

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*Les prêtres ne sont pas ce qu'un vain peuple pense,
Notre crédulité fait toute leur science.*

—VOLTAIRE.

"You Wicked Man!"

READERS of last week's *Freethinker* will recollect the report of the Secular Education League's Demonstration at the Memorial Hall, and some remarks of my own on the subject in "Sugar Plums." I am sorry to have to return to the subject this week, but I cannot very well avoid doing so. The fact is, a good many Christians are annoyed that they did not have the Demonstration entirely to themselves, and particularly annoyed at what they affect to regard as my intrusion; and some of them are playing at the ancient Christian game of misrepresentation; so it is incumbent upon me—or at least advisable—to say, once for all, a few plain words.

I will say nothing about letters that have reached me, and wrathful sentiments conveyed by word of mouth. My best plan will be to deal with the following paragraph in last week's *Christian World* :—

"The meeting at the Memorial Hall on Thursday, promoted by the Secular Education League, and addressed by Revs. R. J. Campbell, Stewart Headlam, and Mr. Peto Curran, M.P., disappointed its promoters. The attendance was large enough, but it was evidently an audience mainly composed of Freethinkers who had 'packed' the meeting and were bent on converting it into a demonstration against Christianity. Mr. Campbell and Mr. Stewart Headlam gave excellent addresses, and then a speech was demanded by the audience from the editor of the *Freethinker*, who sat near Mr. Campbell on the platform. The whole atmosphere of the meeting was distressing, and some of the most ardent supporters of the secular solution of the education difficulty have not concealed their regret that the meeting was held at all."

First, for the statement that the Freethinkers "packed" the meeting. This is an infamous falsehood. Nobody was turned away from the doors; and if all who came got in, the meeting could not have been "packed" in any legitimate sense of the word.

The only part of the hall that could have been "packed" was the platform and reserved seats. One hundred tickets were printed for these seats, and not a single one was sent to the National Secular Society. I did not receive one myself until I wrote for a platform "pass" a few days before the meeting. I did not even know that any had been printed. When I learnt of their existence I expressed astonishment that we had not received any. The result of my letter was that the Secretary sent Miss Vance six tickets, which reached her on the very morning of the meeting, so that she had no time to send them out. Mr. Cohen received two tickets by post at five o'clock the same afternoon. Evidently, then, the Freethinkers had no opportunity of "packing" the only part of the hall that could have been "packed."

Certainly there were more Freethinkers than Christians at the meeting. But whose fault was that? Why did not the Christians come in stronger force? Their own representatives were advertised as speakers, without a single Freethinker amongst them. Why did not enough Christians come to fill

the hall? Why did they leave more than half the seats for the intrusive Freethinkers?

Let me state the facts, as far as I am concerned. The Memorial Hall meeting was arranged, and the speakers selected, at the first Committee meeting which I was unable to attend. It was I who subsequently moved the addition of the Rev. Stewart Headlam. My view—as expressed on Committee, and in several letters to Mr. Snell, the secretary—was that the meeting in such a place as the Memorial Hall should be confined to Christians on the platform and Christians in the auditorium. I did not mean to attend it myself, and I inserted only a bare perfunctory notice in my paper. Later on, however, Mr. Snell wrote me that he was not at all sure of a good meeting, and asked me to say something urgent in the *Freethinker*. I was loth to say it, but I did say it; and, as I never do things by halves, I said it to some purpose—and the Memorial Hall was crowded. This is a sufficient answer to the charge of "packing."

Now, for the statement that the Freethinkers converted the meeting into a demonstration against Christianity. This is another infamous falsehood. Mr. Halley Stewart, M.P., the chairman, kept to the point; and, Nonconformist as he is, was cheered from beginning to end. Mr. Masterman, M.P., in a Churchman's aside, elicited a good-humored intimation that the audience was very largely non-Christian. Mr. Campbell, who was heartily applauded and listened to with the greatest respect, was directly responsible for the loud calls for "Foote." In doubting whether Secularists really understood that Secular Education did not mean the State establishment of Secularism, he said "I understand that the Editor of the *Freethinker* is sitting upon the platform." As he knew by that time the composition of the meeting, the words were a kind of challenge; it was inevitable that the majority of the meeting should call for their own spokesman to vindicate their good faith.

It seems to have been an offence that I "sat near Mr. Campbell on the platform." I was not next to Mr. Campbell—Mr. Masterman being between us; and, as a matter of fact, I sat where the Secretary placed me. Anywhere would have done for me. My power or influence doesn't depend on where I sit. I look upon all that sort of thing with the serenest indifference.

Mr. Campbell did not seem hurt by my being "near" him. I will do him that justice. He placed himself nearer to me in the ante-room, where he shook hands, chatted, and behaved like a gentleman. And I really don't understand the *Christian World's* great concern for Mr. Campbell. I have not noticed much love for him in its columns.

The *Christian World* looks down upon the editor of the *Freethinker*. But that is all affectation. Let me speak plainly—since I am invited. There is more "fundamental brain-work" put into one number of the *Freethinker* than into ten numbers of the *Christian World*—and a hundred times more honesty and courage.

That the demonstration "disappointed its promoters" is a curious statement. The promoters were the Secular Education League's executive committee, of which I am a member. How did the *Christian World* learn of their disappointment? I am anxious to know. And who are the "ardent

supporters of the secular solution" who wish the meeting had never been held? I should like to know their names. They were not "ardent" enough to fill the Memorial Hall.

I quite understand that the "whole atmosphere of the meeting was distressing." It would be to people like the *Christian World* staff. My presence is naturally distressing to them. It causes a terrible flutter in their dove-cotes. And yet, if the Secular Education League is to exist and act upon its present basis, even a wicked man like myself will have to be treated with some consideration. The object of the League, as its Manifesto declares, is to unite all who are in favor of Secular Education, whatever views they may entertain on other subjects. Now "all" includes Secularists. If it does not, let the Christians say so, and run a Secular Education League of their own. In the meanwhile, I wish them more sense and better temper

G. W. FOOTE.

Death of Dr. Conway.

RETURNING home from Birmingham, and in the thick of editorial work, I learn of the death of Mr. Moncure D. Conway. Having only time and space to say a little about him this week, I am taking care that it shall be entirely to the point.

Mr. Conway never, I believe, made any public profession of Atheism, but he never concealed the fact that he was an Atheist. He had not a scrap of belief in any supernatural power, or the least belief in a future life. When I first met him, privately, thirty years ago, he spoke of Atheism as the natural philosophy of every real thinker, and certainly of every evolutionist; and I am not aware that he ever published a sentence, subsequently, which tends in a contrary direction.

When I was imprisoned in 1883, under the Blasphemy Laws, Mr. Conway made the case the subject of one of his "Lessons for the Day" at South-place Chapel; and I am glad to remember how he poured contempt on the bigoted statement that the *Freethinker* cartoons were "indecent." A few weeks after my release from Holloway Gaol, in 1884, a crowded meeting was held at St. James's Hall to demand the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and Mr. Conway was one of the speakers. One of his points fairly brought down the house. He said that some of my elders thought I went perhaps a little too far in my war against Christianity, and that it was perhaps not quite as black a thing as I had painted it; but the Christians themselves had taken the trouble to prove that my elders were wrong and I was right; by putting me in prison they had proved that all I had said against Christianity was true. It was a fine point, finely put, and immensely applauded.

Mr. Conway was a graceful and fluent writer, but his most important literary work was done as the editor and biographer of Thomas Paine. The six volumes of the *Life and Works*, handsomely printed, and ably written and annotated, finally placed Paine on the library shelves as a classic. Yes, a classic. Christians may smile, but they are powerless against Time, the great vindicator.

Towards the end of his *Autobiography*, Mr. Conway quoted the Gnostic legend that it was the Devil who "first named the name of God." And he said that there was "enough deterioration" lurking in "the popular belief in 'progress' as something going on in the world under a divine order" to justify that Gnostic legend of "a devil-invented deity."

At the very end of the book, Mr. Conway said that he "would gladly go over" his "pilgrimage again. Yes—yes! Were it only for the forty years of happy wedlock." It is so good to hear a man say that. He had found the one thing that mattered—and in that he was happy. Moreover, the fact is a singular comment on the stuff now being talked about Free-thought breaking up marriage and the family.

G. W. FOOTE.

More About Atheism.

IT is a time-honored policy among religious people—particularly among the Christian variety—to load with objectionable moral qualities any opinion that is religiously obnoxious. In one of Lucian's dialogues, after the Atheist has brought his opponent to a standstill by his arguments, the defender of religion and morality turns on him with—

"You God-robbing, shabby, villainous, infamous, halter-sick miscreant! Does not everybody know that your father was a tatterdemalion, and your mother no better than she should be? that you murdered your brother, and are guilty of other execrable crimes? you lewd, lying, rascally, abominable varlet."

It is an old policy, and one is bound to confess it has met with considerable success. For the average man is a terrible coward—not from a physical point of view, for the mere courage to fight is perhaps the cheapest and commonest quality possessed by human nature. But he is mentally and morally a coward. Give a party or an opinion a bad name, and he will need no further incentive to shun it as though it were a plague. He does not trouble to examine the opinion denounced; for even to be seen in its company might be dangerous. It is enough that it is taboo.

Last week I dealt with the relation between Socialism, Ethicism, and Atheism. Religious people had said that both Socialism and Ethicism were Atheistic, and to them Atheism implied all that was morally objectionable. And as those who repudiated any association between the two isms knew what was intended when Socialism or Ethicism were said to be Atheistic, I took it that the disclaimer betrayed rather too much of a left-handed acquiescence in the religious identification of Atheism with loose living to pass without comment. I do not mean that those who wrote really believed in this identification; only that, by rebutting a charge based on such a conception, without a correction of the misrepresentation, something was done to give it further currency in religious circles. Much more might be quoted to the same end. One Socialist speaker, in denying that Socialism is Atheism, refers to the practical Atheism of the capitalist classes. Another retorts in a series of articles which apparently aims at demonstrating the moral and religious value of Socialism by proving the infidelity and immorality of the governing classes for the past two centuries. The Rev. R. J. Campbell refers to the "practical Atheism of believing that want and woe are the unassailable masters of life"; and, finally, Lord Rosebery is reported by certain newspapers as saying, in connection with the thesis that Training Colleges ought to turn out teachers calculated to strengthen the moral qualities of a people—

"If you send out sceptical teachers.....you are doing the schools to which you send them, not a benefit but an injury. Scepticism may be a useful acid at later periods of life. On that it is not my province to pronounce an opinion to-day. But of this I am convinced—that scepticism applied to the tender years of childhood, boyhood, girlhood, is a corrosive acid eating deep into all the foundations of character that you wish to strengthen and support. I cannot tell you how or in what direction the children will develop whom you may be called upon to train, but this at least you can foster in them—the seeds of faith, of earnestness, of honesty, of truth, of a legitimate ambition."

And so the game goes on. Speaker after speaker, writer after writer, uses "Atheism" as a synonym for all that is objectionable, without in the least realising that in stooping to such language he is the mere catpaw of a pulpit that grows more contemptible as it becomes less orthodox. And the poor, timid, addleheaded public naturally comes to the conclusion that, whatever Atheism may be in addition, it is at all events something desperately wicked, and the less respectable folk have to do with it the better.

Now, I am not concerned to deny that there have been Atheists who were anything but patterns of morality. Rascality is not such an uncommon thing in the world that religious people may reasonably expect to enjoy a monopoly in that direction. They have their full share; and as Atheists claim that our moralities are the natural offspring of associated human nature, they are equally ready to admit that our immoralities own the same parentage. Only the Atheist adds that there is certainly nothing in Atheism that would lead to either a vicious or depressing view of human life. The world remains what it is whether one believes in a God or not; love and hatred, pleasure and pain, prosperity and poverty, are quite unaffected as facts by a belief in Deity. And short of the really depressing conviction that human beings are so desperately bad or so incurably helpless as to be unable to act decently or co-operate effectively without supernatural assistance, one fails to see any valid reason why Atheists should not lead at least as praiseworthy lives as other folk.

I say at least; in reality, I believe the odds are in favor of a better ordering of life under Atheism than under religion. For if we come to "practical Atheism," every one of the "Atheistic negations" has a very positive aspect. The denial of an intervening Providence involves the affirmation of the effective nature of human co-operation; that of the non-religious character of morality involves the belief that it is a social product, to be developed or degraded as our social organisation is well or ill planned. The rejection of a future life, in which injustices are to be redressed, carries with it the lesson that justice is to be obtained here, or not at all, and that the effective happiness of each is only to be secured through the happiness of all. Nor has Atheism ever taught that "want and woe is the unassailable master of the world." It was not an Atheist who taught "The poor ye have always with you," nor has it ever emphasised, as all the official Christian creeds have done, the weakness, misery, and ineradicable wickedness of human nature. There is really nothing depressing about the Atheistic view of life. If man in many individual instances is not altogether lovely, human nature in the mass shows a capacity for steady development; and the long story of human conquest, from the Stone Age to the present, carries with it the sure promise of still further development in the future.

The difficulty of dealing with Lord Rosebery's deliverance lies in one not being quite sure of what he means. It may be that in this difficulty we should find a companion in Lord Rosebery himself. It may also be that his lordship was using the term "Scepticism" in a sinister philosophic sense; and, if so, it is certain that his hearers and the majority of his readers will take it in another and a religious sense. At any rate, as his expression of opinion was somewhat widely quoted in the religious press as an argument against unbelief, I shall not be doing him an injustice in dealing with the passage from that point of view.

Lord Rosebery, it will be observed, thinks that scepticism may be a useful thing at a later period of life, but not with boys and girls. On which one need only say that if by scepticism is meant a lack of belief in the value of earnestness, honesty, and truth, it is puzzling to see how this can be a desirable thing at any time of life, early or late. If, on the other hand, he means disbelief in religious doctrines, then the teacher, far from doing the schools an injury by leaving these out, is doing them the best possible service. It is one of the greatest of evils that so many people are content to allow children to imbibe religious doctrines they themselves do not believe, leaving it for maturer years to correct the errors of early teaching. No one, so far as I am aware, has ever advocated that young children should be crammed with all the arguments against religious beliefs. The arguments, *pro* and *con.*, are beyond them. All that is asked is that they shall be let alone, so far as these are concerned, and that meanwhile they shall be trained to a proper exercise of whatever capacity

they possess. But at no time are children to be taught what we have reason to believe is false. Truth, after all, is not something to be reserved for consumption by adults, but to be taken by all, young or old, rich or poor, in the fashion that is best fitted for wholesome digestion.

The implication contained in the concluding words of the sentence quoted reads more like an ordinary pulpit deliverance than an expression of opinion from Lord Rosebery. For it would be to cast a quite unnecessary slur on his intelligence to assume that he is not perfectly aware of the truth that honesty, truth, legitimate ambition, and faith in all worthy things may exist quite independently of religious belief. To go no farther than the classic instance of John Stuart Mill, who was brought up by an Atheistic father and carefully secluded from religious influences, we have an illustration of a man whose moral temper marked him as immensely superior to the vast majority of his religious contemporaries. And I fancy, too, that if it were possible to conduct an adequate inquiry on this point, it would be found that it is precisely the sceptical teachers in our public schools who pay the greatest attention to the moral development of the children committed to their care. It is certain that the increased interest in moral instruction has been coincident with a declining interest in religious doctrines; nor would it be too much to say that until theology had lost some of its ancient power it was impossible to pay proper attention to the development of character. Common experience shows that morality is never in so great a danger of perversion as when it is overlaid with theological dogmas.

From the religious world one does not expect fairness to opponents. But from men who stand forward as public teachers, from those who proclaim themselves as the forerunners of a new social dispensation, one would wish to see greater charity of temperament, and a keener sense of intellectual rectitude. For without these things any conceivable social rearrangement will be of small value. The value of any social State lies, after all, in the type of character it produces. And so long as men serve as the mere mouthpieces of interested misrepresentations, or lend themselves in even the most indirect manner to their perpetuation, they are in truth obstructing the development of that higher life they profess themselves anxious to promote.

C. COHEN.

The Appeal to Facts.

THE New Theology describes itself as, "amongst other things, an appeal to facts." This description, however, is true only in part. No theology appeals to facts. It is undeniably true that beliefs, when firm and fervent, create facts, the facts of religious experience; but these are not facts to which any theology can appeal, because in no sense can they be regarded as theological facts. That the New Theologians do appeal to them only shows that the New Theology is a house built upon the sand and is doomed to fall. The facts of religious experience owe their existence to certain beliefs with the truth or falsehood of which they have absolutely nothing, either directly or indirectly, to do. There are so many people who believe in a God of love and forgiveness who has revealed himself in Christ Jesus; and if the faith is strong and passionate they enjoy what they call the sweet sense of the Divine presence in their hearts. Does it never occur to such people that their joyous experience is wholly dependent on their faith? Is it reasonable to suppose that, if God and the eternal Christ really existed, they would have dealings only with those who believed in them? It thus follows that there are no facts to which theology can appeal as proofs that its dogmas are true. This applies to all theologies alike.

It is true that the New Theology does appeal to facts, but they are only the facts which prove the Old Theology to be false. "The main consideration with some of us," a writer says, "is whether a proposition or doctrine we are asked to believe—say, the Virgin Birth, or the physical Resurrection of Jesus—is, *de facto*, true"; and the facts appealed to, in such cases, satisfy the generality of New Theologians that the doctrine in question is not, *de facto*, true. But the New Theology is based on the Divine Immanence, a pure dogma in proof of which no facts can be advanced. To thousands of people the doctrine of the Divine Immanence is simply incredible because of the entire absence of all evidence.

We are told that "it is probably our ignorance that makes certain things seem incredible to us." But are unbelievers, as a rule, more ignorant than believers? Are the facts of the Universe less known to Atheists than to Theists? The truth is that the majority of our Freethinkers have been driven to unbelief by the light of knowledge. Looking the facts of history in the face, they have realised that any doctrine of a personal God is to them utterly incredible. In the nature of the case, it is belief, not unbelief, that implies ignorance. But the believer exclaims: Surely "some deference is due to the consensus of experience." Possibly; but we must ask, experience of what? Has anybody ever had experience of God, of the Holy Spirit, or of the next world? Has anybody ever had experience of the soul as distinct from the body? All these are objects the existence of which is *assumed without evidence*. To speak of the "consensus of experience" in connection with them is laughably absurd, because, without a single exception, belief precedes experience, and because in the absence of belief there never has been any experience.

The question is being seriously put by many people, Is it possible in these days to believe in an Ultimate Authority in religion, and if so, where is it to be found? Catholics say to Protestants: "We have an Ultimate Authority in our infallible Church; you have none." Catholics themselves know how infinitely silly such a claim is. All history stands up and laughs it to scorn. But what say the Protestants? Formerly they found their Ultimate Authority in an infallible Bible, to which they always made their final appeal. But criticism has picked innumerable holes in the Holy Scriptures, and the Protestants are anxiously casting about for some other authoritative court, but as yet without any success. Just now they are at sixes and sevens among themselves. Some of them repudiate the authority of the Bible altogether, and fall back upon the inner light, or what they call the testimony of conscience. Others still cling to the Bible *in a sense*. They accept it as the Word of God because it has "the testimony of the Holy Spirit." They quote Calvin's *Institutes* and John Owen's *Greater Catechism* to the effect that we know the books of the Bible to be the Word of God "by the testimony of God's Spirit, working faith in our hearts to close with that heavenly majesty, and clear truth, that shineth in them." Now, this testimony of God's Spirit is said to be the fact to which we can make our ultimate appeal. But this is the absurdest claim that could be made. No one can know that the Bible is the Word of God unless the Holy Spirit is within him and gives him the information. But surely the man who has the Holy Spirit does not need the Bible. Indeed, to write the Bible was a culpable waste of time and of Divine energy, because, to all who have not the Holy Spirit the Bible is valueless, and to all who have him, superfluous. On the other hand, if there be a Holy Spirit who testifies to the truth of Scripture and to the reality of God and the spiritual world, how are we to account for the fact that there are such countless myriads of people from whose hearts he is absent? Some theologians may not be able to adopt Calvin's or Owen's phraseology, but they all accept the essence of the thought. "The implication is," according to one of them, "that man has an innate capacity for recognising the voice of

God when he hears it." Then, if there be a God who speaks, how is it that every man does not recognise his voice? Why are there so many who never hear him?

But let us come nearer home. It is asked, "What is the Ultimate Authority in morals?" Theology answers, "Not human law, but a higher and holier ordinance." Here, again, we have an appeal, not to an established fact, but to a belief by no means universal—a belief which contradicts the facts of human life. That the moral law is super-human is a perfectly gratuitous assumption. The moral sense of humanity is the direct result of social experience, and varies according to the stage in social evolution reached by its possessors. The moral sense of a low savage is a very different thing from that of a highly-civilised European. It is an affair of degrees, and the degrees are determined by the law of evolution. The moral law is that "which we have not learned, received, read, but from Nature herself grasped, drunk, expressed." It is what we have gradually picked up and put together on our journey upwards; and as at present we have by no means reached the end of the journey, the moral law is likely to undergo many more modifications and developments. What, then, is the Ultimate Authority in morals? Our own nature: there is, and can be, no other. The theologians speak of an "unwritten law," which they declare to be of Divine origin; but the only "unwritten law" known to us is our own constitution. After all said and done, every human being is his own moral authority. In the last resort we acknowledge no other; and this is quite as true of believers as of unbelievers. If my own reason does not impel me to a beneficent conduct, nothing else will or can; and what my reason tells me depends on how it has been trained. A thief is a man who does not believe in the rights of private property, and so he does not hesitate to take your silver and gold. His ethical training has been deficient; and possibly he has received from heredity a low organic quality. Both the honest and the dishonest man are what the law of evolution has made them. On no other ground can our criminal classes be accounted for, their very existence being an unanswerable argument against the existence of a moral governor of the world.

We thus discover that an honest appeal to facts is fatal to every school of theology. Dr. Parker once delivered a series of eloquent discourses, the object of which was to prove that the Universe cannot be accounted for without God. Our difficulty, on the contrary, is to account for the Universe, if God exists. The works of a perfect Deity would necessarily partake of his own perfection; but Nature teems with glaring imperfections. Her blunders and blemishes are innumerable. It is not at all surprising that, in very desperation, thoughtful divines were driven to the expedient of inventing the doctrine of the Fall in Eden; and there is surely some plausible excuse for Paul's dogmatic assertions that, ever since that dreadful catastrophe, and because of it, the whole creation has been in a state of degradation and debasement, groaning and travailing in unutterable pain and sorrow, and yearning for the happy day of her deliverance. And yet the only result of such speculative devices was to make God look more ridiculous than ever. Because man, his creative masterpiece, turned out such a woeful failure, the Creator is represented as wreaking his vengeance on all his other works by subjecting them to the "bondage of corruption" (Romans viii. 18-25). The New Theology is in a worse plight still, if possible, because it affirms that the Universe, as we see it, is the most perfect expression or embodiment of himself that the Divine Being has as yet been able to effect. For unnumbered millions of years he has been trying hard to produce a recognisable image of himself; and apparently he is as far away from success to-day as he was at the start. Is it any wonder, then, that intelligent people are turning their backs on all theologies alike, and finding in Atheism their only possible refuge? An honest appeal to the facts can logically lead to no other result.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Church and Socialism.

By the Editor of the "Truthseeker" (New York).

THE editor of the London *Freethinker* does not share the opinion of the *Clarion* and of *Reynolds's Newspaper* and of some others that the recent Kirkdale election was lost to the Socialist and Labor party by the Tory appeal to religious prejudice. The supporters of Candidate Hill (who is a Nonconformist deacon and not a Churchman, as we surmised) circulated leaflets made up from Robert Blatchford's writings, and upon them, with the declaration that Blatchford is a representative Socialist, based the charge that Socialism is synonymous with Atheism. Editor Foote thinks it doubtful that the misrepresentation caused the Labor candidate to lose, because misrepresentation is a feature of all elections, the various mendacities fairly counterbalancing one another, "leaving the election to be decided by the relative strength of the contending parties."

Mr. Blatchford is convinced that Christianity must be destroyed because it opposes Socialism. Mr. Foote reminds him that that is not the issue. Christianity must be attacked on the ground of its falsehood. "The first question, and in the long run the all-important question, is this—Is Christianity true?" It is not exactly obvious, to the perception of Mr. Foote, that Socialism is promoted by converting Christians to Atheism.

Viewing the situation in the light of history, it appears that Socialism, which is not obviously or otherwise Atheistic, is now in the stage which all reformatory movements have been obliged to pass through. All advance movements are at first denounced as Atheistic by the Church. Later, the Church finds a way to reconcile the new doctrines with its own. Such denunciation is stimulated by the circumstances that no reform is ever originated by the Church, and that Atheists, being more progressive than Godists, have loomed large in all the forward marches of mankind. If the Socialist will recall how many men and measures and theories have been attacked as Atheistic, they will see how little significance there is in the application of that epithet to themselves. It is the first word that springs to the lips of the orthodox when confronted with argument they cannot answer or facts they cannot disprove.

Whatever is not approved by the priests is Atheistic, whether it threatens their faith or their graft. The practice of medicine, which took the treatment of disease out of the hands of the pastors, was Atheistic. Those doctors were "Atheists" who first denied demoniac possession in cases of dementia. Men have been put to death for Atheism, as Socrates and Vanini, although their conception of a deity was less nebulous than that of many modern Christians. Mr. Gladstone discovered on behalf of the evolutionists that their doctrine dispensed with the need of a God.

In the political field, men who denied the divine right of kings were Atheists. Republicanism was political Atheism. To John Wesley, American independence looked like Atheism or Anarchy. Whether we speak of anti-slavery or temperance or women's rights, or some other great movement, we shall find the cry of Atheism raised against it. It has been true of many of the leaders, for they were Atheists or Infidels, but later the Church has always found the idea to be completely reconcilable with Godism and with Christianity. From all which we may reasonably conclude that the opposition of the Church to Socialism will be but temporary. Socialism has its warrant in the Scriptures, and as it gains strength we shall hear the parsons preaching from such texts as these:—

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet, for your sakes, He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be rich.

For I mean not that other men be eased and ye burdened:

But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: That there may be equality.

As it is written, he that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack."

And the preachers, with an ingenuity which no Socialist reconciler of to-day can equal, will demonstrate that the Bible is a Socialist document from Genesis to Revelation, and that the Church has taught Socialism from the beginning. It makes that claim with regard to democracy now, and will add Socialism with the same indifference to truth.

A Letter to Thomas Paine.

LORD EDWARD FITZGERALD, the Irish patriot and martyr, lodged for some time with Thomas Paine in Paris, and liked and respected him the more he saw of him. "I cannot express," he said, writing to his mother, "how kind he is to me; there is a simplicity of manner, a goodness of heart, and a strength of mind in him that I never knew a man before to possess." Lord Edward Fitzgerald's biography has lately been written by his grandson. It is entitled *Edward and Pamela Fitzgerald*. In it there appears a letter from Lady Lucy Fitzgerald to Thomas Paine, written after Lord Edward Fitzgerald's death. It runs as follows:—

"Citizen: In those happy days when I dwelt under the humble roof of my beloved Brother Ed. your picture ornamented his chimney. As the small circle drew round the fire their eyes rested on the resemblance of the Author of the Rights of Man. Citizen, although he was unsuccessful in the glorious attempt of liberating his country from slavery, still he was not unworthy of the lessons you taught him. Accept, then, his picture from his unhappy sister. Its place is in your house; my heart will be satisfied with such a Pantheon: it knows no consolation but the approbation of such men as you, and the soothing recollection that he did his duty and died faithful to the cause of liberty for his country."

This noble letter from a noble and beautiful woman, possessed of every refinement of mind and character, outweighs the vilification of all Paine's libellers—including the pious savage who rejoices in the name of Torrey.

Acid Drops.

Rev. J. E. Rattenbury, the gentleman who now stands in the late Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's shoes, and shepherds the West London Mission, is running Mr. Campbell hard for the Messiahship of Socialism. His notions of history are curious. He has just been saying that "it was because the Puritans realised that they were sons of God that they cut off the head of Charles the First." We suppose Charles the First was *not* a son of God. But let that pass. We want to point out that Charles the First could easily have saved his head if he had chosen to throw in his lot with the Puritans instead of with the Episcopalians. In that case, the Bishops would all have lost *their* heads, as Laud lost *his*, and Puritanism would have been forced by all the power of the State upon the English people. What these "sons of God" wanted was to govern instead of being governed, to tyrannise over others instead of being tyrannised over themselves. And we are quite sure that the Rattenburys of to-day would display the same spirit in practice, if they only had the opportunity.

"The way to make an ideal state," Mr. Rattenbury wound up, "is to keep out of it all that defileth, and that can only be done by accepting and following the leadership of Jesus." Quite so. It reminds us of the proverbial saying that "there is nothing like leather." That was the cry of the leather merchant. "There is nothing like Jesus" is the cry of the professional Jesus man. We quite understand Mr. Rattenbury.

The notion that the leadership of Jesus is the only thing that keeps out defilement is extremely funny. There is more drunkenness, gambling, and prostitution in Christian

countries than in Heathen countries. And this after nearly two thousand years of Christianity.

Apropos of Mr. Cohen's statement in our last week's issue, it is interesting to note the following statement in the *Christian Commonwealth* :—

"There are many people who believe that some, if not all, modern ethical movements are atheistic or agnostic. This is not so. In the great majority, at any rate, there is an honest, earnest endeavor to get at the root of things, and no hearer is ever called upon to listen to any statement which could give offence to the member of the most orthodox sect under the sun."

If this be true, the Ethicists are really more "respectable" than Mr. Campbell himself; for some of *his* statements have given serious offence to his fellow-Christians. Are we to believe that the Ethicists are not only tame cats, but doctored at that?

Juggling about Jesus goes on merrily in the *C. C.* In a long article last week on the Sinlessness of Jesus, it was asked, "Who can make a positive statement in regard to what happened during those thirty years of the life of Jesus concerning which we have no sources of information to speak of?" We have raised this point ourselves a hundred (we might say a thousand) times. But the *C. C.* has its own way of getting out of the difficulty. It draws a distinction "between inability to sin and ability to abstain from sinning," and predicates only the latter of Jesus. It won't do to say he *couldn't* sin, but it is all right to say he *didn't*. How pretty! But if a man lived for thirty-three years without sinning, he might skip through all the rest on the same ticket.

Juggling about Jesus goes on in all sorts of Christian papers. In last week's *Christian World*, for instance, the Rev. J. G. Stevenson wrote that "Jesus Christ was the bravest man who ever lived." We invite him to justify this assertion. Jesus Christ faced death—we will say for his convictions. Have not thousands of other men done that? He suffered for a few hours. Some men have suffered for years. What were his sufferings in comparison with the sufferings of Giordano Bruno, who, as Tennyson so well said, died the most desolate of deaths? Jesus Christ's Gethsemane lasted an hour; Bruno's Gethsemane lasted seven years. Jesus Christ cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Bruno stood erect at the stake, and died without a sound of pain to please his murderers. Jesus Christ may have been brave enough—for a *God*. Bruno was a brave *man*.

The *Christian Commonwealth*, which lives upon Mr. Campbell and the New Theology, is just as bad as any other Christian paper when "infidels" are concerned. In its remarks on the Secular Education League's demonstration at the Memorial Hall, it carefully conceals all it does not wish its readers to know. Not a word is said about Mr. Foote's speech, and the extraordinary enthusiasm of his reception; he is not even mentioned in the list of speakers. Our pious contemporary had no eye except for the "well-known Christians upon the platform." We thoroughly understand now the recent statement of Mr. Campbell's that the religious press is a rotten institution. His own special organ, so to speak, shares in the rottenness.

Rev. R. J. Campbell calls upon the Churches to be honest. Does he really understand what he is demanding? Was there ever an honest Church in the whole history of the world? Is not every Church a religious Trust, with two great ideas—monopoly and big profits?

Paul's idea of the Resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ—which, by the way, we have often ridiculed—is now declared by Mr. Campbell to be such that no "ordinary, sensible man" to-day can believe it. We take the following paragraphs from a newspaper report of Mr. Campbell's recent sermon at the City Temple on "You Cannot Die":—

"Does any ordinary, sensible man to-day believe that the Lord will descend from Heaven? From what heaven? From what point of the compass? Or does any sensible man believe that 'we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord'? That is what Paul says in the next verse. I believe the dignitaries of the Anglican Church, to say nothing of the Nonconformists, would be rather perturbed at such an occurrence.

But Paul was so convinced that the grand catastrophe was near at hand that he actually advised people not to marry. Imagine any preacher standing up and giving that advice to a Christian congregation to-day!

Our whole outlook has changed, and we may as well recognise it at once. We do not take the view that these New

Testament Christians did about death. Seeing that it is impossible for us to think the same thing nowadays, where is the good of taking a text from these words, and asking our hearers to put the same meaning on it that Paul did? If we cannot believe in resurrection as Paul did, where is the good of trying to treat his words as infallible? I am convinced that the time has come when, in common honesty, we preachers must stop pretending that we believe as Paul did in this matter. We do not; and we may as well say so at once."

We are glad to see Mr. Campbell prodding the consciences of his clerical brethren, but we don't believe there will be much response. They have their business to attend to.

Dr. Engert, parish priest of Ochsenfurt, Bavaria, has written many Biblical commentaries leaning towards the Higher Criticism. After the Pope's encyclical letter against Modernism, Dr. Engert was called upon by his Bishop to withdraw his books from circulation. He refused, and is now excommunicated. At this rate, the Catholic Church will soon lose its intelligent priests; and the rest won't help it much in the battle with "infidelity."

The Catholic Truth Society is alarmed at the enormous growth of Rationalism, especially among young people of intelligence. Monsignor Brown tearfully admits that this is "the day of very weak faith," and that many of their young people are "falling away from the practice of their faith." Dr. Doubleday, of Woolwich, has "seen so many fall away" that he trembles as he contemplates the future; and, while advocating "the bringing out of publications calculated to fortify their own people against Rationalism," he hopes "they will not stir up a spirit of controversy." What a pitiable confession of weakness! What a glaring exhibition of cowardice! The case for Christianity is so hopeless that it won't bear to be discussed. The Church may dogmatise as much as she likes, but she must not argue with unbelief, for if she does venture upon an argument, Dr. Doubleday assures us, there will be "the worst of consequences" in the conversion of multitudes of their people to Freethought.

Father Gerard, another member of the Catholic Truth Society, is convinced that nothing would injure the Church more than discussion. "In regard to Rationalism," he says, "there is not the least idea of favoring controversy." "Their idea is, by their publications to put the truth in the plainest possible way for the use of their own people, because they find a widespread need of anti-Rationalistic instruction, not only for the lower classes, but for much higher classes." But the Catholic Truth Society will soon discover that mere dogmatism will not satisfy people who have come under the spell of Freethought, and begun to think for themselves. If faith cannot justify itself at the bar of reason its doom is a certainty. Rome has thriven on ignorance and credulity. She will die of knowledge and incredulity.

The Rev. L. E. Shelford, Prebendary of St. Paul's, admits that the theologian has had to yield to the astronomer, to the geologist, and to the evolutionist, but claims that he is still able to cling to the Bible as the Word of God. Contradictions and difficulties present themselves, no doubt; but we must be "patient, and wait for the clearer day." "The time for reconciliation has not yet come." It *will* come, of course—in eternity. Eternity is the one safe refuge of intellectual cowards. The truth is that no reconciliation between faith and science is possible, either here or elsewhere. The theologian has not a single leg to stand on.

We forgot to say that the *Daily Mirror* outstripped all competitors in announcing the death of Gerald Massey, who, as our readers are aware, spent nearly forty years of his life in trying to prove that Christianity was a legendary and mythological system, which really came out of ancient Egypt. The *Mirror* announcement spoke of "Mr. Gerald Massey, the well-known poet, and Christian Socialist." *Christian!* How's that for high—or low?

We were glad that the Kaiser had a fine day for his ride through London. It gave the people an opportunity of expressing their good-will to the German nation through its official representative. But we confess to having been shocked by the gushing newspaper reports of the Kaiser's share in the Royal *battue* at Windsor. There was a huge slaughter of all sorts of game, and it was announced, with obvious admiration, that the Kaiser, whose gun was loaded for him, for the sake of expedition, actually killed seven hundred birds and other harmless living things with his own shooting. Prodigious! But, at the same time, disgusting. Such is Christian feeling towards the lower animals (after

all those centuries of the boasted religion of love) as displayed by the sovereigns of two boastfully Christian countries.

We call to mind a burning passage of Ruskin's, written towards the end of his working life, on this very subject. "And every hour of my life," he said, "since that paragraph of *Modern Painters* was written, has increased, I disdain to say my feeling, but say, with fearless decision, my knowledge, of the bitterness of the curse, which the habits of hunting and 'la chasse' have brought upon the so-called upper classes of England and France; until, from knights and gentlemen, they have sunk into jockeys, speculators, usurers, butchers by battue; and, the English especially, now, as a political body, into what I have called them in the opening chapter of the *Bible of Amiens*—the scurviest louts that ever fouled God's earth with their carcasses."

The agitation against the Salvation Army is growing. At a recent meeting held by the Trade and Labor Council at Walthamstow, some figures were given by the secretary of the Carpenter's and Joiner's Society that let in some much needed light on the methods of the Army. The figures involved charges of both underselling and sweating. According to the Secretary's statement and figures, the prices charged for labor on certain specified jobs worked out at from a fourth to half that charged by first class builder's shops. The workmen were paid two shillings per day, but of this, nine shillings per week was stopped for food and one shilling for clothing. Even the remaining two shillings was so manipulated by the Army that there was often nothing at all left for the men. The speaker added that unless the Army was underselling ordinary traders, the profit on the Hanbury-street workshop could not be under sixty pounds per week.

Several speakers who had actually been in the workshops of the Army followed and corroborated all that had been said. One man said that in one department the men had to pick 7 cwt. of dirty paper, or they were turned into the street. The food that was given them was often too bad to eat. "The Army found a man in the gutter and trampled him into the mud." In the end, the meeting adopted a resolution condemning the system of sweating practised by the Army and asking for a Parliamentary inquiry into its methods. Several Army officers were at the meeting, but took no part in the proceedings.

General Booth, on leaving New York, expressed himself as well pleased with "my people" in America. During the last two years, he said, the Army in the United States had added two million dollars to the value of its property. There is no need to search further for the cause of the General's satisfaction.

The *Christian Commonwealth* declares that the Bible is the most widely distributed and the least read book in existence. The statement is welcome because it is true, and not commonly made in such quarters. What we should next like the C. W. to explain is in what way the British character is dependent upon this little-read book, and what are the grave dangers run in giving up a volume that few people read.

The Bishop of Manchester, in his diocesan magazine, defends his remonstrance against that Blackburn parson's use of unfermented wine at the celebration of the holy sacrament. "Readers of Church history," the Bishop says, "will understand how serious the whole question is." Quite so. It is just as serious as most other questions that belong to Church history.

The Southport Laymen's League having reminded his lordship of a certain legal opinion that there is no law demanding the use of unfermented wine, the Bishop submits this question to the League: "If our Savior did not use fermented wine, why did St. Paul (1 Cor. xi.) not instruct the Christian Church to use unfermented wine, and so avoid the scandal of drunkenness at the Lord's supper?" The answer of the League to this poser has not yet transpired.

The secretary of the Church of England's Men's Society announces that forty new branches, with 776 new members, have been formed during the past month. If we were only informed how many of this number were non-Christians or non-Church members before joining the C. E. M. S., we should then know what the figures really represent. Every addition to Secularism represents a loss to the Churches; every addition to a Christian Church usually means a loss to some other branch of the same firm. The cards are reshuffled; and very often some dropped in the shuffle.

We are all familiar with the manner in which Christians claim all that is good in the world to the influence of their creed. In this matter, the Rev. A. J. Forson easily deserves first place. Says this spiritual descendent of Ananias: "No sooner did Christianity begin to make its way than it changed the conditions of child-life. Why, before the end of the first century a Roman Emperor was supporting 5,000 destitute children every year, and increasing the number at the public expense." Before the end of the first century, mark, when the very name of Christianity had scarcely been heard in Rome. And it was Trajan—we suppose this is the Emperor indicated—above all others, who was so influenced by Christianity! As a piece of religious mendacity this may safely defy competition. But provision was made for the care of destitute children, 1,800 years ago, by the Pagan emperor of a Pagan state. And, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Lancashire Christians were murdering little children in factories for the sake of the money derived from their "massacre of the innocents."

Evangelist Torrey is one of the most incurable liars on this planet. He has lied for so many years that the habit of it has become second nature. To root it out of him would be as easy now as to extract his liver or his kidneys. When he was in England, saving other people's souls and losing his own (if he had one), we had to perform the painful but necessary task of refuting his infamous libels on Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll; a task in which we received invaluable aid from Mr. W. T. Stead. But neither Mr. Stead nor anybody else could induce Dr. Torrey to cry *Peccavi*. The Yankee evangelist went one better than the first American president. George Washington didn't lie, and Dr. Torrey couldn't.

Just listen to truthful Torrey in the following extract from the report of one of his late addresses at Philadelphia:—

"I have yet to find the first sceptic, Agnostic, Infidel, or Christian Scientist whom I cannot convince that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. I have made this announcement in every country in the world that we have visited, and hundreds have consulted me upon the subject. I have reason to believe that not one of them has doubted Christ since."

That takes the cake. Old Nick is called the father of lies, but he would walk behind Torrey any day. Ananias, of course, is out of the running altogether.

Torrey was challenged again and again to indicate a single sceptic that he had converted in England. The only one he could point to was an entirely imaginary female infidel lecturer in Hyde Park—perhaps some drunken impostor who had eased him of a half-crown.

Rev. J. Hirst Hollowell, of the Northern Counties Education League, got a rap over the knuckles lately from Mr. Chiozza-Money, M.P., who was unable to attend the League's annual meeting. The honorable gentleman objected to Clause VIII. of the League's suggested Education Bill. In the first place, it proposed to re-establish the old School Boards; whereas in Germany, where "educational method is most advanced," there are no *ad hoc* educational authorities, but "education is controlled by the ordinarily elected town councils." "I also beg leave," Mr. Chiozza-Money said, "to express my astonishment that your so-called Education Bill, like the Government's Education Bill, contains scarcely a line or syllable to advance education in this country, but deals solely with the religious wrangles which disgrace our public life."

Mr. Seddon, M.P., may be a very sensible and estimable man in most respects, but in one respect, at any rate, he is a remarkably foolish person. Addressing a Labor gathering at Longsight lately, he said that "he would inform the Duke of Rutland that the atheist was the man who would repeat the crucifixion of the Nazarene by denying the brotherhood of man." Now, in the first place, we beg to ask Mr. Seddon for the name—and, if possible, the address—of any Atheist who denies the brotherhood of man. In the next place, we beg to remind Mr. Seddon that the Nazarene was crucified by the religious leaders of the Jews at that time. The only person mixed up with the crucifixion, who could possibly be suspected of irreligion, was Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor; and it is perfectly clear from the Gospels that he tried to save Jesus from the pious rabble of his persecutors. What on earth Atheism had to do with the crucifixion of Jesus, and how on earth Atheism is likely to repeat the performance, we must leave Mr. Seddon to explain at his leisure. But in all probability he will wait a long while before undertaking the task.

We are sorry to say that Mr. Seddon's nonsense about Atheism and the crucified Nazarene was greeted with

applause. It proves that even Labor meetings are not always crowded with philosophers.

Seventy-eight Doukhobor pilgrims are journeying from their reservation in Saskatchewan to find the Messiah. They need not have gone to Canada to do that. They might have stopped in Russia. There is Tolstoy.

We hear of the formation of "The Buddhist Society of Great Britain," which has started an office at 14 Bury-street, Oxford-street, London, W.C. We hope it will do some missionary work amongst the London Christians. They want it badly.

Twenty new members of a Battersea Baptist Church were recently baptised in the Thames at Hampton Wick. One of them was an old gentleman of seventy. It must have been a risky experience in November. Perhaps he wished to spend Christmas in heaven.

Boulogne has dealt with the church-bell nuisance. An official order has been issued that these instruments of torture are not to be put in operation before eight o'clock in the morning, nor after eight o'clock in the evening, and that they must never afflict the inhabitants for more than five minutes at a stretch. When will such mercy be extended to long-suffering England?

The German Crown Prince, when a boy (so the story says), was receiving religious instruction from a clergyman, who told him, like a good Christian, that all human beings were sinners. The little fellow frowned, and said, "Except mother. She is not a sinner." Good boy! Happy mother! And rotten old creed!

"People," the *New York Post* says, "regard the Church as a social, not a religious institution; and they choose one sect or another on exactly the same grounds as they would choose a club." We never said anything worse than that in the *Freethinker*.

Many years ago, the *Westminster Gazette* allowed a very able journalist to expose the Mahatma business in its columns. "Isis Very Much Unveiled" played the very deuce with the Theosophic tricksters who were carrying on the Blavatsky frauds after her death. It was shown how egregiously Mrs. Besant had been imposed upon. And the result was a serious rupture in the Theosophic camp—one outcome of which is the present rivalry between Mrs. Tingley, of America, and Mrs. Besant, of India and St. John's Wood.

The *Westminster Gazette* is now in other hands, and is allowing a nameless writer to contribute a lot of papers on "Occultism and Common-Sense"—in which there is plenty of the former article and very little of the latter. Circumstantial stories are told of all sorts of mysterious experiences. But what is the use of them? They will never convince unbelievers. It is not in this way that the "occult" or the "supernatural" either lives or dies. Take the case of witchcraft. Nothing could possibly be more circumstantial than the evidence given in open court by "competent witnesses" of the amazing performances of witches. If evidence could establish the reality of such things, witchcraft was perfectly real. But the instructed eye of modern times looks smilingly on all that circumstantial evidence. The witnesses were mistaken. Why? Because we have passed by that stage of culture; we look down upon it, and are free from its illusions. We are not moved by any amount of circumstantial evidence. We dismiss the whole thing as absurd and impossible. And the best informed and most thoughtful of us see quite clearly that in all such matters it is not the evidence that produces the belief, but the belief that produces the evidence. Which is the bed-rock truth of the whole subject of superstition.

The "Bakerite" quarrel still goes on in the *Islington Gazette*. We cannot follow it any farther at present, but we rejoice to see that the Christian Evidence people are feeling a little ashamed, at last, of their hooligan (and unsuccessful) efforts to "drive" Mr. Pack out of Finsbury-park. After trying disorder, and even violence, they now say that all they want to do is to draw away Mr. Pack's audiences and reduce his collections to next to nothing. Mr. Baker declares that Mr. Pack is only there for the money. Well, a collection of £2 1s. was taken up at the "Bakerite" meeting at which that declaration was made. What does Mr. Baker lecture for?

The Wigan and District Free Church Council deploras the fact that "so many apparently intelligent men" gather to listen to Secularist lecturers in the Market-square. But it is not going to "counteract" the evil work of these men by opposing them. "Public debates," it says, "are not advisable." Of course not. They enable the people to see what a bad case the Christians have. It is added that the Secularist lecturer is "flippant and insincere" and "not open to conviction." But what about the "many apparently intelligent men" whom he leads astray? Why not save their souls by a good debate? Simply because the Wigan Free Church Council knows which would be the losing side in such an encounter.

"Observer" in the *Darwen News* asks why the magistrates are so down upon simple women who go in for spiritism and palmistry while the Churches are allowed to traffic in the secrets of futurity. This is a hit—a palpable hit. We wonder if any Church champion will reply.

The dear *Daily News*, in noticing the death of Mr. Moncure D. Conway, took care not to mention the fact that he was a Freethinker. It even announced that "a memorial service is being arranged by the worshipers at South-place Chapel. "Worshipers" is good—distinctly good. The lecturers to the said "worshipers" are J. M. Robertson, Joseph McCabe, and J. A. Hobson—all Atheists.

So many people are getting afraid of "Atheism." Robert Blatchford himself, in last week's *Clarion*, announced that he is "not an atheist." He also announced that he was laid up with influenza. Perhaps that is the explanation.

Mr. Blatchford reviewed Mr. Campbell's *New Theology*. At the end of his article he remarked that Mr. Campbell said he was still a Christian, but, said Mr. Blatchford, "I don't believe him." Mr. Blatchford now says that he is not an Atheist, and we reply, in his own formula, "We don't believe him."

We don't mean that Mr. Blatchford is telling a falsehood, any more than he meant that Mr. Campbell was telling a falsehood. We simply mean that he is mistaken. If he understands Atheism, he doesn't understand himself; and if he understands himself, he doesn't understand Atheism. That's all.

Mr. Blatchford now talks about "my religion," and apparently he is going to explain it. We look forward to the explanation with much interest. When a man, in a world full of religions, rejects them all as false and pernicious, and then sets up one of his own, he is likely to afford some amusement. An iconoclast turned preacher is generally a more or less comic spectacle.

Can it be that the "not an atheist" and the "my religion" are due, not to the influenza, but to the absence of the *Clarion* humorist? Mr. A. M. Thompson is in America.

The Rev. L. E. Shelford, Prebendary of St. Paul's, has been discoursing on the first chapter of Genesis. As a matter of course, he discovers it to be sublime and full of profound truth—statements that might be helpful if only one were given clear indications of where the sublimity and the truth are to be found. Many devout scientists have put forward theories of reconciliation between science and Genesis, he says, and adds the names of Chalmers, Buckland, Pyc-Smith, and Hugh Miller. Ye gods; Why, the man must have been asleep for some fifty years or more! Imagine a present-day preacher falling back upon pre-Darwinian scientists in this manner! No wonder he adds, "It is felt that the time for reconciliation between the statements of this chapter and the facts of science has not yet come." Really, the man is prehistoric. To anyone who knows anything about the matter, the question of reconciliation was settled years ago. There is no chance of agreement, for the simple reason that the Genesis account is untrue. Most educated religious people admit this much, although Prebendary Shelford seems unaware of the fact. Still, one can't help admiring this gentleman. Before him one experiences the feelings that would arise did one meet a megatherium perambulating Fleet-street.

"The Bible itself actually gains in force and value as treated by Mr. Courtney." So says the *Daily Chronicle* in reviewing that gentleman's *Literary Man's Bible*. What a pity it is that the Holy Ghost did not employ Mr. Courtney in the beginning!

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 24, Stanley Hall, near the "Boston," Fortress-road, Junction-road, London, N.; at 7.30, "The Growth of God."

Thursday and Friday, Nov. 28 and 29, Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street, Bristol; at 8, "Blatchford v. Campbell; or Socialism, Christianity, and Atheism"—"Is Christianity True?"

December 1, 8, 15, Queen's Hall.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 1, Birmingham; 8, Manchester; 15 and 16, Edinburgh.—Address: 241 High-road, Leyton.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 24, West Ham. December 8, Aberdare; 22, Holloway.

R. E. HOLDING.—We remembered you quite well. Glad to hear from a reader of so many years' standing. Thanks for cutting, though we had seen most of the things marked in other papers. Like yourself, we hope Church and Chapel will go on fighting over the schools; they will thus hasten the day of Secular Education.

J. BOWMAN.—Shall be sent as requested. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.

J. GRIFFITHS.—You cannot do better than get William Cobbett's *Legacy to Parsons*, which can be bought for eightpence. It gives the clearest account ever written of the origin of the Church of England as by Law Established. We might write something on the subject in the *Freethinker* if our readers generally desired it.

W. G. E. HASWELL.—Of course Addison must have been aware of the true astronomy; he was probably speaking with what is sometimes called "poetic license." We all still say the sun rises—though it doesn't. Thanks for fresh list of names. We don't quite understand the allusion in that last excerpt from Lafcadio Hearn.

J. MARGETTS.—Your manners are exquisite—like your intelligence.

J. BROUGH.—Some will be useful. Thanks.

BARRY "SAINT."—The gentleman you refer to should write short stories for the *Daily Mail*. Of course it is not true that Mr. Foote ever debated with Mr. W. T. Lee at Cardiff, or elsewhere, and acknowledged himself beaten.

H. C. SHACKLETON.—The subject is hardly worth further correspondence. Pardon us, then, for merely noting one sentence in your letter—namely, that you have read the *Freethinker* for fifteen years and never seen in it anything approaching to "vilification" of Mr. J. M. Robertson.

A. G. ROYSTON.—Glad the Christian friends you persuaded to go with you to hear Mr. Foote at Liverpool were "much impressed." Thanks for all your good wishes.

MARION FERGIE.—We cheerfully accede to your request, and note that Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner lectures to-day (Nov. 24) for the Liverpool Ethical Society, at 6 Colquitt-street; at 3 on "Militarism in India," and at 7 on "Freethought in the Old Century and the New."

E. GURNEY.—*Infernal Death-Beds*, by G. W. Foote, can be obtained at our publishing office, price 8d.

M. JENNINGS thanks us for six copies of the *Freethinker*, and says he is securing the "weekly treat" for himself in future.

C. T. SOLDHANA (Madras).—We have never published our lectures. We never write them out; our speaking is absolutely extemporaneous; and the cost of competent shorthand reports would be considerable. Besides, a report cannot possibly give all of a lecture; expression and gesture are necessarily omitted, and they help to produce a speaker's effect upon the audience. On the whole, we think our readers must be satisfied with the work of our pen—at least for the present.

H. BLACK.—May be able to find room next week.

WATCHFUL.—We had already written on it. See "Acid Drops."

T. MATHER.—See paragraph.

R. HENDERSON.—Pleased you thought our last number "splendid." Hope to see you at Bristol.

C. F. S. BARKER.—Mr. Cohen's articles on "Christian Morality" were as good as you say. We had already congratulated him on a capital bit of work. But we cannot see our way to re-arranging them at present. We have overrun the fund of the Salvation Army Tract, and must have that straightened out before going further.

J. McVIE.—Havelock Ellis's *Man and Woman*, in the International Scientific Series, would give you the information you seek. Glad you are grateful to the friend who introduced you to the *Freethinker*.

J. HOWELL.—As you say, this journal needs to be more widely known; and our readers can help to make it so.

BRIXTON.—We note your denial, but if you did not mean what we said you expressed yourself very badly.

IRISH ADMIRER.—See reply to another correspondent. The project is hardly feasible at present.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

L. E. MABBETT.—Much obliged to you for the information.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Mr. Foote is none the worse for his "great effort" on Sunday, as you call it.

R. H. LEAK.—Shall be sent. Glad you enjoyed yourself so much at the Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday.

JAMES LEO.—You are right, but few auditors like to sit behind the lecturer.

T. ROBERTSON.—Too late for this week; in our next.

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote winds up the present course of Sunday Freethought lectures at Stanley Hall this evening (Nov. 24), his subject being "The Growth of God." North London "saints" should try to bring some of their more orthodox friends along to this lecture.

Mr. Foote had magnificent meetings in the Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday, and the enthusiasm was unbounded. The first was by far the largest afternoon meeting he has ever had there, and the second was by far the largest evening meeting. It was altogether a red-letter day for the Birmingham Branch. A stranger, looking at that grand evening audience—comprising so many ladies, as well as men—might have wondered how it was brought together. Well, it was brought together simply by Mr. Foote's name on a bill. Nothing was owing to the press. Birmingham papers gave Mr. Foote no announcements and no reports. He gets his ever-increasing audiences there in spite of them. They don't make him—and they can't unmake him; and there is comfort in that.

Some of Mr. Foote's audience travelled a long way to hear him. Some cycled, in no very pleasant weather, from Coventry; Mr. Horace Parsons, a good friend of the Birmingham Branch, journeyed over from Evesham; and one little band of Freethinkers, as bright and genial as they make them, came over from the Potteries, and "wouldn't have missed the lectures for anything." Mr. Fathers, the Branch president, occupied the chair at both lectures.

Prior to the lectures in the Birmingham Town Hall some excellent music was finely rendered by a military Brass Band of twenty-eight performers, including some of the best known professional musicians in the Midlands, who all gave their services gratuitously. The conductor, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Davies, was publicly "named" by the great Charles Bradlaugh in the old Dean-street rooms thirty-six years ago; and his son was publicly "named" thirteen years ago in the Town Hall by Mr. Foote.

Birmingham "saints" will please note that two more meetings will be held in the Town Hall next Sunday (Dec. 1). Mr. Cohen will be the lecturer. We hope they will make his visit well known and thus help to secure him big audiences.

Being unable to spare a Sunday at present, Mr. Foote is paying Bristol a week-day visit and delivering two lectures for the new N. S. S. Branch. The lectures are to be delivered next Thursday and Friday evenings (Nov. 28 and 29) in the Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street. Reserved seat tickets can be obtained of Mr. G. W. Harvey, newsagent, Lower Arcade, or Mr. J. Flynn, newsagent, Horsefair.

Mr. Lloyd had a good audience at Stanley Hall on Sunday evening; his lecture was excellent and much appreciated, and there was some useful discussion afterwards.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures at Aberdare on Sunday, December 8, and the local Branch has decided to call a Conference of N. S. S. members scattered through S. Wales to consider

the general question of district organisation. The Conference is to meet at 11 a.m. at Pugsley's restaurant, Cardiff-street, Aberdare.

The Camberwell Branch reports the conclusion of a highly successful open-air season. From April to October sixty-seven lectures have been delivered, and the collections realised over £15, leaving a substantial balance in hand. This happy result is largely due to the efficient chairmanship of Mr. F. R. Theakstone. Three gratuitous lectures were also given by Mr. Theakstone, and two by Mr. L. B. Gallagher. The Branch is now negotiating for a course of lectures in January at the Horns Assembly Rooms, Kensington.

Mr. Harry Snell wishes to say that his letter to the *Daily Chronicle* on Atheism and the Ethical Movement was written in his official capacity as Secretary of the Union of Ethical Societies, and was so shortened as to give an incorrect idea of what he wrote. With reference to our remarks on his long connection with English Freethought, Mr. Snell says: "I do not forget the quarry whence I was hewn, and the debt I owe the Freethought cause. The day may come when I shall be able to devote far more time to it than has been possible of late years."

Mr. F. J. Gould, in the *Leicester Pioneer*, administers a righteous castigation to the Rev. F. B. Feist, vicar of St. Andrew's, who issued a clerical blast against him during the recent municipal elections. The reverend gentleman has since tried to justify his course of procedure, and it is to this effort that Mr. Gould replies. On the subject of marriage and the family, Mr. Feist quotes from Mr. Belfort Bax, a well-known Socialist. Mr. Gould, however, stigmatises this as "a paltry dodge." He says that few men in Leicester have more frequently written and spoken on religion, education, and womanhood than he has, and "why go to Mr. Bax to find out what Mr. Gould thinks and says?" Mr. Gould admits, of course, that he was a Labor candidate, that he is a Socialist, that he is a Secular Educationist. He also admits that he "does not believe in the existence of a Personal God." "The Supreme Being I believe in, and reverently acknowledge," he says, "is our mother Humanity." As to "alarming" Christians, Mr. Gould pleads guilty, if Christians of Mr. Feist's type are meant; and he says he "ought to be proud of having accomplished the very difficult feat of waking up the clergy."

Mr. Feist is dreadfully alarmed at what he calls "Godless Education," but Mr. Gould points out—and we are glad to know of the fact—that Secular Education is supported by the Mayor of Leicester (Mr. Alderman T. Smith), Mr. J. M. Hubbard (Liberal and Christian member for the Castle Ward), Councillor G. E. Hilton (a Primitive Methodist), Mr. Theodore Ellis (a Christian supporter of the Adult School movement), and the Rev. Rowland Evans (minister of Dover-street Baptist Chapel). These are all as good Christians as Mr. Feist can be. So his "Godless Education" falls flatter than he expected.

Townsmen who think the peasant is stupid because he has other thoughts than theirs, in consequence of his different life, are very much mistaken. They think, in their own way, even about the deepest problems. In Mr. George Bourne's new book, *Memoirs of a Surrey Laborer*, there is some capital and characteristic talk by a hardy old peasant who does not take much stock in "this 'ere religion." Take the following:—

"All he kep' on about was the devil. The devil kep' comin' and botherin' of'n. 'Tis a bad job. I s'pose he went right into it—studyin' about these here places nobody ever bin to an' come back again to tell we. Nobody don't know nothin' about it. 'Ten't as if they come back to tell ye. There's my father, what bin dead this forty year. What a crool man he must be not to 've come back in all that time, if he was able, an' tell me about it. That's what I said to Colonel Sadler. 'O,' he says, 'you better talk to the Vicar.' 'Vicar?' I says. 'He won't talk to me.' Besides, what do he know about it more'n anybody else?"

Capital! The pith of the whole matter is there. What do all the preachers of Kingdom-Come know?

There is to be an indoor Freethought meeting at Southend-on-Sea to-day (Nov. 24). Mr. W. J. Ramsey lectures at 8 p.m. on "Salvation" in the Victoria (large) Hall—for the new N. S. S. Branch.

Queen's (Minor) Hall has been engaged on December 1, 8, and 15, for three special Sunday evening lectures by Mr. Foote. His subject on the opening night is one that should crowd the place—"Socialism, Christianity, and Atheism; and Blatchford versus Campbell."

Christian Rule.

"Men discovered that those who loved the gods most were apt to love men least; that the arrogance of universal forgiveness was amazing; that the most malicious had the effrontery to pray for their enemies; and that humility and tyranny were the fruit of the same tree."—COLONEL INGERSOLL, *Oration on the Gods*.

"The greatest sin hitherto is the word of him who said, 'Woe unto those who laugh here.' He did not love enough. Otherwise he would have loved us also, the laughers."—NIETZSCHE.

"So the priests hated him, and he Repaid their hate with cheerful glee."
SHELLEY, *Rosalind and Helen*.

HAVING the opportunity of seeing Mr. Pinero's play, "His House in Order," performed by a passing touring company, we availed ourselves of our good fortune to see this piece. No doubt most of the readers of this journal have seen or heard of Mr. Pinero's play; for those who have not, it is sufficient to say that the principal characters are, Filmer Jesson, M.P., Nina (his second wife), Sir Daniel and Lady Ridgeley (the first wife's parents), with their son Pryce and daughter Geraldine. These, with Hilary Jesson, brother to the M.P., and British minister to Santa Guada, who is spending a holiday at his brother's house, are the essential characters in the play.

Filmer Jesson, M.P., is just one of the stiff, unbending, autocratic individuals who pass for gentlemen among the upper middle class. Everyone must be at his beck and call. Everything must be in its proper place. The household must work with clock-work precision and regularity. In fact, his house must be kept in order so that he is absolutely free to pursue his "career." Now, Annabel, the first wife, having been brought up under the strict, puritanical training of the Ridgeley's, made a perfect wife, according to the ideas of Filmer Jesson. That is to say, she performed the duties of a superior, upper servant.

Unfortunately, however, Annabel dies and Mr. Jesson remarries. But Nina, the gay and light-hearted new wife, has no idea of keeping a house in order; so Geraldine, the dead wife's sister, is installed to keep "His House in Order." Then commences a petty persecution of the second wife by the first wife's relations, who are bitter Puritans, looking upon amusement as of the Devil, and hating the cheerful, healthy, gaiety of Nina, the second wife; thwarting and opposing her upon every possible occasion, and generally making her life miserable.

Moreover, they are always comparing her conduct with that of the first wife. As Nina tells Filmer's brother, it is all Annabel, Annabel, Annabel. However, Nina accidentally discovers some letters of the first wife's, proving that she was not the paragon of virtue she appeared to be. The repression of all the healthy and joyous instincts of her nature found vent in a secret and illicit love for one of her husband's friends, the offspring of the guilty intrigue being the boy Derek, the only child of the first marriage. Filmer's brother Hilary finds Nina with the letters, and persuades her not to reveal them; and she gives them to him to destroy. Then Hilary remonstrates with Filmer upon the manner in which Nina is being treated, but Filmer will brook no interference; then Hilary, as a last resource, produces the letters, and Filmer, overcome by his wife's generosity in not using the letters, gets rid of the pious crew, restores Nina to her proper position, and all ends happily.

The play interested me most as a study of the bitter puritanical piety displayed by the first wife's relations. It is to be observed that Mr. Pinero does not represent the first wife's relatives to be hypocrites; they are not using religion as a cloak for immorality; they are simply earnest Christians like the old Puritans, whose praises the Nonconformists are never tired of singing, and of whom the historian Macaulay has recorded that they suppressed bull-baiting, "not because it gave pain to the bull, but

because it gave pleasure to the spectators." The same hatred of pleasure displayed by the first Christians, of whom Gibbon has remarked that they were so fearful of enjoying themselves in this world that "The first sensation of pleasure was marked as the first moment of their abuse."

Only those who have spent their youth in a really pious household can appreciate the true inwardness of the "religion of love." We should think that Mr. Pinero must have experienced the effects of Christian charity at some time in his life, or he could not reproduce it with such fidelity. Those who have not experienced a real religious training should see this play; they can sit at ease, like Lazarus gazing on Dives in torment, and see the religion of love in action without the inconvenience of being operated upon.

When the child Derek is sent off to bed, he is told that he need not stay to wash his hands, but he is by no means to hurry over his prayers. When the French governess strikes a few bars of Chopin upon the piano she is immediately suppressed; Chopin is too worldly, and so on.

When the Nonconformist advocates closing the museums, libraries, and shops on a Sunday, he exhibits great anxiety that the working man should get his "day of rest"; but the real reason is the puritanical one—the fear lest the working man should enjoy himself on that day. Charles Dickens, in *Little Dorrit*, has given a vivid picture of the horrors of the Christian Sunday. It is Sunday evening in London:—

"In every thoroughfare, up almost every alley, and down almost every turning, some doleful bell was tolling, as if the plague were in the city and the dead-carts were going round. Everything was bolted and barred that could by possibility furnish relief to an overworked people. No pictures, no unfamiliar animals, no rare plants or flowers, no natural or artificial wonders of the ancient world—all taboo with that enlightened strictness, that the ugly South Sea gods in the British Museum might have supposed themselves at home again. Nothing to see but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to change the brooding mind or raise it up. Nothing for the spent toiler to do but to compare the monotony of his seventh day with the monotony of his six days, think what a weary life he led, and make the best of it—or the worst, according to the probabilities."

The sound of the bells revived in Arthur Clenham's memory a long procession of miserable Sundays. The dreary Sunday of his childhood. The sleepy Sunday of his boyhood; when he was marched to chapel like a military deserter. The interminable Sunday of his nonage. "There was a legion of Sundays; all days of unserviceable bitterness and mortification, slowly passing before him." "Heaven forgive me," said he, "and those who trained me. How I have hated this day!" Yes, and thousands could add, "so have we"; the present writer among them.

The late George Gissing—that very fine, but rather depressing, novelist—had also experienced the desolating effect of the British Sunday. In his novel, *The Emancipated*, there is a description of a Sunday morning, from which we cull the following:—

"Mrs. Elgar moves about silently, the pain on her brow deepening as chapel time approaches. At length, the boy and girl go upstairs to be 'got ready,' which means that they indue other garments yet more uncomfortable than those they already wear. This process over, they descend again to the breakfast-room, and again sit there, waiting for the dread moment of departure. The boy is more rebellious than usual; he presently drums with his feet, and even begins to whistle very low a popular air. His sister looks at him, first with astonished reproof, then in dread."

His sister has a vivid recollection, in after years, of the dreadful day when Reuben, quarreling with his mother—

"Uttered words which signified hatred and rejection of all he had been taught to hold divine. Mrs. Elgar's pallid, speechless horror; the cruel chastisement inflicted on the lad by his father; she could never look back on it all without sickness of heart. Thenceforth,

her brother and his wild ways embodied for her that awful thing, infidelity."

How many young lives have been wrecked because, in their wild protest against such an inhuman system, they have gone to the other extreme, and, throwing natural morality away, along with the evil faith, have run riot until they have reached the prison cell or a suicide's grave. To use a homely phrase, they have "thrown the baby away along with the dirty water."

This is not a fancy theory, invented by a wicked infidel, to score one off the Nonconformist philistine. The late Charles Haddon Spurgeon himself lamented the fact. He says:—

"When I see so many children of Christians turn out out worse than others, when I find some of the sons of ministers among the ringleaders in sin, what can I do but pray that I may sooner die than have such a curse fall upon myself."*

Of course, Spurgeon could not see that religion was the cause of this lamentable falling away from the path of virtue of the children of Christians; who according to their theory, should have served as a pattern to the children of the more worldly and unregenerate; instead of serving as a warning and an awful example.

In fact, he actually advised more religion as a remedy! "The Puritans," he says, "never fell into the fault of sparing the rod, but their children were catechised every Sabbath, were prayed for and wept over, and the Puritan household was a very heaven on earth." Very likely; for so far as we can discover from a perusal of Holy Scripture, the only occupation of the heavenly population, consists of standing round a throne, singing psalms and chanting praises to God Almighty, for ever and ever. An eternal Nonconformist Sunday.

But of human happiness the Puritan family knew nothing; they looked upon it as an invention of the Devil. Certainly they did not spare the rod. They must have been like the people spoken of by Colonel Ingersoll, who, he says, must have thought that when the Savior said, "Suffer little children to come unto me," "he had a raw hide under his mantle, and made that remark simply to get the children within striking distance."

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was also a believer in the rod. He gives directions how to train children. "Break their wills betimes," he says, "begin this work before they can run, before they can speak plain." He exhorts parents never to praise their children for anything. "Let a child, from a year old, be taught to fear the rod and to cry softly; from that age, make him do as he is bid, if you whip him ten times running to affect it."† He established a school to put these principles into practice. The children of tender parents, he said, had no business there, and all parents had to agree not to take their child away, "no, not for a day, till they took him for good and all."‡ The poor little victims had to rise every morning, winter and summer, at four. They were never allowed out of sight of a master; even in the dormitory, where they slept, a master occupied a bed and a lamp was kept burning all night. "As we have no playdays," says Wesley, "so neither do we allow any time for play on any day; he that plays when he is a child will play when he is a man."§

That is how the religion of love and happiness works out in practice. To-day, it is not so arbitrary and domineering. It is engaged in a life and death struggle with science and civilisation, and it is trying to compromise with "the Prince of this World."

But let us see what it was like when it was supreme. The Puritans of the Commonwealth were the representatives of the Nonconformists of our day. They ruled the country from 1649, when

* Sermon No. 713, *Soul Murder*.

† Southey, *Life of Wesley*, p. 561 (1871).

‡ *Ibid*, p. 344.

§ Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii., p. 590.

Charles I. was beheaded—for his crimes—until 1660; a period of eleven years. At the end of this time, they had made themselves so hateful that the people were glad to welcome even another Charles rather than continue under the yoke of the Godly Puritans. If the Puritans had been less bigoted there is no reason why we should have had another king. We might be living now under parliamentary government, like America or France, but for religion.

When the nation did succeed in throwing off the Puritan incubus, they rushed to the other extreme; and the period that followed is marked as the most sensual and licentious in English history. "The whole face of England," says the historian, Green, "was changed in an instant. All that was noblest and best in Puritanism was whirled away with its pettiness and its tyranny in the current of the nation's hate."* The knowledge that his ideal of a Puritan England was a failure, embittered Cromwell's last days and hastened the fever that ended his life. He felt that the reign of Puritanism would end with his death. As Green remarks:—

"The children even of the leading Puritans stood aloof from Puritanism. The eldest of Cromwell's sons made small pretensions to religion. Milton's nephews, though reared in his house, were writing satires against Puritan hypocrisy and contributing to collections of filthy songs. The two daughters of the great preacher, Stephen Marshall, were to figure as actresses on the infamous stage of the Restoration."†

Even their own children could not stand it. Under Puritan rule, dancing was not allowed; even the innocent dancing of children round the maypole was forbidden. The theatres were closed; Sunday sports abolished; Christmas itself had to pass without pies, puddings, or any merry-making whatever.

When the Puritan rule came to an end, human nature, so long denied innocent amusement, rushed to the other extreme, and the shamelessness and brutality of the Restoration passes belief. To cite Green again:—

"Lord Rochester was a fashionable poet, and the titles of some of his poems are such as no pen of our day would copy. Sir Charles Sedley was a fashionable wit, and the foulness of his words made even the porters of Covent Garden pelt him from the balcony when he ventured to address them."

The dialogue of the stage was "of a studied and deliberate foulness, which even its wit fails to redeem from disgust. Wycherly, the popular playwright of the time, remains the most brutal among all dramatists; and nothing gives so damning an impression of his day as the fact that he found actors to repeat his words and audiences to applaud them"‡—an illustration on a public scale of that which Spurgeon lamented on a private scale, and through a similar cause.

The next great revival of religion in this country was that under Wesley and Whitefield, which Mr. John Morley speaks of as "the great Evangelical revival, terrible and inevitable, which has so deeply colored religious feeling and warped intellectual growth in England ever since."§ We are feeling the effects of that upheaval even now; for, as Lecky observes:—

"To the strength of the Methodist and Evangelical opinion is mainly due the strange anomaly that, at the present day, after nearly fifty years of almost uninterrupted democratic legislation, the great majority of public museums and galleries in England are closed on the only day on which the bulk of the people could enjoy them. The working classes have thus been deprived of a source of amusement and instruction of pre-eminent virtue, and the public-houses of their most formidable competitors."||

The Nonconformist party is still a power in the land, as the last general election has shown; but all their energy has, so far, been spent in fighting the

Church for the possession of the children. When they have settled with their old enemy they will turn their attention to putting those things right which offend the Nonconformist conscience, among which may be reckoned the closing of all shops on Sunday, stoppage of Sunday railway travelling, closing of those museums and picture galleries now open on Sunday, prohibition of music in the parks, and so on, until they have brought back again the old Puritan Sabbath. Freethinkers, arise! The Philistines are upon us. Let us attack this debasing superstition with still more energy, for while it survives it is a menace to the progress and happiness of humanity.

W. MANN.

Leon Gambetta.

GAMBETTA was the greatest French orator and statesman of his age. He was one of those splendid and potent figures who redeem nations from commonplace. To him, more than to any other man, the present Republic owes its existence. He played deeply for it in the great game of life and death after Sedan, and by his titanic organisation of the national defence he made it impossible for Louis Napoleon to reseat himself on the throne with the aid of German bayonets. Again, in 1877, he saved the Republic he loved so well from the monarchial conspirators. He defeated their base attempt to subvert a nation's liberties, but the struggle sapped his enormous vitality, which had already been impaired by the terrible labors of his Dictatorship. He died at the early age of forty-four, having exhausted his strength in fighting for freedom. Scarcely a dark thread was left in the leonine mane of black hair, and the beard matched the whiteness of his shroud.

France mourned like one man at the hero's death. The people gave him a funeral that eclipsed the obsequies of kings. He was carried to his grave by a million citizens. Yet in the whole of that vast throng, as Mr. Frederic Harrison remarked, "there was no no emblem of Christ, no priest of God, not one mutter of heaven, no hollow appeal to the mockery of the resurrection, no thought but for the great human loss and human sorrow. It was the first time in the history of Europe that a foremost man had been laid to rest by a nation in grief, without priest or church, prayer or hymn."

Like almost every eminent Republican, Gambetta was a Freethinker. As Mr. Frederic Harrison says, "He systematically and formally repudiated any kind of acceptance of theology." During his lifetime he never entered a church, even when attending a marriage or a funeral, but stopped short at the door, and let who would go inside and listen to the mummery of the priest. In his own expressive words, he declined to be "rocked asleep by the myths of childish religions." He professed himself an admirer and a disciple of Voltaire—*l'admirateur et le disciple de Voltaire*. Every member of his ministry was a Freethinker, and one of them, the eminent scientist, Paul Bert, a militant Atheist. Speaking at a public meeting not long before his death, Gambetta called Comte the greatest thinker of this century; that Comte who proposed to "re-organise society, without God and without king, by the systematic cultus of humanity."

When John Stuart Mill died, a Christian journal, which died itself a few weeks after, declared he had gone to hell, and wished all his friends and disciples would follow him. Several pious prints expressed similar sentiments with regard to Gambetta. Passing by the English papers, let us look at a few French ones. The Duc de Broglie's organ, naturally anxious to insult the statesman who had so signally beaten him, said that "he died suddenly after hurling defiance at God." The *Pays*, edited by that pious bully, Paul de Cassagnac, said: "He dies, poisoned by his own blood. He set himself up against God. He has fallen. It is fearful. But it is just." The

* Green, *History of the English People*, vol. iii., p. 328.

† *Ibid.*, p. 314.

‡ P. 329.

§ John Morley, *Voltaire*, p. 94 (1872).

|| H. B. Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii., p. 641.

Catholic *Univers* said, "While he was recruiting his strength, and meditating fresh assaults upon the Church, and promising himself victory, the divine Son of the Carpenter was preparing his coffin."

These tasteful exhibitions of Christian charity show that Gambetta lived and died a Freethinker. Yet the sillier sort of Christians have not scrupled to insinuate, and even argue, that he was secretly a believer. One asinine priest, M. Feuillet des Conches, formerly Vicar of Notre Dame des Victoires, and then honorary Chamberlain to the Pope, stated in the London *Times* that, about two years before his death, Gambetta came to his church with a brace of big wax tapers, which he offered in memory of his mother. He also added that the great orator knelt before the Virgin, dipped his finger in holy water, and made the sign of the cross. Was there ever a more absurd story? Gambetta was a remarkable-looking man, and extremely well known. He could not have entered a church unobserved, and, had he done so, the story would have gone round Paris the next day. Yet nobody heard of it till after his death. Either the priest mistook some portly dark man for Gambetta, or he was guilty of a pious fraud.

According to another story, Gambetta said "I am lost" when the doctors told him he could not recover. But the phrase *Je suis perdu* has no theological significance. Nothing is more misleading than a literal translation. Gambetta simply meant "It is all over, then!" This monstrous perversion of a simple phrase could only have arisen from sheer malice or gross ignorance of French.

While lying on his death-bed Gambetta listened to Rabelais, Molière, and other favorite but not very pious authors, read aloud by a young student who adored him. Almost his last words, as recorded in the *Times*, were these: "Well, I have suffered so much, it will be a deliverance." The words are calm, collected, and truthful. There is no rant and no quailing. It is the natural language of a strong man confronting Death after long agony. Shortly after he breathed his last. The deliverance had come. Still lay the mighty heart and the fertile brain that had spent themselves for France, and the silence was only broken by the sobs of dear friends who would have died to save them. No priest administered "the consolations of religion," and he expressly ordered that he should be buried without religious rites. His great heroic genius was superior to the creeds, seeing through them and over them. He lived and died a Freethinker, like nearly all the great men since Mirabeau and Danton who have built up the freedom and glory of France.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE WILL.

If all our actions are reflex, the result of stimuli, then we have no will. That which we imagine our will is only unnoticed stimuli which are the real initiatives in all our actions. If there be a *hiatus* anywhere which cannot be attributed to stimuli, then we would be justified in assuming some unknown agent as our "will," but there is none.—A. Redcote Dewar.

ASSOCIATION.

At every step you have need of your brothers; and you could not satisfy the simplest needs of life without aiding yourselves by their work. Though superior to every other being by virtue of association with your fellows, you are, when isolated, inferior in strength to many animals, and weak and incapable of development and of a complete existence. All the noblest aspirations of your heart, such as love of country, and also those less virtuous, such as desire of glory and of others' praise, indicate your inborn tendency to unite your life with the life of the millions who surround you. You are, then, created for association. It multiplies your strength a hundredfold; makes the ideas of others yours, and the progress of others yours; and raises, improves, and sanctifies your nature through the affections and growing sentiment of the unity of the human family. The wider, the more intimate and comprehensive your association with your brothers, the further you will advance on the path of individual progress.—Mazzini.

Correspondence.

SOCIALISM AND ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have just been reading Mr. Cohen's thoughtful and interesting article on "The Standpoint of Atheism," in which he attempts to prove that Socialism is essentially Atheistic in its position.

May I, as a Socialist—I hardly like to use the name, as it is associated with so many absurd so-called reforms with which I am not in accord—urge that he is somewhat unjust to the Socialist party?

In what way, I would ask him, is Socialism, as a political party, more Atheistic in its position than the Conservative or Liberal parties? Does Mr. Balfour seek to ameliorate the economic disadvantages of the masses with the aid of God? Certainly not! Tariff reform is his remedy. Does Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman? Of course not! Free trade is his palliative. As a matter of fact, all political parties leave God strictly out of their calculations when legislating on economic reforms. I believe I am right, Sir, in saying that you once gave, as your reason for excluding political questions from the columns of the *Freethinker*, the statement that the more planks one adds to a platform the fewer people it will hold.

Why, then, should Socialists place themselves at a disadvantage by adding the plank of Atheism—it would have to be aggressive Atheism—to their platform, when there is room in their ranks for all desirous of social reform?

ALFRED GERMANY.

THE CHRISTIAN EUROPEAN.

If one could observe the strangely painful, equally coarse and refined comedy of European Christianity with the derisive and impartial eye of an Epicurean god, I should think one would never cease marvelling and laughing; does it not actually seem that some single will has ruled over Europe for eighteen centuries in order to make a *sublime abortion* of man? He, however, who, with opposite requirements (no longer Epicurean) and with some divine hammer in his hand, could approach this almost voluntary degeneration and stunting of mankind, as exemplified in the European Christian (Pascal, for instance), would he not have to cry aloud with rage, pity, and horror: "Oh, you bunglers, presumptuous pitiful bunglers, what have you done! Was that a work for your hands? How you have hacked and botched my finest stone! What have you presumed to do!"—I should say that Christianity has hitherto been the most portentous of presumptions. Men, not great enough, nor hard enough, to be entitled as artists to take part in fashioning man; men, not sufficiently strong and far-sighted to allow, with sublime self-constraint, the obvious law of the thousandfold failures and perishings to prevail; men, not sufficiently noble to see the radically different grades of rank and intervals of rank that separate man from man: *such* men, with their "equality before God," have hitherto swayed the destiny of Europe; until at last a dwarfed, almost ludicrous species has been produced, a gregarious animal, something obliging, sickly, mediocre, the European of the present day.—Nietzsche, "*Beyond Good and Evil*."

YOUR PARENTS.

Love your parents. Do not let the family which springs from you make you ever forget the family from which you sprang. Too often indeed the new ties relax the old, whereas they ought only to be a new link in the chain of love which should bind together the three generations of a family. Surround the white heads of the mother and of the father with tender and respectful affection till their last day. Strew their way to the grave with flowers. Breathe over their weary souls a fragrance of faith and immortality with the constancy of your love. And may the affection which you keep inviolate for your parents be a pledge of that which your children will keep for you.—Mazzini.

Obituary.

ON Sunday, the 10th inst., an old member of the Birmingham Branch of the N. S. S. (Mr. Bridges) was buried at the Lodge Hill Cemetery. He was at one time president of the Branch, and took a very active part in our movement, especially at the period when Mr. Bradlaugh was fighting for his seat in the House of Commons. Enfeebled by age and a long illness, he remained staunch to his Freethought principles to the last, and at his wish was accorded a Secular funeral.—J. PARTRIDGE.

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.

STANLEY HALL (Fortress-road, Junction-road, N.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Growth of God."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Theology Nonplussed." Selections by the Band before Lecture.

COUNTRY.

ABERDARE BRANCH N. S. S. (Pugsley's Restaurant): 6, G. Lewis, "The Decay of the Churches."

BRISTOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-square): G. W. Foote, at 8 each evening—Thursday, Nov. 28, "Blatchford v. Campbell; Socialism, Christianity, and Atheism"; Friday, Nov. 29, "Is Christianity True?"

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, W. M. Bushby, "Was Burns an Orthodox Christian?"

FAIRSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, J. R. Clynes, M.P., "Reform: Public and Personal."

GLASGOW: Secular Hall, Brunswick street—J. M. Robertson, 12 (noon), "Christianity and Politics"; 6.30, "The Evolution of Religion"; II.—The Subsidiary Doctrines and Symbols of Christianity." Illustrated by limelight views.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Club, 125 Albion-street): Friday, Nov. 23, at 8, H. S. Kitchen (Zetetic Society), "Some Ass-tro-Comical Fallacies."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): H. S. Wishart, 3, "Atheism and the Bottom Dog"; 7, "The New Theology a Red Herring."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, M. Clark (Russian), "Christian Russia."

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Nov. 28, at 8, R. Mitchell, "Immortality."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Lecture arrangements.

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Mound, at 3, meets for Discussion.

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S.: Market Cross, Saturday, at 8, Geo. T. Whitehead, a Lecture.

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