said that this gentleman would have under him 2,000 officers, nineteen of whom were natives. We see the actual proportion of native and British officers now. The Salvation Army in India is just a branch of the British occupation.

Rev. Professor Peake, president of the Manchester and Salford Sunday School Union, has just been telling that body that, although the Bible is such a blessed book, the "difficulties that lie in the way of statesmen in meeting the objections of this side and that, may lead to the teaching of the Bible being driven out of the schools altogether." These reverend gentlemen begin to see that Secular Education is inevitable. And we are glad.

Victor Hugo's *Intellectual Autobiography* has just been published by Funk and Wagnalls, the translator and editor being Mr. L. O'Rourke. We have not had time to read it yet, but we note an interesting extract in the *Daily News* review. Hugo must have known a good many Atheists, but, being a fervid Theist himself, he pooh-poohed Atheism. A young Atheist named Anatole Leray visited Hugo in 1852. He had devoted himself—he, who had been a priest—to the task of "extirpating from the human mind every species of the supernatural." "We left each other," Hugo says, "coldly." But there was a sequel. The young Atheist subsequently lost his life in trying to save the life of others. A vessel was wrecked, and Anatole Leray was amongst the saved. And this is how he was lost again:—

"A half-wrecked boat had remained in the surge and was appearing and disappearing in the waves: three women clung to it despairingly. The sea was at the height of its fury; no swimmer even among the hardiest of the sailors dared to risk himself. They kept their eyes fixed on their dripping garments. Anatole Leray flung himself into the surf. He struggled hard and had the satisfaction of bringing one of the women to shore. He dashed in a second time and rescued another. He was worn out with fatigue, torn, bloody. They cried out to him: 'Enough! enough!' 'What!' said he, 'there is still another.' And he flung himself a third time into the sea.

He never reappeared."

Those wicked Atheists!

Some hitherto unpublished letters of Mazzini have just appeared in the *Nuova Antologia*. They were addressed to a Russian lady grieving for the loss of her two children. Mazzini affirms in these letters what is plain enough in his writings, that he believed in God and in a future life; but he makes an explicit repudiation of the orthodox faith of Europe. "As I have told you," he says, "I am not a Christian. My God has almost nothing in common with the God of Christian dogma."

Forty-nine new members were enrolled at the last Executive meeting of the National Secular Society, and two new Branches were authorised at Bristol and Aberdare.

I say: Fear not! Life still  
Leaves human effort scope.  
But, since life teems with ill,  
Nurse no extravagant hope;

Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then despair!

—Matthew Arnold.

## Ingersoll and His Times.—II.

BY DR. JOHN EMERSON ROBERTS,

Minister of the Church of This World, in Kansas City.

(Continued from p. 578.)

THEN in the new world was night. Hideous visions came and went. The darkness was filled with terrors. The fiends of fear haunted the cradle and hovered about the grave. Children waking in the night shuddered lest they had died and waked up in hell, and fell back to sleep again and fitful dreams. Within the Church insanity bred, hope despaired, the heart of pity turned to stone, reason lay prostrate in the dust, and above the darkness, God grasping a sword athirst for slaughter.

Sermons, measured by the hour, depicted the fate of sinners in the hands of an angry God. Hymns in doleful cadence detailed the work of the worm that dieth not.

Men and women were regarded as firewood. The earth was a vast drying kiln in which they were being seasoned for hell. Every cradle was rocked on the edge of the abyss.

All nature was vile, everything was impure. The tear of pity, the beauty of love, the holiness of sacrifice, devotion, honor, loyalty of friendship, all were cursed with the curse.

The smoke of the fire that is not quenched, ascended. Nearer and nearer in the gloom crept the horizon. One by one in the darkness the stars faded from the sky, and in that ineffable night the shuddering people wept and prayed.

Religion, with the dagger of superstition, had assassinated reason.

Let us be just to the past. Human thought is a strange thing. We cannot tell its origin, explain its processes, nor account for its conclusions. Not until the mystery of man is a mystery no longer shall we know how the orthodox dogmas could have originated, much less how they could have been believed.

It passes understanding that men could compile a book—of the earth earthy—equal and no more to the genius of the times that produced it—written through and through with the barbarities of the ages from which it came—soiled with their uncleanness, stained with their cruelties—faithfully reflecting their ignorance, their superstitions, and their savagery—their hopes, their ideals, and their dreams—a truly human book—at times as good as the best, and often as bad as the worst—and say God wrote it and damned be he who says he did not.

It passes understanding that men could say God had given the keys of the eternal destinies of the race to an agent who resides in Italy, and keeps every country on the map under tribute.

It passes understanding that men could believe God calls preachers and that their business is more sacred than that of men upon whose industry, like parasites, they fatten and thrive.

It passes understanding that men could imagine an Infinite Being filling an eternal torture-chamber with human souls and yet call that Being good.

It cannot be explained how the mind of man ever imagined the Infinite swaddled as a babe or hanging dead upon a gibbet.

Reason has no answer—analysis gives no clue—conjecture no guess—imagination is baffled, and love despairs in the presence of one who can worship such a God, or who aspires to take up a homestead in the country where his kingdom is said to have no end.

Yet these things were all believed, and believed by multitudes of the noblest and best.

Let us be just to the past. It may be that religion is a disease. We may sometime discover that faith and insanity are alike mental disorders. Prayer may be allied to locomotor ataxia. Conversion be a kind of fever, usually intermittent. Presbyterianism may be due to a germ. The Baptist germ, like typhoid, may be found in water.



It is certain that, in the olden times, the saints were sickly—as a rule filthy—and that preachers, as a general thing, were pale and thin. Health and spirituality were not on speaking terms. Piety and consumption slept in the same bed.

No artist has represented Christ as in any sense strong or robust. The canvas shows him emaciated, wan, and with an air of weariness and exhaustion. He does not look as though he could save anyone.

We know that Jonathan Edwards was of a frail, weak body. We know that Pascal was partially paralysed and at times insane. We know that Calvin was a life-long sufferer from asthma, dyspepsia, gall-stone, and the gout; and that Saint Paul was squint-eyed, bow-legged, and averse to the society of women.

Let us be just to the past. Religion may be a disease. Creeds and dogmas may be only the pock-marks. Or, it may be that in evolution is to be found the explanation of orthodoxy.

We know that the present is the child of all the past, that wings were once fins, feathers were scales. Things that soar and sing once crawled in yeasting bog and fen. Nature struggles to improve. Two forces matched preserve the past and lead forth the future. The old, ever reluctant, yields to the new; and what has been, struggles eternally to re-utter itself in what is becoming and is to be. The human species evolved from the brute.

The physical outstripped the mental growth. When man in bodystood erect his mind still went on all-fours. The jungle gloomed around him. The instincts of a distant past were yet strong upon him. Vague recollections, fitful hints, half-remembered things hovered on the horizon of consciousness. Out of the abyss arose muffled memories of the den, the lair, the stealthy search for prey. Within the curious "walls and bastions of his brain," faint and dim as echo's echo, came again the hyena's howl, the fanged serpent's hiss, the fierce joy of the tiger when the crooked daggers of his claws "were sheathed in quivering flesh. Once more he prowled in the forest depths, haunting the track of the defenceless, or, crouching, lay in wait. The past, that which he had been, was over him like a spell. The wilder-ness was arrayed against progress. The beast was grappling with the man; and of that conflict, sinister and terrible, savagery for the time triumphant, orthodoxy was born. Let us be just to the past.

It may be that man's ancestry in the lairs of wild beasts presupposed the five points of Calvinism:—

That the iron boot was a lineal descendant of the boa constrictor.

That the sword in the hands of the Church was the reversion to the teeth in the tiger's jaw.

That many of the ceremonies supposed to be solemn and essential were in reality reminiscences of the monkey's artless pranks.

And that all the savagery of beasts that thirst for blood, all the fierceness and ferocity of claw and venomous fang, all that was cruel, heartless reptilian, from the first throb of life upon the globe until the dawn of reason's day, found complete and perfect expression in the dogma of endless hell.

Let us be just to the past.

Nothing seemed equal to the task of illuminating that darkness. Against those ramparts, legion-guarded, every attack had been futile.

The people were infatuated with their slavery. They thought their chains sacred. They fought to defend those who put fetters on their brains.

They called him an enemy who sought to shatter superstitions. They turned upon those who would make them free. With the old cry, "Crucify him!" they gathered in mobs around every man found facing towards the dawn.

It was said the gates of hell should not prevail against the Church. It was true; they did not. The gates of hell were inside the Church. The Church was the guardian of the gates of hell.

There had been great men. Men with reason that revolted, and consciences that abhorred the mental

bondage of their fellow men. Some, seeing the hopeless odds, remained silent. Such were Jefferson and Franklin. Others, like Thomas Paine, went up alone to do battle for humanity, and fell pierced by a thousand shafts of slander, malice, and Christian hatred.

Upon the altars of the Church were forged and fashioned falsehoods, and to lie about the dead became one of the regular functions of the men of God.

A new sect arose, senseless enough to remain substantially orthodox, but good enough to deny the doctrine of an endless hell. All other sects were against them. They were denounced. They made no headway, thus proving that, as the ancient Jew preferred Jerusalem, so the modern Christian preferred hell above his chief joy. He was wedded to the worm. Later came the gentle Channing, the amiable Freeman Clarke, and the mild-mannered Unitarians. Orthodoxy had put on evening dress, but the devils had not been cast out. The Unitarians made no impression. While they read essays; and indited poetry, the devils laughed and applauded.

Theodore Parker went out from the ice-palace of Unitarianism, and, clothed as with garments of fire, went up against the citadel of superstition. But the time was not yet. Then he went abroad for his health. The Young Men's Christian Association of Boston met daily and prayed that Theodore Parker might never return. In Florence, Italy, he fell sick, and died. Then the Young Men's Christian Assassins thanked God that he had heard and answered their prayer.

The situation could not have been more hopeless. Arrogant with wealth, proud with respectability, defended by authority, pandered to by the press, advocated by the intelligent, declaimed for by the ignorant, and feared by all, the Church seemed passing to universal dominion and humanity to universal night. Reason was in eclipse. The shadows of midnight filled the sky. But the unslumbering forces were hidden in that shadow.

The time was hastening. On the dial of the ages the index was approaching the fateful hour. The darkness was a womb from which a genius was to be born. Destiny had not forgotten the world. The earth in her orbit was swinging towards the morning.

Above that chaos, and from out that night, came the primal ancient mandate, "Let there be light," and there was—Ingersoll.

There is no accounting for genius. Before its coming no prophetic vision can discern its approach. After its arrival, its having come cannot be explained. It seems to have no ancestors, just as it has no successors or descendants. It is as though Destiny were jealous of her chosen ones—preparing them in obscurity, fashioning them in secret, to dower the world with sudden and unexpected riches. Thus came Shakespeare, Lincoln, Ingersoll. One thing Destiny is particular about. One thing she insists upon. It is that the immortals shall issue from the lowly, from real folks, from the genuine, from natural people. She likes wood with the bark on. She hates varnish, and holds vengeer in utter abhorrence. She conspires with men and women who have struggled with the storm, bowed to the tempest—felt the sting of winter's cold, the ardor of summer's heat—who have known the cling and clasp of rain, the joyous wind, the thousand-throated dawn, and the solemn hush of dusk—men and women who live much out-of-doors, who are acquainted with the mysterious night, with forest paths and springs and winding streams—above all, with men and women who work and love together. Out from the city's streets of eternal day—past the mansion and the palace—she goes to the humble home, where night brings rest and the morning toil, and both are glorified by love. There Destiny keeps her vigils, and leads forth the advent of genius.

We are informed by Most Holy Writ that a long while after God had made man he came back to the earth and took an inventory. He found the business in such bad shape that "he repented him that he



had made man." To atone for his mistake he sent a flood and drowned all but eight persons. How do we know but the Lord came back the second time to see how things were going on, and, finding the world so full of bad theology, "raised up" Ingersoll to overwhelm it as with a flood? This view has at least two strong presumptions in its favor. In the first place, it shows that the Lord has become more humane—more civilised. He employs the reasoning faculties, and uses persuasion instead of force and fear; and, in the second place, it shows that he has become more effective in accomplishing his purposes; for, while the flood left eight of the old stock to carry on the wickedness of the world, Ingersoll did not leave a vestige of the old theology.

Genius has the quality of being universal. It extends and amplifies its possessor. He transcends. He becomes inclusive. With a few notes the composer utters all the sounds that echo in the heart of man—all sobs of grief and sighs of longing, all cries of terror and wailings of despair—all shouts of victory, all curses of defeat, and all discordant mutterings of malice, foiled and baffled hate. He gives a tongue to every passion—repeats the laughter of every joy, and tells again to raptured hearts the tender story of whispered love. Such music is not provincial, nor national. It knows no race, no clime. It is elemental—that is, universal. In any field, of music, painting, sculpture, or speech, he is the genius who interprets us to ourselves. He is voice for the dumb, eyes for the blind. He hears for the deaf. He is strength for the weak, and for the timid and fearful he is courage and high resolve. He justifies men to themselves. It is, in this sense, that Mr. Ingersoll was a universal man. He belongs exclusively to none, because he belongs to all. Not to Peoria, or Washington, or New York, but to all the cities, to the towns, to the hamlets, and wayside homes—to all the states beneath the flag, and to the states beyond the seas. He worked with parties, but he was ampler than they. He was the pride and glory of Freethinkers, but he was also more. He was a citizen of the Republic of mind—of the democracy of intellect. In the empire of reason he wore the purple robe of power.

In order to fittingly judge of the magnitude of his task, to understand the vehemence of his motive, and to justly measure the vastness of his achievement, we must look less closely at the man and more directly at the genius. We must, for the moment, disenchant ourselves of the charm of his personality and the fascination of his intimacies. We must see him not as related to us, but as related to all. It was not our cause but humanity's that he championed. It is not we but the world that he enriched.

The man of talent may choose his work. Taking account of his abilities, he may estimate their probable worth in possible vocations. He may compare and calculate. He may consult his tastes and take counsel of his ambitions and desires. He then, after due deliberations, and in accordance with his best judgment, makes an investment of himself in the market of the world.

The genius has no choice. He, too, may have desires. They must be put away. He may have ambitions. They must be nailed to the cross. Genius is mandatory and inexorable. Before it all ways are closed, all ways but one. All paths, save one alone, are guarded by the angel with the sword of fire. In that must he go. He is impelled by a force resistless and austere. Genius is compulsion. It is the fateful mandate. It is the omnific "thou shalt."

Mr. Ingersoll did not choose; he could not. His work was made ready for him; his task prepared. Destiny had dowered him above all of his generation, fanned to fiercest flame within his breast the fires of indignation, and laden him with "that most fearful of all responsibilities, a conscience informed and illuminated."

He looked and saw fetters on the brain of men, the fiends of fear within their heart. He saw horror crouched upon the coffin of the dead, the serpent of

superstition coiled in the cradle of the babe. He saw the priest putting out the eyes of reason and putting poison in the heart of joy. He saw the smoke curl from the cruel pit, and heard the laughter of the saints in the heartless heaven of the saved. He saw hypocrisy at the altar making merchandise of grief and fear. He saw a monster in the skies called God, and the multitude in terror upon their knees, "Then he cried out. That cry will emancipate mankind."

The Church was an arsenal supplying ignorance with weapons to wound the living, and falsehoods with which to slander the dead.

Our religion had come to us cumbered with the mistakes and follies of the past—stained with its superstitions—brutalised with its bigotry—envenomed with its hatreds—and the avowed and open foe of reason and common sense. Science had enlightened the world. The Church by choice remained in intellectual darkness. Civilisation had made conspicuous progress. Theology remained barbaric. The earth's word was amelioration—the word of the Church was hell and damnation. Human society was facing toward the east—the glow of dawn was on its face. The Church was facing toward the past. The Church suspected science. The altar feared the light. The bat was in the belfry. The lark was in the sky.

Then this genius with divine audacity—this genius standing alone, standing "erect in the midst of a kneeling universe," arraigned the priest in the name of justice—religion in the name of reason, and in the name of a civilised humanity demanded the abdication of an uncivilised God.

In that attitude of indignation and defiance the man was more than man. He was the heart, the brain, the conscience of the age, the heart that had been betrayed and bereft, the brain that had been terrorised and enslaved, the conscience that had been outraged and polluted. That cry that startled the world, that shook every Church upon its foundations, that filled all the timid with terror, and every hypocrite with rage—that cry was the voice of humanity. It was not Ingersoll the man. It was mankind as Ingersoll. He was the voice of *one*, but that one was universal man.

Upon him, as upon a great and perfect instrument, tuned to the best and tenderest the heart can hope or feel—to the noblest the soul can dare or dream—to the sanest the reason can comprehend—Destiny struck the anthem of the future. He was the challenge of civilisation to savagery, of reason to superstition, of the coming morning to envious night.

(To be concluded.)

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON SEPT. 12.  
The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. J. Barry, R. Brooks, C. Bowman, C. Cohen, E. Charlton, W. Davoy, W. Leat, J. Marshall, Dr. Nichols, J. Neate, C. Quinton, V. Roger, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, H. Silverstion, T. Thurlow, F. Wood, E. Woodward, and the Secretary.

The minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed. The monthly cash statement read and adopted. The President reported upon Mr. Wishart's visit to Bristol and to Aberdare, as arranged by him. The Executive heartily endorsed his action, and left future arrangements in his hands. As an outcome of this effort permission was requested, and granted, for the formation of new Branches in both towns. Forty-nine new members were received for the various Branches.

The Secretary reported successful Demonstrations at Victoria Park and Parliament Hill, and regretted that, in consequence of the indoor lecture work, it would be impossible to arrange others this season. The Touzoau Parris Fund was discussed, and it was resolved—

"That the sum of £5 be voted to the Fund now being raised in the *Freethinker*, in special recognition of Mr. Parris's services to the movement at the time of Bradlaugh's parliamentary struggle."

Several minor business matters were discussed before the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*



Colonel Ingersoll's Loan.

"I PRESUME every prominent man with a moderate amount of wealth is pestered by a horde of pensioners," said a young attorney at the Lawyers' Club. "In addition to the regular parasites that prey upon him continually, are occasional needy ones that appeal to him at every opportunity.

In this respect the late Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll was probably the most annoyed man of his time. Generous to a fault towards his friends, his big heart was touched by appeals from the most casual stranger. I doubt if there was a city in which he lectured where he did not leave behind a part of the money that he had earned upon the platform. I ought to know something of this, for I myself made a touch on the Colonel, and he responded to it like the gentleman that he was.

It was down in Memphis about ten years ago. How I happened to be there is nobody's business. It is enough to say that I was 'stone broke,' friendless and desperate. I even envied the sweating, half-naked stevedores down at the river wharves, as they stood in line to receive their pay, only to hustle off and lose their money in a crap game. My hotel bill at the Peabody was worrying me a lot. It wasn't big, but I had nothing with which to pay it. I scarcely had nerve enough to go in and eat my meals, and I never would have stepped up to the desk if I hadn't been compelled to ask the clerk for mail in the hope that a letter might contain a cheque that would relieve my misery.

One day I noticed in the hotel lobby a lithograph likeness of Colonel Ingersoll. I had seen it before, announcing a lecture on 'The Mistakes of Moses.' But this time it furnished an inspiration. I hated to confess it. I had met Colonel Ingersoll in the days of my prosperity, a year or so before. But the meeting had been of the most casual sort and gave me not the slightest claim upon his friendship. I doubted if he even remembered me. Such was my necessity, and so low had my self-respect ebbed that I determined to join the vast army of leeches that followed him.

On the night of the lecture, which was given the next evening, I went around to the stage door and gained admission by stating that I was a friend of the famous orator. A stage hand gave me a seat in the wings, and at the close of the lecture handed my note to Colonel Ingersoll.

I can see the noble old chap as he came out into the wings to meet me. He had evidently met my kind before, but he was patient and courteous.

'I don't remember you,' he said, 'but tell me what I can do for you.'

Tell him! I unloosed the tongues of my woe and let fly. I told him I had to have \$20.

'That is a pretty large sum for one man to ask of a stranger,' he remonstrated gently.

I admitted it, but pleaded the harder.

'Very well,' he weakened, handing me the bill. 'Only remember that I am not so rich as many think I am. Hundreds of persons ask me for money. I can't give them all twenty-dollar bills. Some day I may need this, so if you have any luck hereafter send it to me. I may have to pass it on to some other poor devil.'

That loan of the Colonel's helped me over the rough hill of my hard luck. Inside of a year I was in Washington with a good job. One day, and it happened to be pay day for me, I was coming down the elevator of the old building formerly occupied by the Department of Justice on Pennsylvania-avenue, not far from the White House. The elevator shaft was dark, and I did not recognise two men that entered the car as it stopped at the floor below the one at which I had stopped in. When the passengers got out at the ground floor I noticed one of two men stop and hand a quarter to an old apple woman who was sitting on the stoop outside the door beside her basket.

The giver of the coin was Colonel Ingersoll. A feeling of shame swept over me. I had not returned the money that had been of such benefit to me in the crisis of my life. I had \$25 in my pocket, and I know my landlady would be lenient with me, so I grew bold. The Colonel was just getting into his carriage at the curb.

'Colonel Ingersoll,' I said, stepping up to him, 'I don't suppose you remember me.'

'No,' he replied, just a trifle suspiciously. 'I don't believe I do.'

'Well,' I replied, 'I believe you said that once before, but this time I don't think you will regret having me refresh your recollection. First take this \$20, and I'll explain myself.'

I did, and I don't think I ever felt more proud of having pulled myself together than I did then, for I was telling the story to the one man who had seen how nearly down and out I had been.

'My boy,' he said, laying a big, friendly hand on my shoulder, 'you don't know how happy you have made me

feel. That repays me for the thousands that never have come back.'

A few weeks later I read a press dispatch announcing that he had suddenly dropped into his last sleep at his home at Dobbs Ferry. I had paid my debt none too soon."

—New York Press.

Correspondence.

ARE ATHEISTS THINKERS?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Writers like "Haw Menai" are best met on their own ground. One would ask: What sort of a being is his "God"? If he believes in a future existence, what does he intend to do when he gets there? Would he really like to live for billions of years? Does he really believe that all those who cannot accept the Christian "plan of salvation" are to be damned for eternity? That, I believe, is what "General" Booth believes; and yet a writer in the *Sphere*, presumably the Editor, recently wrote that it would be considered that the "General" was the working man's greatest benefactor. He might read Huxley's *Social Diseases and Worse Remedies*, an indictment which is as true to-day as ever it was. If "General" Booth is not a charlatan, he certainly is a quack. I think it would be a good thing if he would hurry up and get to "Heaven," and leave the world to emancipate itself on scientific lines. "Haw Menai" is good enough to declare that Atheists are lunatics. He asks whether they are thinkers. The Editor of the *Freethinker* is charitable when he admits such communications. Was Professor W. K. Clifford a thinker? Was Professor Bain, perhaps the greatest psychologist who has ever lived? Was Bradlaugh? Are Haeckel, G. W. Foote, Cohen, and other well-known Atheists thinkers?

Another correspondent, in a previous issue, by some very curious logic, has arrived at the melancholy conclusion that the real value of Atheism is zero. Doubtless it is, as far as a future existence is concerned. But as regards this world, it certainly is not. When Atheism is general, millions of money now spent on religious propagandism will be released, together with an immense amount of energy. There will be greater community of interest. The Universities will cease educating people who consider the highest mission is to stifle thought and trade on the credulity of others. It will not be a crime to think or to express one's thoughts. Life will be fuller.

J. A. REID.

The *Swindon Advertiser*, under the heading of "Rural Credulity," prints the following:—

"An illustration of the remarkable credulity still existing in the country districts of England is, says the *London Daily Telegraph* Warminster Correspondent, provided in a story current in every town and village on the Somerset and Wilts border. It is to the effect that a farmer at Breton, Somerset, dissatisfied like other people with the weather, used some blasphemous expressions about it, in the course of which he threatened or challenged the Deity. The story goes that he was immediately transformed into a living statue, and that all efforts have failed to remove from his hand the hayrake with which he was working. It is said that though a team of horses have been attached to him he could not be dragged away from the place, and a shelter is being built round him. Many people in Warminster and the neighboring towns have been eagerly scanning the papers to find out the latest particulars and the tale is firmly believed and implicitly retold by hundreds."

This is "rural credulity." We agree with the *Swindon Advertiser*. But, after all, it is fairly on a level with the Bible story of Lot's wife, who displeased the Lord by turning back to look at the burning city of Sodom, and was turned into a pillar of rock salt. Those who believe in the one story may just as well believe in the other too.

The Rev. J. H. Jowett, M.A., is a great adept in the art of playing upon words, and the effect on sentimental believers is remarkably soothing. He is an exceptionally skilful conjurer with pretty phrases and emotional inflections. Take the following specimen: "I come to Christ, my Sovereign Lord. I take his will, I go forth to execute it, building on the sublime assumption that all the mystic ministries of the empire of God are pledged to my support." "How exquisitely beautiful," exclaimed a Christian reader. Yes; but also how crammed with hypocrisy. Christ said, "Resist not evil," or, as some read it, "the evil one"; but Mr. Jowett is everlastingly resisting and blackguarding whatsoever and whomsoever he regards as evil. Why, only a few months ago he publicly expressed a spiteful wish to have George Bernard Shaw muzzled!



**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, C. Cohen, "A Search for God."

**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.15, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture. Brockwell Park, 3.15, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, H. Vicars, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N.S.S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies, "The Holy Cup—and Other Things."

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. (I. L. P. Hall, 21 King-square-avenue): 11, Members' Meeting.

**OUTDOOR.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.: Wednesday, Sept. 25, at 8.15, in the Bull Ring, H. Lennard.

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

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

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N.S.S.: Market Cross, on Saturday, at 8, G. T. Whitehead.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Lecture arrangements and other business.

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (I. L. P. Institute): 3, Business meeting.

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