

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

Christianity gave Eros poison to drink; he did not die of it, certainly, but degenerated to Vice.

—NIETZSCHE.

Lying by Suggestion.

THE Salvation Army has a rival in the Church Army and "General" Booth an imitator in the Rev. W. Carlile. Some time ago this gentleman got into a heated correspondence with the editor of *John Bull*. He was challenged on a matter of figures, and he got the worst of the encounter; in fact, he soon crawled out of the arena and cut a most abject figure—besides leaving a very unpleasant (financial) smell behind him.

We have never heard this Rev. W. Carlile, neither have we seen him in person; but we have noticed his photograph in the shop windows, and gazed upon it with mingled dislike and contempt. He stands in the pulpit, dressed in parsonic costume, holding a trombone in one hand, and raising the other histrionically to heaven; his perky face, and his perky little hand, of which we judge he is proud, being enough to repel anybody who has a relish for wholesome human nature.

"General" Booth runs the *War Cry* and Mr. Carlile runs the *Church Army Gazette*; and in a recent number of this paper there is an item which is about as disgraceful as anything we recollect in the gutter-walks of Christian journalism.

In order to expose this wretched performance as it should be, we must reproduce it completely, and as nearly as possible in the style of the original. Here it is then:—

"REGRETTED—BUT TOO LATE.

An avowed infidel, whose language and conduct had been most profane, and who had boldly argued for man's right to kill himself when he found it expedient, swallowed a quantity of opium which put an end to his life.

Among his papers was found one on which was written: 'I have at this moment swallowed a vial full of tincture of opium, consequently my life will be

but short. Whether there will be a heaven or hell I leave the parson to divine.'

(The part of the manuscript which followed was blotted out, and concluded thus: 'My hand trembles, my eyes grow dim, I can see to write no more, but

he that would be happy should be religious.'

Dear Reader, are you at this moment swallowing the tincture? Poison that is slowly but surely destroying your soul, and which consists of Indifference, Worldliness and Unbelief, etc. Or have you taken God's antidote for the Poison of Sin? and are you enjoying the happiness which enters into a man or woman with the life of Jesus?

'Tis heaven or hell for you and me,
Now make your choice which shall it be.

Capt. MONKS."

We have reproduced this item as nearly as possible. One detail we were obliged to omit. The blank space over the words "The Late Charles

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Bradlaugh" was filled with a little, rough, but recognisable portrait of the great Freethought leader.

Now if our readers will just imagine the whole item as it appeared in the *Church Army Gazette*, including the portrait of Charles Bradlaugh, they will perceive the object of this disgusting manoeuvre.

"Captain" Monks probably regards this as a very clever proceeding, and so may his Commander-in-Chief. We dare say they will feel astonished at being told that it is a shocking piece of blackguardism. But that only makes their case the more hopeless.

The impression that "Captain" Monks intends to convey—unless he is too dense to see the point of his wretched joke—is that Charles Bradlaugh was the "avowed infidel" who committed suicide by swallowing opium, and yet exclaimed before he died that to be religious was the only way to be happy. The ordinary Christian reader, who knew nothing about the circumstances of Charles Bradlaugh's death, could form no other conclusion. Printing the portrait of Bradlaugh, with his name under it, in the very midst of the story, could not possibly serve any other purpose.

For the sake of casual readers of this week's *Freethinker*, we may state that Charles Bradlaugh died on January 30, 1891, of hypertrophy of the heart following on Bright's disease. He came home ill on January 10; was nearly killed by an attack of spasm three days afterwards; knew that his case was past cure, and met his fast-approaching death with perfect serenity. He was attended by Dr. Ramskill and Dr. Bell, and his daughter was aided by a professional nurse; all of whom signed a testimony that during his illness he was never heard to utter a word "either directly or indirectly bearing upon religion or any religious subject." His mind was at rest on all such subjects; the convictions of a lifetime did not need to be ventilated on his death-bed; day by day he grew weaker, but was always cheerful, until he sank into the last unconsciousness. It was during that unconsciousness, which was never to be broken, that the telegram came announcing that the House of Commons had resolved to expunge from its records the resolutions which had excluded him from his seat. He had won the crowning victory of a great war, though he did not know it—but that did not affect the victory itself.

It was as an Atheist that Bradlaugh was excluded from the House of Commons; it was openly as an Atheist that at length he took his seat; he lectured as an Atheist up to the last remnant of his platform strength; his *National Reformer* was "Atheist" right under its title to the very last number that bore his name; as an Atheist he lived for more than forty of his fifty-seven years, and as an Atheist he died.

Any whisper to the contrary came, in the first place, from a Christian brother, whom he had been a good friend to as long as possible, and from whom he had at last to separate himself completely. No intercourse had existed between them for many years, and none took place at the end. Whatever the Christian brother says, therefore, is simply the product of his own pious imagination. He is only trading on the family name. That is his whole fortune. He could never do it honor himself. It was made illustrious by one whom he resembles as an ape resembles a man.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Word "Religion."

THERE are many non-Christian and, in the popular sense, non-religious people who are yet desirous of retaining the term "religion." They are under the impression that to be without a religion of some sort is to be in a thoroughly bad way, an irreligious person being generally pronounced desperately wicked. Only the other day a highly-intelligent gentleman claimed that, although he had completely renounced every form of theology, he was still a religious man, religion, in his opinion, signifying the science of right living in this world. Etymologically, no doubt, religion is a word capable of bearing a great many diverse interpretations; but historically it is difficult, if not impossible, to dissociate it from theology. In literature, religion is usually surrounded by an atmosphere of supernaturalism. Tiele understands by it a "mode of divine worship based on the belief held in common" by all who profess it. K stlin defines it as "the conscious relation between man and God, and the expression of that relation in human conduct." Matthew Arnold describes it as "morality touched by emotion." In all these definitions religion presupposes theology, out of which it naturally grows. Professor William James is not overburdened with theology, as most readers well know; but even he contends that religion means "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the Divine." Professor W. E. Collins, while holding that "religion and theology differ both in idea and in scope," says that "it may indeed be questioned whether they ever are, or can be, entirely separable"; and he also refers to the fact that "many contend that a theology of some kind, more or less definite or indefinite, is presupposed in all religion, at any rate implicitly." In common speech, religious people are invariably looked upon as worshipers, or as those who devote a certain portion of their time to Bible-reading and prayer.

Therefore it follows that to attach a non-theological meaning to the term "religion" is to depart from popular usage, and to be open to constant misunderstanding and misrepresentation. If you say to the man in the street, "You ought to become religious," he will take it for granted that you are urging him to make his peace with God, and get ready for death and the judgment. Such are the associations of the term that the merest mention of it naturally conjures up the thought of eternity and the alleged duty of preparing for it. Is it, then, worth while to perpetuate the word "religion"? What is to be gained by its retention, or lost by dropping it?

Mr. Salter has written an exceedingly interesting book, entitled *Ethical Religion*, in which there is a chapter on "Morality as a Religion"; but even Mr. Salter is obliged to admit that "religion is commonly regarded as concerned with another realm than that of ethics," and that "reverence and awe still go out to Divine persons, or perhaps, vaguely, to unknown powers, not to the laws of morality." He is quite right when he says that "reverence and awe have their real ground and object in the natural order under which we live," and that "morality become conscious, become aware of what it means and involves, seen in its wide, deep ramifications, takes on something of that hue of feeling, something of that solemnity that of old characterised men's commerce with the gods"; but what benefit is to be derived from calling "morality touched by emotion" a religion? The fact that love to the community may be as intense and joyous as love to God used to be, does not justify the application to the former of the term "religion," which has always been associated with the latter. As love to man is not the same thing as, and may exist in the absence of, love to God, why should the two be called by the same name? The apostle James says that "pure religion and undefiled is this, to visit the fatherless

and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world"; but he supernaturalises the whole thing by the introduction of the words, "before God and Father." What the apostle means is, that the service of man is a duty we owe to God, and can rightly discharge only by God's help. Now, Christianity is one of the nine ethical religions, and from a purely ethical point of view the nine are substantially identical; but we must not lose sight of the fact that there are scores of religions in which the ethical elements have absolutely no place. Nature-religions are practically innumerable; but they are all alike in their dependence upon some form of theism. Every one of them has its god or gods, with whom all its devotees have some ritual dealings.

We maintain that it is next to impossible to divest the term "religion" in the minds of the people of its supernatural associations. Every time a Secularist employs it he is under the necessity of explaining what he means by it, or two-thirds of his hearers will be radically misled. In Christendom, to be religious is synonymous with being a Christian. If a Freethinker says that he is religious, the natural inference is that in some way, peculiar to himself, he accepts Christianity, which, of course, is in no sense true. Likewise, when a Christian minister admits that there are no theological certainties, the "one sure thing to start with being our moral nature and the way it acts," we logically conclude that he has repudiated Christianity and become an Atheist, but we are quite wrong. "The reactions of our moral nature," he says, "are as inevitable as those of chemistry, and there is no mistake about their character. That is the universal testimony of humanity." This, however, he calls a *religious* certainty, as if he had relieved religion of its heavy load of divinity. But listen to the following:—

"Equally sure are we of the difference between the moral and spiritual up and down. We may make a thousand mistakes in history or natural science; we make none as to the quality of our acts and affections. And it is here we find our religious criterion. Here is it that multitudes of humble believers, who would stumble helplessly in the region of expert criticism, know themselves on sure ground. They know with Zwingle that 'truth does not depend on the discussions of men, but has its seat and rests invincibly in the soul. It is an *experience* which every one may have.' Precisely. It is an experience, and it is having the experience as a personal possession that is the only way to certainty."

Certainty as to what? As to the reality of the difference between right and wrong in conduct? By no means, but as to the truth of what is called fundamental Christianity. Religion is not morality, after all, but an experience of the saving and sanctifying love of God in Christ. In truth, of course, this is nothing but culpable trifling with a great subject. The difference between right and wrong is a discovery of social experience. Apart from the requirements of social life there is no such thing as "a universal principle of right and wrong." Right and wrong are simply relations which, in the absence of the things or beings related, would have no existence. But how on earth does moral certainty lead to the certainty that Christianity is true? Listen again:—

"St. Paul had certain theories as to the world-order and other matters, in which we can hardly follow him. But that sense and feeling of what Christ was to him, which sent him missioning to the world's end, was a fact, an actuality in him, which no criticism can shake. And what made him sure can make us sure."

Thus an experience of the reality of the difference between right and wrong in conduct has carried this apologist up to a realisation of the doctrine of Atonement as taught by Paul. Of course, between the two experiences there is absolutely no connection except in the theologian's brain. There are thousands of people who, though their moral sense is both deep and quick, have had no experience whatever of the saving grace of heaven. In their knowledge of the difference between right and wrong

they have found no religious criterion of any kind; and in consequence they have no use whatever for the word "religion."

We are often told that, whereas theology has generally been an instrument of incalculable cruelty and injustice, religion has never accomplished anything but good in the world. But at what period in the history of Christendom did theology and religion ever stand apart, and act independently? Has not religion always meant theology in practice? Speaking historically, therefore, we are bound to say that religion has never been divorced from theology. The form which religion takes is determined by the brand of theology held by its professors. Every religious sect is the exponent of a specific school of theology. In view of this fact would it not be much wiser on the part of all Secularists to relinquish the terms that savor of the bitter and bloody controversies which blacken all the pages of history? Even at the present time the religious sects of this country are constantly quarreling and wrangling as to which religion shall be established in the schools; and as yet no end to the dispute is within sight. If Secularism or Ethicism insists upon being classed as a religion, the demand for secular education is, after all, nothing in the world but a cry for the establishment and endowment of a new religion in Government schools. If the secular policy is ever to be adopted, it must be advocated as a strictly non-theological and non-religious policy. But once Secularism becomes, or allows itself to be characterised as a religion, though a religion for this world only, it will certainly commit suicide. What the world needs is, not a new religion, rational or irrational, but deliverance from *all* religions, even from the very word. Secularism arose as a protest, in the name of reason, against every religion under the sun; and as long as there is one religion left, it is bound to continue a protest against it, and an invincible plea for morality as an exclusively non-religious, human affair.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Sermon.

MY text is one with which the world is very familiar, and yet not so familiar as to have quite grasped all that it implies. It runs, in the words of an old prayer: "Oh, God!—if there be a God?—save my soul—if I have a soul?—from hell—if there be a hell? Amen!—if necessary." It will be observed that our text divides itself into three parts—God, Soul, Hell; each head giving us a distinct and yet interdependent subject. In the first place we have the simple cry, "Oh, God!" Simple, and yet how profound! We have to do with the age-long cry of the human soul to something outside and higher than itself. And consider all that is involved in such a cry. Man has been crying for ages to his gods for some sign of their presence, some indication of their readiness to help. Here and there some good and holy man, who, by fasting, solitary meditation, and by putting both mind and body into the proper condition for seeing heavenly visions, has had some sign vouchsafed to him. But the maceration of mind and body by which such visions are rendered possible requires a type of character possessed by few. The majority cannot rise to such things; they continue generation after generation seeking for a sign, yet finding it not; crying to God, and listening in vain for a reply.

Yet the craving does not die. In moments of distress, of helplessness, of highly-wrought emotion, the old feeling finds expression. How expressive is the spontaneous exclamation, "God help him!" that rises to our lips when we hear that human aid is no longer able to keep a dear friend or relative with us! Or the cry of "Good God!" when we are told of some horrible and far-reaching disaster by sea or land. The unconscious emphasis laid upon the first word of the exclamation is also not without its signi-

ficance. The uneducated bear the same testimony as the cultured. The denizen of the slums, when his feelings are wrought beyond the ordinary, calls upon God to deprive him of vision (expressed in the vernacular "Gawd blimey") to witness that he will behave in this or that particular manner. "God's truth," or "Gawd's strewth," is also the way in which he bears testimony to a truth that is not of the common order. Nay, his very lack of education and culture makes for a deepening of his perception of spiritual things. The primitive conception of the unseen is unclouded by the doubt that has resulted from education; he is on more of a spiritual level with those who in days gone by walked and talked with God.

There are not a few who have drawn from this unanswered human cry the inference that man's belief and trust in God is misplaced. But this is a too hasty conclusion. It is part of God's purpose that we should seek, and it is the work of those who teach in his name to see that this craving for God is kept alive and active in the human breast. But this could not have been, had man's cry to God met with immediate answer. Had the existence and activity of God been as evident as the sun, the wind, or the rain, he would have sunk in the human consciousness to the level of a natural force, with his existence unquestioned as a mere fact, believed in by all, and yet troubled about by few. The religious instinct would thus have sunk to zero by sheer disuse. As it is we may discern evidence of his existence in the fact that no one can be certain where or how it is displayed. It is of the very essence of religious faith that it should be constantly seeking that which can never be discovered, to demonstrate that which can never be proven. And it is the function of God's priesthood to encourage our weak humanity in the search.

This leads us to the significance of the further exclamation, "If there be a God?" It supplies the tonic of a healthful scepticism as distinguished from that which is unhealthy and degrading. A scepticism that, while professing a disbelief in God, yet nourishes a faith in one; or, while failing to see anything that can make God either mentally or morally useful, yet admits the awful gap there would be in life once the belief in God were excluded—is a form of scepticism that all religious people will treat with respect. It at least does homage to man's holiest feelings, and leaves him upon his knees in that restful dependence upon Providence without which the world would now be far different from what it is. It is the scepticism which tells men that if nothing can be known, further search is useless which is to be resisted, for this scepticism degrades all the more surely because its evil influence can nowhere be indicated with any degree of certainty.

"Save my soul—if I have a soul?" Here we touch upon another deep conviction of human nature. What is the soul? No one knows. No one ever did know. No one ever will know until that last day when all things shall be revealed, and when we shall all stand before God, recognising each other the more readily because we shall be so entirely different to what we are now. The belief in a soul was not established by evidence, and it cannot be destroyed by criticism. It is universal—except among that growing number who, puffed up with the vanity of pseudo-science, have ceased to believe in its existence. We live in an age when the value placed upon verifiable evidence is excessive; all the greater need is there to insist upon the truth that a belief which could exist for so long without evidence is beyond the sphere of its application. And because we are without evidence for this belief, do we demand the clearest possible demonstration of its falsity before surrendering it. Once more the common mind sets an example before all. For it is not among the world's uneducated people that disbelief in a soul is found. Among all known tribes of savages the belief is unquestioned. Among the uneducated in civilised countries the belief in a soul exists with far

greater strength and certainty than among educated circles. It would indeed seem as though God had, in this manner, used the foolish ones of the earth in order to confound the wise. The existence and nature of the soul is, in truth, one of the most profound and complex subjects with which the human mind can deal. All the more reason is there to marvel at the inscrutable ways of Providence which enabled savages, too poor in mental ability to understand the common things of life, to reach the truth on a subject that baffles the world's ripest intelligence. This belief has come down to us through thousands of generations. Millions of people have died in the full conviction that they were not as the animals are. The whole of the Christian pulpit, despite its many differences of opinion, have agreed on this; and surely these considerations, taken together, supply a defence against which sceptical criticism beats in vain.

"If there be a hell?" The light of this reflection is one that must occasionally flash across the most darkened intelligence. For it raises the profound question of what lies beyond the grave. Are we the creatures of a day or a generation only, to play our part upon the stage of life and then to be seen and heard no more? The religious instinct of man forbids such a conclusion. We feel that we are born to a nobler, or, at least, to a more protracted destiny. Every genuine Christian feels that he is of far too great a consequence to be so summarily disposed of. He feels that he is a part—an important part—of a huge cosmic scheme, and that to extinguish him at death would leave a hideous gap in nature repugnant to his sense of the fitness of things. To him, the universe has a moral meaning, and he resents, with indignation, the thought that nature could fail to rise to his expectations.

There are those who say that the belief in a future life is an exploded superstition, that it rests upon no better foundation than the ill-founded speculations of a primitive savage. But who is there that can say we do not exist after death? For thousands of generations men have been seeking for such knowledge, without success. How, then, can it be held that we have no reason for believing in a future life? Our critics do not know what lies beyond the grave, and in that fact lies our strongest evidence for a belief in a future life.

Consider, too, what the world would have been like without this belief; the comfort and consolation it would have lost. People talk much of social problems; how important has been the bearing of this belief upon them! To the many generations who have passed through life in misery and left it in tears, unbelief has nothing save the message that things ought to have been better here, might have been better, and perhaps will be better for their successors. But this belief in a future existence has taught the hungry and naked to be patient in their hunger and nakedness, for they were destined to an existence where these things would be no longer experienced. It has gone even further, and encouraged them to look, without ill-will, upon those who were responsible for their misery, and to treat sufferings as mere methods of correction used by a heavenly father for their ultimate purification. Christians smarting under wrong have consoled themselves with the thought that in the next world those who wronged them would suffer tenfold for their misdeed, and in the spirit of humility, developed by faith, they have borne their ills patiently, waiting for the moment when eternal justice would place them in heaven, gloating over the sufferings of such as were powerful on earth. All this, and more, scepticism would sweep away with little thought of the comfort they were filching from a suffering world.

Finally, there is that little, yet tremendous, word "if." If there be a God? If I have a soul? If there be a hell? Ah, my friends, what a deal lies there! If there be a God it will be no use pleading at the end, "I did not think there was"; the die will be cast, and an eternal God will not fail to punish all

who have outraged his majesty by not being aware of his existence. If I do not believe in the existence of John Smith, John Smith is not injured, and it would be folly for him to punish me for that; but God is not as we are, and it is due to his omnipotent love and power that we should be punished for our blindness. Or if there be not a God? Even then the believer is in the safer position. Better off in this world for his belief he may not be, but he is guarded against disaster in the next. Greater economy and worth of mental and moral life there might be in this world by refusing to believe in the absence of evidence; but if there be no future life, of what avail is this? The Christian has built upon the rock, and the rain and the wind beat against it in vain.

C. COHEN.

What is Truth?

To give a philosophical definition of Truth that will be invulnerable to all objections is a problem by no means easy, yet it is one of transcendent moment. To the student of philosophy, the rise and fall of the various systems and schools of thought demonstrate the fact that the truth of one age differs fundamentally from the truth of another. Nothing is more palpable than that there is no finality in Truth. Like every other offspring of the human brain it is subject to the law of evolution, and our conceptions of Truth have constantly to re-adapt themselves to the accumulated knowledge of life and natural phenomena. So far as we are concerned, Truth exists only when we become conscious of it, and in proportion to our powers of perception. Until the world—nay, the universe—has been searched from pole to pole, till the bowels of the earth have yielded their secrets and the heavens surrendered their mysteries, not until then, I say, can Truth in its entirety be said to exist. What, then, subject to human limitations, is Truth? Briefly this: the highest knowledge of any age is the truth of that period.

"In every age," wrote Charles Reade, "there are a few men who hold the opinions of another age, past or future." The few men who rise high above the normal intellectual standard of their times are the men of genius—men whose mighty intellects pierce beyond mere external facts into the soul of things. Rare as such beings are, the due appreciation of them is rarer still. *Veritas odium parit!* Such a man was Darwin, whose puissant intellect perceived, through the marshalled wealth of facts concerning the origin of species, the universal law of evolution. Such a man also was Newton, who, in the falling of an apple—so tradition relates—divined the underlying truth of the law of gravitation.

These mighty intellects revolutionise thought; and, in establishing the new truth they have discovered, they administer the *coup de grace* to the errors which have usurped its place. From the vast forests of humanity has always arisen the Origin Pine—the *pseudo-tsuga Douglasii* of genius—towering high above its fellows towards the Sun of Reason in the Heavens of Thought. On the other hand, it is equally true that in every age puny minds have gulled the punier minds into accepting their pourile interpretations of life and the universe as the "eternal verities." In no sphere of mental phenomena is this more obvious than in religion. The great fact that Truth is progressive condemns every religion as false. The failure to recognise this fundamental psychological principle is the inherent folly of every creed. Antiquity has no more right to dictate to the present than the present has to futurity. The Pope's recent encyclical against Modernism is a typical instance of religion's futile opposition to the onslaughts of progressive Truth. It is Canute defying the sea—the Pope *versus* Evolution—and Rationalists know who is ultimately bound to win. It was Schopenhauer who told us that "a

certain degree of general ignorance is the condition of every religion, and is the element in which alone it is able to exist," but people cannot always be kept in ignorance. They have been taught to read, and the vast progress in printing and publishing has placed the masterpieces of the world's literature within their reach. Thus ignorance—the "*conditio sine quâ non*" of religion—is being dispelled by the ineffable light of knowledge.

But the fact of the progressiveness of Truth has a lesson for rationalism as well as for religion. The history of human thought has taught religion nothing. Let us beware lest we miss its warning. Shakespeare's words, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy," are none the worse for being oft-quoted, though they suffer through frequent mis-quotation, and they contain a message for Rationalists. Many who have caught glimpses of a few of the facets of that glittering jewel, Truth, are apt to acclaim their knowledge as eternal verities. Now eternal verities, Carlyle notwithstanding, have never existed. The disintegration of old ideas is a continual process peculiar to no age. On all sides, and in every branch of study, the advance of knowledge is accompanied by the inevitable sweeping away of old traditions and conceptions of life. The death of the geocentric theory of the universe was coeval with the birth of the heliocentric. From the fire of criticism the old truth rises, Phoenix-like, and becomes the new truth. *La vérité est morte, vive la vérité!* What arrogance, then, to speak of eternal verities! Nothing can escape the inexorable law of evolution—not even the titular God of Christianity. As man evolves he has the double duty of evolving his gods. In the Bible we may trace the evolution of the fiendish Jehovah—vengeful and tyrannical, and committing unspeakable atrocities—to the God of the New Testament, a heavenly Father of Love, who, however, still betrays the taint of his former barbarism in his threat of hell for unbelievers. But we have progressed far beyond this. Science has reduced natural phenomena to law, and God has become a negligible quantity in the universe. Threats of eternal punishments have lost their weight, and nothing is sacred from the dissecting knife of Science. Man, emboldened by Reason, has ruthlessly torn the misty mantle of metaphysical verbiage from natural phenomena, and discovered that the theological bogie is non-existent. And the world is becoming happier and more moral. "*Courage, tout le monde, le Dieu est mort!*"

ALFRED GERMANY.

The Churches and Secular Education.

A FEW weeks ago was seen the novel spectacle of a leading Nonconformist minister (Dr. Clifford) delivering a eulogistic address at the unveiling of a memorial at Highbate Cemetery to the late Mr. G. J. Holyoake. The ceremony was reported to the extent of half a column in a leading Manchester Nonconformist paper, and in the same issue appeared a letter from a local minister decrying the evils of Secularism. I wrote to the editor, reminding him that Holyoake advocated Secularism for over half a century, but my letter was not published.

The man in the street appears to have a hazy notion as to the meaning of Secularism and purely Secular Education, and this is not to be wondered at considering the misrepresentations that are constantly being made by the clerical party. The general impression is that the Secularist desires the endowment of Secularism, whereas all he claims is the removal of religious instruction from the day schools to its proper sphere, the churches and chapels, and the consequent relief to his conscience of no longer having to contribute towards the propagation of beliefs which are objectionable to him. The clamor for rights of parents has no room for the rights of fellow-citizens.

The indifference of the average parent to the instruction which their children receive in the religious atmosphere, and their similar disinclination to support any movement which is anti-Christian, though themselves non-attending members of any particular church, is a factor which must be taken into account by the Secularist. What is the best course to be taken under these circumstances? I think we should

adopt a more aggressive attitude in our movement. A good many parents are averse to availing themselves of the so-called Conscience Clause for their children, out of consideration for the feelings of the latter, who can be, and are, made to feel uncomfortable through this hideous regulation, causing, as it does, religious strife and bitterness in young minds which otherwise would not occur. It is, however, the duty of the Secularist to see that his children are strictly withdrawn from religious instruction, so that the parents who avail themselves of the Conscience Clause would grow to such numbers that it would tend to disorganise the routine of the schools, and in time lead to the Beard of Education acknowledging the demand and necessity for a purely secular curriculum.

It is almost hopeless to expect a Liberal Government to concede this reform without some extraordinary effort is made to make them appreciate the extent of its demand. The canting phrases to which we have been treated, first by Mr. Birrell and then Mr. McKenna, as to the Bible and its hold upon the British nation, source of England's greatness, etc., etc., are sufficient to show the futility of expecting any help from the present administration. Then, again, the Labor party contains a good many "trimmers," and wonder what the majority of 1,400,000 for Secular Education at the last Trade Union Congress are doing towards helping on the movement by availing themselves of the Conscience Clause for their children?

It would also assist considerably if the Secularists organised more, locally, with the object of spreading suitable literature and holding meetings at all times, and especially municipal and parliamentary elections. By this means the apathetic portion might be absorbed into the movement. The latter are inevitably lost to the Churches. Extra propaganda work of this character is absolutely essential if we are to make any headway against the clerical party. The latter are making a strong rally to keep this religious instruction in the forefront on each and every occasion, and if we do not resist strenuously we shall lose a deal of ground. I would suggest your inviting offers from different centres for the post of secretary to extend the system of branches into smaller districts, so that advocates of the Secular solution could get into closer working touch with each other. Only by these means will it be possible to secure that cohesion which is so necessary to obtain the quick and permanent realisation of our goal.

H. B.

CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity is the religion of the *individual*. The *collective* and *progressive* life of Humanity, and of its component nations, is unknown to its dogmas and its moral doctrines. Christianity consecrated the two aspects, internal and external, of *individuality*; it knew nothing of *association*, which we now know to be the only method of Progress. It regarded men as *brothers*, because they were the sons of one God; but the *ideal* was a personal, and not a *collective* one; and *each individual* had indicated to him the way to attain the *ideal*, without learning that it was needful for this very end to unite the capabilities and powers of *all*. To save oneself, not *through* the world, or by working with the world, but *in spite* of the world—that was the supreme formula of Christianity.—*Mazzini*.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY.

And therefore philosophy busies herself about human objects, and by persuasion and eloquence, insinuating the love of virtue, equity, and concord in the minds of men, draws multitudes of people to a society, makes them subject to laws, obedient to government, and forgetful of their unbridled affections, whilst they give ear to precepts, and submit themselves to discipline, whence follows the building of houses, erecting of towns, and planting of fields and orchards with trees and the like, insomuch that it would not be amiss to say that even thereby stones and woods were called together and settled in order. And after serious trial made and frustrated about the restoring of a body mortal, this care of civil affairs follows in its due place, because, by a plain demonstration of the inevitable necessity of death, men's minds are moved to seek eternity by the fame and glory of their merits.—*Bacon*, "*Wisdom of the Ancients*"—*Orpheus*.

WORKS, NOT FAITH.

The professor in charge of a Princeton classroom had been annoyed by the tardy entrance of a student. He pointedly ceased talking until the man took his seat.

After lecture the student apologised.

"Professor," said he, "my watch was fifteen minutes out of the way. It's bothered me a good deal lately, but after this I shall put no more faith in it."

"It's not faith you want in it," replied the professor; "it's works."—*Harpur's Weekly*.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Cohen's criticism of Mr. Ramsey Macdonald's reference to Charles Bradlaugh may be strengthened in one particular. Mr. Macdonald said, foolishly enough—for he is not as wise as he affects to be—that "there are, and have been, secularist leaders like Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Herbert Spencer who have preached the incompatibility of Secularism and Socialism." Of course, there are no such Secularist leaders, and there have been no such Secularist leaders. Charles Bradlaugh had political and social opinions of his own, and advocated them on his personal responsibility. He was so scrupulous about this that he would not allow "M.P." to be printed after his name on bills announcing his Freethought lectures. Never for a moment did he say or hint that logic or anything else debarred a Secularist, as a Secularist, from being a Socialist. As a matter of fact, his most intimate associate in Secularism, Mrs. Annie Besant, was a Socialist. Dr. Aveling was a Socialist; Mr. J. M. Robertson was a Socialist. These facts are enough to show that Mr. Ramsey Macdonald does not know what he is talking about. On this point we do know; and we mention these things because they were before Mr. Cohen's time in the Freethought movement.

Mr. Macdonald's observation that "Socialism has no more to do with a man's religion than it has with the color of his hair" is really stupid. There is no analogy in the two cases. One intellectual position may conceivably be related to another intellectual position, but neither can conceivably be related to a physical object. Socialism might be related to religion, and religion to Socialism. We do not say they are related, only that they *might* be. But neither Socialism nor religion *could* have any relation to the color of a man's hair—unless it led him to use hair-dye.

Towards the close of that section of his little book on Socialism, Mr. Macdonald deserts his argument by insinuating a close affinity between Socialism and Christianity. Just listen to this:—

"At any rate, there must be some meaning in the fact that at every great revival of Christian emotion, communist doctrines have been preached. They have sometimes been wrapped up in hideous extravagance, but the extravagances can always be separated from the sober motives. Christianity at its best has always appeared in the world with Communism at its right hand."

Now this is antagonistic to Mr. Macdonald's main contention. It is a strong insinuation that Socialism *has* something to do with that form of "religion" known as Christianity. Not that Mr. Macdonald's statement is true, that communistic doctrines appear with every great revival of Christian emotion. They certainly (for instance) derive no sort of countenance from the teachings of John Wesley—the greatest Christian revivalist of the eighteenth century, or from the teachings of John Henry Newman—who was really the greatest Christian revivalist of the nineteenth century. As for the final sentence, if Christianity at its best (whatever that is—it is very vague) keeps company with Communism—are we to suppose that Mr. Macdonald is a Communist, or that Socialism and Communism are in any way identical? The Communism of the New Testament is "share and share alike"—having all things in common. This has been preached in exciting times in modern ages. The Anabaptists, or some of them, preached it, and practised it; and women were apt to be thrown into the category of "things in common." But what Socialist preaches this doctrine in the twentieth century? Mr. Macdonald, we repeat, is not as wise as he affects to be, but he is wise enough to know that "equality of opportunity" is one thing, and equality in realised results quite another. The latter is the Communism of the New Testament. And we believe that it would please Mr. Ramsey Macdonald as little as any man on earth. So that on this point we conclude that he is simply talking—yes, the word must out!—*bunkum*. The gallery is full of Christians, and he is playing to the gallery.

And now a word in conclusion. Mr. Macdonald ventures to sneer at such a colossus as Hume because he was a Tory. Apparently this Socialist mentor, with all his infallible airs, believes that Tory meant in Hume's time what it meant a hundred years afterwards! But the reference to Hume as "a man of timorous culture" is positively silly—unless it is positively ignorant. With the Blasphemy Laws staring him in the face, in the days of brutal intolerance, Hume wrote his great essay against miracles; and by means of his splendid irony he enabled every reader of intelligence to understand his attitude towards even Theism itself. The Christian leaders who answered him quite understood what he meant—though irony could not be quoted in an indict-

ment. We have some evidence, therefore, of Hume's courage. What evidence have we of Mr. Ramsey Macdonald's? He need not fear imprisonment, he need not fear anything worse than being held in odium by bigots and hypocrites, yet he does not do as much as Hume did in that day of danger. He has not the courage to make a frank avowal of his religious opinions. His, and not Hume's, is the "timorous culture."

It used to be a Christian custom to sing the praises of Jesus Christ as the only Savior of the world. Now, however, he no longer occupies that exalted position. He has been dethroned by those who still bear his name, and his work has to be done by others. In a recent address to converts, the Rev. T. E. Ruth, of Liverpool, said that the Church is "a society of saviors." Every Christian must now be a savior, or he is not worth his salt. Your business, said Mr. Ruth to his converts, is to learn to be saviors. That is Secularism flying the Christian flag.

A clergyman said, the other day, that "God has indeed consented to fail, apart from man's help, in man's own case." There is some comfort, however, in the thought that he "always succeeds in the animal"—in tigers and bears and lions and serpents. This is sheer nonsense; but it is not customary for a preacher to acknowledge that his almighty and all-wise Creator and Ruler has *consented* to fail. Who asked him for such a silly consent? Who was there whom he could consult when he made man? If there were a God, how he would laugh at the foolish things said about him!

Here is another sample of homiletic wisdom: "Humanity gains all its tragic interest from the fact that God, in creating the highest beings, has taken great risks." That is to say, the creation of man was a Divine experiment. God did not know how his masterpiece would turn out—whether it would be a credit or a disgrace to him. Unfortunately, his best work soon became a heap of black ruins; and now he is vainly endeavoring to convert these shapeless ruins, *with their own co-operation*, into a magnificent building that will redound to his everlasting glory!

A writer in a recent issue of the *Standard*, says that missionary hopes of converting the upper classes in India have not been realised. During five years, the Oxford Mission in Calcutta has not made a single high caste convert. The Cambridge Mission at Delhi has not a single case of baptism to show as the result of twenty-five years' college work. In Madras, the finest Missionary College in India has, in forty years, gathered a mere handful. Other colleges in India have been equally unsuccessful. Yet, strange to say, one still gets from missionaries the same tales of the wonderful blessings vouchsafed to their work, the eagerness of the natives for the Gospel, etc. Compiling missionary reports must be a great strain on the inventive faculty.

"Had it not been for the native Christians," says Bishop Wilkinson, "we must have lost India." A "Veteran" writes to the *Daily Telegraph* calling this an extraordinary statement. "The native Christian," he said, "was a doubtful and somewhat dangerous element in the Mutiny, and among the prisoners we took after the final battle of Cawnpore there were a certain number of professed Christians. Moreover, when we caught the so-called 'Brigadier' who superintended the massacre at Cawnpore, there were with him at the time of his capture at least half-a-dozen native Christians. I had a native Christian for my servant during the Mutiny, and the only signs of civilisation I detected in him were that he spoke English and got drunk periodically."

According to a Reuter telegram, a quarter of a million Mohammedans have died of the plague in the Punjab because they refused to evacuate infected villages, on the ground that Mohammedans are forbidden to flee from the wrath of God. Foolish, no doubt; but honest and consistent. How unlike the good Christians, who love God so much, and keep out of his way all they can!

Samson, Sunday-school teachers are told, was a good man who did much good while he lived. He had exceptional physical strength, and used it for the benefit of his nation. Yet, strange to relate, Samson "disappointed God." God had made a special plan for the strong man's life; but Samson had his own plan, and consistently followed it, in defiance of heaven's will. What an impression of the Divine Being the scholars will receive from such curious teaching! Here was a mere man who set omnipotence at naught, got

the better of infinite wisdom, and caused his Maker to look ridiculous!

The *Bath Herald* reports a sermon by the Rev. J. C. Church, of St. John's, Lower Weston, on "The Religion of Christ—Moonshine or Sunshine—which?" The preacher began by reading a long extract from a letter "written by an unbeliever to a lady in Weston, who had sent to the individual in question some tracts directing him to think upon the eternal verities." The unbeliever said some strong things against Christianity and the Bible, which certainly needed answering; but the reverend gentleman started right off by saying that "he was not going to answer the letter, but to allude to the thoughts and the state of mind which prevailed in the man who wrote it." *He was not going to answer it!* He preferred to come in any other form but that. Naturally.

The "Christian conscience" of England has been very quiet of late concerning the troubles in Macedonia. Presumably this is because there is no longer an opportunity of parading massacres by Turks. Yet it appears that the condition of things in many districts is worse than it has been for some years. Only the offenders are Greek and Bulgarian Christians, so there is no longer the chance of airing Christian vindictiveness under the cloak of humanitarianism. From a *Times* telegram, we learn that a whole series of attacks on villages, accompanied by murders, have occurred during last month. One party of Bulgarians attacked a village, killed six men and burned eighteen houses. In one house seven women were burned by these Christian assailants. On October 21, another village was attacked, five people being killed and ninety-three houses burned. On November 3, a Greek band attacked a village, killed eight, wounded four, burned eighteen houses and destroyed a number of cattle. Soon after, the Bulgarians retorted by completely wiping out a village. Outrages and murders are of daily occurrence; the dividing line between the parties being, apparently, constituted by Christian sectarian differences. Now, if there were only a chance of repeating, in various keys, the late Dr. Parker's "God damn the Sultan," what a hearty outcry there would be in Christian England.

A writer in the *British Weekly* has recorded his impressions of a first visit to Paris. He observes that the majority of the people in churches were women, and thinks the great need of Paris to be the Bible. We have no doubt the French capital will continue to exist without cultivating a Protestant monomania for the "sacred book." He also tells a story of a Frenchman "of the educated class" who had apparently never seen a Bible, but who, on hearing a passage read, was struck by its beauty, and hunted over thirty booksellers without being able to procure a copy. We venture to think the story is—well, highly colored. The writer also notes that a Sunday crowd in Paris is a holiday crowd; but, we observe, that he evidently did not find it a drunken crowd. That is reserved for our own pious land. He also says that in the Bois de Boulogne he saw "everywhere family groups seated on the grass, eating, drinking, or engaged in various games." Family groups! It is worth noting. In Christian England it is far more the rule for men to go out alone, leaving the "missis and kids" behind. Yet we talk of the superior home life of Christian England! French people must smile at our conceit.

The *Christian Commonwealth* is right. People do really need to understand what Secular Education means. And among these is its own contributor, Dr. J. Warschauer. Replying to a correspondent, this gentleman says, "The advocate of secular education says that religion is the chief boon, undoubtedly"; but there are a variety of Christians, and people who are not Christians, and therefore, as these can't agree, it is best for the State to leave religion alone. Now, we beg to point out to Dr. Warschauer and others that the advocate of a sane secular education does *not* say "Religion is the chief boon." He says nothing at all about it, whether it is the chief boon or a thing of no consequence whatever. He contents himself with saying that religion does not come within the legitimate functions of the State, and therefore the State should leave it alone. Nor does he base his case upon the impossibility of satisfying all varieties of Christians. He does point this out, but it is as an illustration of the strength of his position, not the foundation of it. If Christians were possessed of a sufficiently keen sense of justice there would be no need to dwell upon this point at all. The ground argument for Secular Education is that it is a simple act of justice to all, and that is the whole of the matter. It is really pitiable to see Christian supporters of Secular Education partly or wholly blind to the essential justice of the case, and lamenting that the inability to

agree amongst themselves—even to the extent of being unjust to others—is driving them to do what is right.

Mr. J. Bruce Glaisher deserves a medal. Speaking at Wrexham, in support of Socialism, he said "it was quite true that there had been Secularists and Atheists in their ranks." Had been! It was quite a thing of the past, you understand. It probably occurred when Socialism was sowing its wild oats, and religious people ought not to cast against a Socialism that had grown respectable and Christian the sins of its youth. Mr. Glaisher was good enough to say he was not sorry that Atheists and Secularists had been in the Socialist ranks. In the name of these dead and gone Atheists and Secularists—for it is quite a thing of the past, you understand—we thank him. But, he added, Socialism was essentially religious in character. So Christians need not be alarmed. Said we not that it is now quite respectable—and Christian?

England, it appears, has the unenviable first place in the traffic in decrepit horses. The Belgian Animal Protection Congress suggested, some time ago, that abattoirs should be established at Antwerp, so that the decrepit horses sent from England should be killed on arrival. It is a horrible and degrading traffic, and it is characteristic of Christian England that while framing laws to punish cruelty here it should seek to sell animals that cannot be employed without cruelty, to continental customers.

Torrey will rejoice. He has been saying for years that Freethinkers are always committing suicide, but he has not been able to give instances. Now he and his like can adduce one—at last. Mr. and Mrs. Good, the publisher's reader and artist, who drowned themselves together in the Thames, near Teddington Lock, seem to have been Freethinkers. They left a very pathetic letter stating that they had good reasons for leaving a world which was too hard and cruel for them, and they added:—

"Our opinion is that every person has an indefeasible right to relinquish his life at any moment, especially when, in doing so, no duties or obligations are evaded. In the days to come the lethal chamber will be found in all civilised communities, and suicide, instead of being consummated in secrecy, and stigmatised as disgraceful, will be openly permitted.

For the hereafter our minds are perfectly settled. Whatever may happen after death is a secret. It is certain, however, that the bloodthirsty and revengeful demon with a lust for everlasting torture, who has so long masqueraded as the Christian Deity, is non-existent.

Belief in the unity of matter and the non-persistence of the individuality enables us to face our fate unflinchingly. While the universe endures we shall endure, but we shall be unconscious of it."

The jury, under the coroner's direction, brought in a verdict of "suicide," which involves a refusal of decent burial—just as if that would trouble the poor dead ones!

Toronto would probably give a first-rate welcome to a real Freethought lecture. We see by a cutting from the local *Daily Star* that Mr. C. T. Russell had a crowded audience in the Grand Opera House to hear his lecture on the subject of "To Hell and Back," and we read that his denunciations of the savage orthodox doctrine were loudly applauded. Mr. Russell, however, spoke as a believer in the Bible, and contended that hell was not taught in it; which, as far as the New Testament is concerned, is downright nonsense.

Rev. R. J. Campbell appears to have a curious idea of Atheism. In a recent sermon on the loaves and fishes miracle, as reported in the *Daily Chronicle*, he said: "It is not the will of God that men should go in misery and despair. It was atheism to think so, and worse atheism to say so." Fancy an Atheist saying what is the will of God! What next?

Sir Robert Anderson writes to the *Express* against the Rev. R. J. Campbell's explaining away the loaves and fishes miracle. Sir Robert says that "if the narrative is not to be believed, the apostles must have been either rogues or idiots." But that doesn't follow. It was not the apostles who wrote the story. Sir Robert believes it was, but he is mistaken; or, rather, he is misinformed. He doesn't know the facts.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* is concerned about "Blasphemy at Highbury." We suppose it refers to open-air Freethought lectures by "the advocates of Atheism," which "must be most demoralising." The impudence of these Christians!

Apparently this is a move in the new Tory policy of "war against Atheism." The *Pall Mall Gazette* returned to the

subject on Monday evening. It has found that the Free-thought speakers at Highbury Corner (it does not mention names) have made the whole neighborhood "impossible of residence to decent folk," and men are even "afraid to take their wives and daughters to church" that way. "Fearful and obscene language" is used, and the police do not interfere, though the Chief Commissioner of Police has revoked the permission to make collections. Reference is made to "the contents bill of the paper" which is sold at the meetings. If the *Freethinker* is meant, we do not issue a contents bill. But that is a trifle to a Tory scribe in a passion.

In a leaderette the same day the *P. M. G.* warned the Chief Commissioner of Police that "the time has arrived when some definite step should be taken to protect the inhabitants of Islington from the incursion into the once-peaceful area of Highbury Fields of the purveyors of blasphemy and obscenity and the mischievous demagogues who preach anarchy, sedition, and Socialism, to the obstruction of the public thoroughfares and the irreparable damage to youthful mere understanding." We fancy we have heard something like that before. It sounds like the old barrel organ of the tabernacle, but its motive is obviously political.

Dr. Olaf A. Toffteen, professor of Semitic languages and Old Testament literature in the Western Theological Seminary, Chicago, calculates that the Flood happened 3,327 years before Christ. Well, as it never happened at all, that date is as good as any other.

We see by the *Liverpool Post* that in a train which had just left Stafford a man fell on his knees and began to read the Bible. He was at once arrested as a dangerous lunatic. Is this a Christian country?

A couple of "meejums" have got into trouble at Boston. One of them was a lady, and when she was captured (as a materialised spirit) at a dark *séance*, she was clad only in an airy costume of filmy gauze. The capture was made by police-constable Brisbane, who had to use his truncheon in order to overcome the lady's supporters. He got both the "meejums" to the station, where they were charged with fraud.

Rev. Mr. Hoffman is being sued by the Christian College, at Boston, New Hampshire, for a sum of money which he refuses to pay over. His refusal is based upon the view that the College is an infidel institution, inasmuch as it refuses to accept as true the Bible story of Jonah and the whale. The case is likely to be interesting. We look forward to some amusement.

Nineteen out of the twenty-five Church clergymen in Newcastle-on-Tyne are defying their Bishop. They say they don't care twopence for the laws of England. They declare that sooner than give in they would welcome Disestablishment. But how about Disendowment? Ay, there's the rub?

"The Infidel and his Daughter" is a heading in the *Farnborough Gospel Witness*—a title which does not suggest accuracy. Under it is a story of an infidel's dying daughter, who asks him, "Shall I trust to your opinions, or to the teachings of dear mother?" "Trust to your mother!" says "the champion of infidelity," covering his face with his hands, and weeping like a child. Her name was Ethel Allen. We suppose her father's name was Allen too. But we never heard of that name amongst the champions of infidelity. Did you?

"Father" Adderley, preaching at Stirchley, protested against the idea of social reform being carried out on non-religious lines. He might as well protest against the tide on the Cornish coast, with all the might of the Atlantic behind it. Every social reform is necessarily non-religious. Being satisfied with the ways of Providence is religious; trying to alter them is irreligious. The very word "reform" implies an improvement on the divine methods.

"Pioneers, O Pioneers!" This quotation from Walt Whitman was the heading of a long article in last week's *Christian Commonwealth*. The pioneers are New Theologians like Mr. Campbell, who give up the story of the Virgin Birth of Christ. But they only give it up when the story is done for. The real pioneers are overlooked by our pious contemporary. They were Voltaire, Paine, and other leading Freethinkers during the last hundred years.

In the course of a "powerful sermon" the Rev. J. E. Rattenbury said: "Jesus told people to ask God for their

daily bread, but we must make it possible for that prayer to be answered by God." Poor old God! What a ramshackle Deity this reverend gentleman preaches!

Theology *does* change, after all; at least, so we would infer from the utterances of some popular preachers. Old Isaac Watts taught the English-speaking world to sing:—

"Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come";

but the Rev. Dr. Hunter, of Glasgow, believes in and proclaims "a God who can be helped." Though omnipotent, God is not strong enough to do his work without assistance from man. Well, this is, at any rate, more like the truth. In any case, it explains Dr. Hunter's profession. The great drawback, however, is that between God and man the work of the Universe is shockingly neglected: the one waits for the other, and the golden opportunity is missed.

Dr. Hunter pays God a strange compliment by saying that he began, but did not finish, making man. "Like the rest of his work man was left unfinished that man himself might complete what God began." The Almighty put his hand to the creative plough, then looked back and went away when the furrow was less than half made. What a pity! O the perfect, glorious world we might have had if God had only seen fit to finish his work! Paul did not agree with the Glasgow oracle; but then Paul lived long ago, and didn't know! Dr. Hunter is the man who *knows*.

"A village minister" naturally pronounces "the village Bethels true sanctuaries," because they "represent some of the noblest life of our land," being "bulwarks of liberty and justice and truth." But in reality most of them are the abodes of bigotry, bondage, scandal, and all uncharitableness; and there are *some* village ministers who think and say this of them.

The Bishop of London is "greatly cheered" that during the last forty years 225 new churches have been built in the diocese. Well, we suppose he is fully entitled to get all the comfort he can out of the situation; but the fact is that Church attendance is decreasing, even though the opportunities for attendance are multiplied. The Bishop thinks the building of these churches "one of the grandest things in the history of the Church." We presume he is looking at the matter from a purely trade point of view. Perhaps the issue of a circular headed "Great extension of business," etc., etc., to be left at each house, might meet the situation.

The *Methodist Times* publishes a report that in New York the educational authorities have prohibited, in public schools, the singing of Christmas carols and all hymns in which the name of Christ occurs. This has been done in consequence of representations from Jewish citizens. The *M. T.* publishes this report as a warning as to what might happen in this country if Secular Education is adopted, and takes this as "a sufficient condemnation" of such a change. Of course, if it were proposed to sing hymns to the Virgin in public schools, the *M. T.* would realise the justice of excluding them, because that would offend Protestants. When, however, it is a question of taxpayers who are not Protestants, the matter has quite a different complexion. What a fine sense of justice Christianity does develop?

The Liverpool Education Committee has resolved in favor of all children being taught the faith of their parents "by teachers who believe what they teach." We object to this on principle, though we shouldn't mind it as a matter of practice. It would soon be found unworkable, and the chaos would lead straight to Secular Education.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE.

The late Richard Mansfield was a patient sufferer in his last illness, and he retained his good cheer to a marked degree. One day he told his physician that he believed he would not live many weeks longer.

"Bosh!" said the physician. "You are good for a long time yet. Why, man alive, did you ever hear of anybody near death with legs and feet as warm as yours?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Mansfield, "lots of them. For instance, there was Joan of Arc, and the Salem witches."

—*Harper's Weekly*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 8, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.; at 7.30, "Robert Blatchford's Disavowal of Atheism."

December 15, Queen's Hall.

To Correspondents.

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

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 8, Aberdare; 15, South Shields; 22, Holloway.

S. DAWSON.—We hope your good wishes for our circulation may be realised. Clayton's *The Bishops as Legislators* would give much that you want. Our exposure of Dr. Torrey's libels on Paine and Ingersoll was spread over several pamphlets and many months of the *Freethinker*. Our shop manager might be able to make you up a set. With regard to Marx, though we don't discuss Socialism (or its rivals) in these columns, you will find that Bernard Shaw and the Fabians generally do not take him as their gospel. Far from it.

P. W. NUTTALL.—So the chaplain of your regiment told you that Mr. Foote is not really the editor of the *Freethinker*, and does not write any of the articles that appear in its columns. The reverend gentleman is either an Ananias or a Dan Leno. Ask him whether he is serious or larking.

OBSERVER.—Pleased to see your letter in the *Darwen News*, and not surprised that there is no reply. What reply is possible?

V. PAGE.—Always pleased to see the "saints" active in correspondence in their local press. Torrey pamphlets sent.

J. BARLOW writes:—"I have much pleasure in thanking you for the six copies of the *Freethinker* you have so kindly sent me. I am now receiving it from the newsagent, and look upon it as one of the best papers I read."

R. JARRATT.—Glad to hear from an appreciative new reader. Thanks for good wishes.

H. J. CLARK.—See paragraph. Always glad to receive cuttings.

F. COOPER.—We dealt with it last week. Very likely, as you suggest, it is part of an effort to bring further persecution upon the Secularists.

TWO CLIFTON ADMIRERS.—Of course we remember. Glad to have your kind and encouraging letter, and to know that, on hearing Mr. Foote for the first time, your "high expectations were exceeded."

P. GOODMAN (Philadelphia).—Pleased to hear from an appreciative reader in Benjamin Franklin's old city. You say we ought to come to America, and that "this way fortune lies" especially for us. Perhaps so; but our roots are struck here, and we cannot separate our life now from the English Freethought movement. Shall be very glad to see you if you come over next year.

H. B. SAMUELS.—Nobody was "afraid." The meeting had to end—that's all.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. BAVIDGE (Toronto).—Pleased to hear from you, and thanks for the cutting. So you saw the *Freethinker* for the first time on November 18 in a store window, and went in and paid 10 cents (5d.) for it. It seems a heavy price, but probably there are several profits between our publishing office and a Canadian purchaser.

J. WABLEY.—Pamphlet sent. Glad you receive and read the *Freethinker* with so much pleasure out in South Africa.

W. J. McMURRAY.—It is an old suggestion, though none the worse for that. We may act upon it before long.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your welcome cuttings.

A. FAGO.—Too late for this week; in our next. In inserting Mr. Dixon's letter we strained a point in his favor; his letter being too long, and too much an advertisement of Christian Science.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Glad to hear Mr. Cohen had such good meetings at Birmingham on Sunday.

W. H. HARRIS.—Mr. Lloyd lectures in the New Theatre, Aberdare.

F. S. EDWARDS.—See "Acid Drops." Christian and liar are so apt to be synonymous where "infidels" are concerned.

A BARRADOS FREETHINKER.—Thanks for cuttings. "See Sugar Plums."

JAMES FORREST.—Glad you enjoy "Acid Drops." Thanks for cuttings.

J. A. REID.—We suppose the *Freethinker* is meant. Your letter to the *P. M. G.* is likely to be an unprofitable investment of time and energy. "Hear all sides" is not the motto of that journal.

J. BROUGH.—Cuttings received with thanks.

J. W. WOOD.—Something odd always happens when people "receive" the Holy Ghost.

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

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote started his new Queen's Hall course of lectures on Sunday evening. There was a capital audience, and his address on "Socialism, Christianity, and Atheism," with special reference to Mr. Robert Blatchford and the Rev. R. J. Campbell, was followed with the deepest interest for nearly an hour and a half and very warmly applauded. Mr. F. A. Davies, who made a first-rate chairman, woefully invited questions and discussion, and was so successful that he had at last to put on the extinguisher.

The Queen's Hall platform will be occupied by Mr. Foote again this evening (Dec. 8), when his subject will be "Robert Blatchford's Disavowal of Atheism." In a certain sense this will be an important lecture. We hope Freethinkers will give it all possible publicity amongst their friends and acquaintances.

Someone wanted to know where the "free seats" were at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening. There is nothing about "free seats" in the advertisement, though there are a few at the back of the hall. Moreover, it is rather rough for persons who can afford to pay to want a "free seat" (at somebody else's expense) "on principle." The expenses at Queen's Hall are heavy—and have to be met.

Mr. Foote visited Bristol last week, after many years' absence, to deliver two lectures for the newly-formed N. S. S. Branch. He had good meetings, and there was a great rally of the old Freethinkers. During his stay in the city Mr. Foote was the guest of the veteran W. H. Morrish, who was bookseller to the Freethought movement there as far back as forty years ago. So much interest was manifested in Mr. Foote's lectures that questions and discussion kept him on the platform two hours and a half each evening. One of the speakers on the second night was a local Christian minister. The chair was taken the first night by Mr. John White, who was an active Freethinker in Bradlaugh's days; and on the second evening by Mr. Brown, the Branch secretary, a more recent adherent to Freethought. We hope the new Bristol Branch will "keep pegging away" and have other London lecturers down during the winter.

The *Bristol Daily Mercury* fairly reported both Mr. Foote's lectures, and noticed the "large attendance."

The Birmingham course of special lectures, held in the Town Hall, continues to more than fulfil the expectations of its promoters. Mr. Cohen had two very large meetings there on Sunday last, the great hall being nearly full at the evening meeting. In the afternoon the subject was "The Salvation Army," and there was a sharp fire of questions when the lecturer resumed his seat. There were many "Army" officers present in uniform, but they—wisely, perhaps—refrained from putting questions. The Volunteer Orchestra again performed, to the great enjoyment of all present.

At the close of the afternoon meeting there were many requests for copies of Mr. Cohen's tract, "The Salvation Army and the Public." Unfortunately, the stock of this tract is now exhausted, and there are no funds available for its re-issue. We shall be pleased to print a new edition, and it is a tract that ought to be kept in print and widely circulated. All that is required is funds. No one receives a penny of profit from it, and those who wish to see more

printed must do their part of the work by defraying the cost of production.

Mr. Lloyd pays his first visit to Aberdare to-day (Dec. 8) and delivers two lectures, afternoon and evening, in the New Theatre. The district "saints" will no doubt rally in strong force and give Mr. Lloyd an enthusiastic welcome.

In the morning at 11 a meeting will be held at Pugsley's Restaurant to discuss Freethought propaganda and organisation in South Wales generally. All friends of the movement will be welcome.

Twenty new members were enrolled at the last monthly Executive meeting of the National Secular Society.

Mr. H. S. Wishart, as part of his Liverpool mission on behalf of the N. S. S. Executive, is lecturing twice every Sunday, afternoon and evening, in the Milton Hall, Daulbystreet. Admission is free, with a collection towards expenses. The local "saints" should get Christians to attend the meetings.

A Methodist local preacher writes us that he has been the recipient of four consecutive copies of the *Freethinker*, which he has found "exceedingly fresh and interesting." "I must confess," he says, "that the reading of these papers has changed entirely the view I previously held concerning you personally and the *Freethinker*." He has ordered this journal through his newsagent. But he asks why we are so hard upon Jesus Christ, who was at least a great and good man. We reply that we regard Jesus Christ as almost (if not quite) completely an imaginary character. There is no insult, however, in our occasionally referring to him as "J. C." He is referred to as "J. C." quite solemnly in French Catholic writings—even in the writings of Bossuet, Massillon, and Pascal.

Secular Education is plainly advocated by the Rev. J. Warschauer in the *Christian Commonwealth*. "I claim," he says, "that the 'Secular Solution' follows irresistibly from the essential principles of Nonconformity.....If it is wrong for the State to teach religion to its adult population, how can it be right for the same State to teach religion to its child population?.....Simple Bible Teaching, however acceptable to Catholics, either Roman or Anglican; it is not acceptable to Jews, who would exclude the New Testament, or to agnostics and rationalists, who decline to have beliefs they reject instilled into their children's minds, or taught at their expense; and Catholics, Jews, and agnostics share with Protestants the privilege of paying rates."

A lady reader writes us an encouraging letter from Westcliff-on-Sea. "I have lately become a subscriber to your paper," she says, "and have thoroughly enjoyed it from beginning to end. It was studying the Bible, and trying hard to believe it, and not being satisfied, that caused me to buy the first copy of the *Freethinker*. I like it immensely, and feel more contented."

London Freethinkers will please note that the Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place at the Holborn Restaurant (as usual) on the second Tuesday in January. The chair will be occupied by Mr. Foote, who will be supported by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, Roger, and other members of the N. S. S. Executive.

There was a controversy in the *Advocate*, a newspaper at Barbados, West Indies, on the question "Is there a Hell?" One of our readers sent the editor Mr. Foote's article "Where is Hell?" and the *Advocate* reprinted it. That number of the paper was sold out.

The Christ of St. Paul's Epistles is totally different from the Jesus of the Gospels. The Jesus of the Gospels was an amiable enthusiast, apparently professing to possess miraculous powers, a man of whose real life we know very little. Paul was penetrated with the desire of regenerating the Roman world. For this purpose he availed himself at first of the old Mosaic Law. The story, half true, half fabulous, of the life of Jesus revolted him. But after a long struggle, it was suddenly borne in upon his mind that this life of Jesus might be the way through which the great purpose of regenerating the moral life of men was to be accomplished. Henceforth he joined himself to the little Jewish sect of Christians, which but for him would always have remained Jewish.—*J. H. Pridges.*

The Actual Jesus.—II.

(Continued from p. 765.)

IT is the Christians, and not impartial critics, to whom the silence of Jewish and Roman historians presents real difficulty. If the Gospels were true, the career of popular preaching and wonder-working (including even the raising of the dead), the triumphal entry of a Messiah or Christ into Jerusalem and the trial and execution of this descendant of king David as an alleged "King of the Jews," the preternatural darkness and other wonders that accompanied the Crucifixion, the resurrection of Jesus and of many saints who left their graves and appeared unto many in Jerusalem, the bodily ascent of Jesus into the clouds, and the numerous miracles wrought by the Apostles whom he left to continue his work, would have rendered Jesus a most remarkable person who could not fail to be noticed by the historians and philosophers of the time. To the Freethinker, who cannot expect to find contemporary historical or philosophical records of supernatural or miraculous events that never happened, and who rejects the details of the Gospel narrative as almost entirely fictitious, the difficulty scarcely exists apart from erroneous preconceptions as to the ideal character of Jesus and the supposed importance and publicity of the position he attained during his lifetime. The silence of Jewish and Roman historians and philosophers concerning the execution of an obscure carpenter's son as a criminal is only what might be expected.

As to the silence of Josephus concerning the new sect or religion, we may observe (1) that the accounts of Christian origins and numbers in the Gospels and the Acts are almost wholly fabulous, and (2) that the primitive or undeveloped Christians under the Apostles had so much in common with the more advanced Jews, including the Essenes, that Josephus, if he were aware of their existence, may have thought it unnecessary to distinguish them as a separate sect. So far as the pious opinions of the more advanced or more fervid followers of this particular Christ included a growing belief in the detestable and wildly absurd blasphemy (for so it would appear to Josephus) that a young Jewish carpenter was a literal Son of God sacrificed by his Father as a sin-offering, Josephus might be unwilling to add a crowning example of the gross superstitions or religious follies for which the Jews were despised by the educated classes throughout the Roman empire, for whom, more than for his own compatriots, he wrote his works. Paul, apparently the foremost or most advanced of the Jesus-Christians—far too advanced, in fact, for the Apostles at Jerusalem—preached only in distant parts among the Gentiles. His sect, in fact, abrogating the Jewish Law, could hardly be regarded as a Jewish sect, and the Apostolic or Judaic Christians in Palestine seem always to have remained a small and comparatively unobtrusive body, differing but little from the more advanced of the orthodox Jews among whom they lived and whose Mosaic laws and customs they maintained with the greatest strictness.

When Josephus speaks of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the followers of Judas of Galilee, and says "these are the sects of Jewish philosophy" (*Antiquities*, xviii, i, 6), he does not exclude the existence of smaller groups. He gives the four fundamental schools of religious thought among the Jews, without attempting to make out a list of minor, or intermediate, or composite sets of opinions or doctrines. Elsewhere, indeed, he omits even the followers of Judas of Galilee, thus reducing the number of his Jewish "sects" (or schools of religious philosophy) from four to three only (*Autobiography*, § 2). As he thus ignores or forgets an important sect which raised an armed insurrection and had to be defeated and dispersed by the Romans, who ultimately crucified its leader's two sons, James and Simon, still more might

he ignore the peaceful law-abiding followers of a much humbler and more insignificant Christ who perished as a common criminal at Jerusalem. For three years, moreover, Josephus himself followed the teachings and practices of a sort of John the Baptist, who ate only food produced by nature and clothed himself only with material obtained from the vegetable kingdom, and yet he does not mention the followers of Banus as a sect. Neither does he speak of the followers of John the Baptist as a sect, though he refers to the popularity of John and his execution by Herod. If a present-day historian spoke of Protestants, Catholics, and Freethinkers, as the three sects or main divisions of religious philosophy among the British people, I think he might well be excused if he did not also include the Jezreelites, or the Latter-Day Saints, or the New Church of Jerusalem, or the rest of our three or four hundred sects. Of course, if Josephus had foreseen the development and ultimate triumph of the Gentile branch of the Jesus-Christian superstition centuries after his own death, he might have taken particular notice of the otherwise insignificant seedling, which, indeed, dwindled and perished in its native land, but a cutting from which, transplanted into more favorable foreign soil, produced the great world-religion called Christianity. But Josephus had no such supernatural foresight into the distant future, and we have no right to expect it of him.

The above considerations may at least so far account for the silence of Josephus as to leave us perfectly free to believe that the Gospels are based on the actual fact of a crucified Jesus.

It is Paul's Epistles, however, rather than the Gospels, that lead me to the definite conclusion that there was an actual Jesus. These Epistles are much earlier than the Gospels in date. Unlike the Gospels they are not anonymous collections of fragments appearing a century or more after the occurrence of the alleged incidents. Their author, Paul, a self-introduced and not altogether welcome intruder, who had serious disagreements with the Apostles who had been companions of Jesus, could hardly have been invented. That the Epistles appeared at a time when the Gospels were unknown (and therefore were evidently not in existence) is shown by the absence of such references and quotations as would otherwise have been inevitable. Neither do they contain allusions to the terrible siege of Jerusalem, a disaster which would so deeply affect the Jewish imagination and is so powerfully dilated upon (in the prophetic form) by the Jesus of the Gospels. The general absence or scantiness of the miraculous element so common in the Gospels, and the more natural and practical tenor of the Epistles, are also indications of an earlier origin and relative truthfulness or actuality. Many passages in Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans—and it is upon these Epistles and such passages that I more especially rely—produce upon one the impression that they are the genuine work of a genuine man, laboring of course under certain delusions, just as Mohammed and many other sincere founders of religion have done. As in Mohammed's case, the visions and revelations which so deeply impressed Paul have been attributed to an epileptic tendency, which is supposed to have been the "stake in the flesh" or "thorn in the flesh" to which he refers as a severe personal infliction designed to prevent him from being "exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations" (2 Cor. xii. 7).

I cannot agree with the *Freethinker's Text-Book* (p. 210) that Paul's Epistles and the Acts are "mutually destructive" because they contradict each other. Truth and falsehood are not mutually destructive because they conflict. The discrepancy between the two only destroys one of them. In this case the discredit of falsehood must fall upon the Acts, which was written at a much later date (apparently a hundred years or so afterwards) by an anonymous author, who introduces the miraculous element with the greatest freedom, and puts his own ideas into the

long speeches which he composes for Peter and Paul, who are thus made to speak alike, in order to conceal or cover the scandal of the great and permanent breach or quarrel which separated the Apostles and the new convert, who proved far greater than them all, inasmuch that his views of Christianity prevailed over theirs, so that the superseded Apostles (and Jesus too) had to be made to conform to the victorious views of Paul in order to save the credit of the Church. The consequent rejection of the Acts of the Apostles as "unhistorical" leaves the Epistles untouched. The points in which they differ from the Acts are, indeed, distinctly in their favor.

Unfortunately one cannot rely implicitly even on the least disputed of these Epistles. There have evidently been some interpolations and alterations*, and there have probably been many more which we have no means of detecting.

Dr. Anderson, D.D., and Professor Manen go so far as to reject the whole of the Pauline Epistles (see Mr. J. T. Lloyd's article in the *Freethinker* for Aug. 25, 1907, and the report in the *Christian Commonwealth* for Aug. 15, 1907, pp. 812-815). Dr. Anderson considers that these Epistles were written by "a number of master-minds in the Church in the second century," who "took the name of the hero who carried the message out of Palestine, out of pure reverence for it, in accordance with the literary habit of the time." The Epistle to the Romans in particular, he thinks, could not have been written by Paul, because it is "filled with overflowing with the discussion of questions that could not possibly arise in the lifetime of a man who was a contemporary of Jesus," and that it would have been unintelligible to Christian converts in Rome, if there were any in the year 60, which Dr. Anderson doubts.

So far as names and evidence can be given, there was one "master-mind" among the early Christians—that of Paul. If Dr. Anderson is right, the early Church must have been fortunate in the possession, not merely of other "master-minds," but of "a number" of them or whole "school" of them, who somehow kept themselves in the background with a most unusual amount of modesty and success. Dr. Anderson himself says, "Who these men were we shall probably never be able to tell, so effectually did they practise the Christian virtue of self-effacement." And while these modest "master-minds" effectually concealed their identity, more petty-minded and puerile leaders came to the front, thus producing on many of us the impression, or rather the conviction, that the early Fathers, and the early Christians generally with only a few exceptions, were men of an inferior type both intellectually and morally, so that they would apparently be incapable of the authorship of the Pauline Epistles.

I think that considerable weight ought to be attached to the fact that the *leading* Epistles of Paul are almost universally accepted by critics. For my own part I feel certain that there is at least a genuine basis in the Pauline Epistles. I cannot believe that the personal passages in Galatians and Corinthians are forgeries. The ring of truth and of personal passion that pervades and inspires them could not, I think, be counterfeited by the early Fathers or known "master-minds" of early Christianity. The Church profited by the services of any number of forgers of clumsy or commonplace types,

* Thus in the list of Christ's appearances (1 Cor. xv. 5-8) the references to "the twelve" and to the "five hundred" are interpolations (see Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*, pp. 370, 371). If the original text had mentioned the mythical "twelve," it would not have gone on to say "then to all the apostles." It would have said "then to the twelve again" or "then to all the apostles again." If the story of the appearance of the risen Jesus to five hundred at once had been current in Paul's time, so striking and important a testimony would not have been neglected in the Gospels at a later date. Similarly the story of the Last Supper (1 Cor. xi. 23-25) is partially or wholly an interpolation. It includes the myth of the betrayal by Judas, which could not have preceded the myth of the Twelve Apostles, of whom Judas was one, and this mythical Twelve was not known to Paul. The Revised Version admits that the text has been tampered with, for it drops the words "Take, eat," and the word "broken."

but it is not in the least degree probable or credible that she possessed forgers of such exquisite, or indeed Shakespearian, ability as the concoction of these passages would need. To invent, moreover, a more or less suppressed but burning quarrel in the early Church would hardly serve their purpose. What the Church needed, and somewhere about the middle of the second century *obtained*, was such a work of fiction as the Acts, which conceals the importance and long duration of the quarrel by making James and Peter accept Paul's views, and by making Paul obedient to the behests of James and Peter.

I quite fail to see that the questions discussed in Romans could not arise in the mind of Paul—or why they should be unintelligible to the Christians at Rome, chiefly Jewish converts, some of whom would probably be deeply interested in theological problems, and would, I imagine, be able to discuss them with some acumen and a fair share of logic. Seeing, too, that many enterprising Jews and people of many other nationalities flocked to the common metropolis from all parts of the Roman empire, I see no reason why there should not be both Jewish and Gentile Christians at Rome in A. D. 60*—nearly thirty years after the assumed date of the Crucifixion. Even if Paul over-rated the intellectual capacity of people he had never seen, this would be no argument against the genuineness of his Epistle. And to object that Paul could not have written the Epistle and that there is "difficulty of discovering a writer who could have written it," is like saying that Shakespeare's works could not have been written by Shakespeare, but must have been written by some "master mind" such as Bacon.

Dr. Anderson assumes that Paul's Epistle to the Romans is not in "harmony" with the Christian thought of the time. But what evidence can he possibly have to this effect? There is really no evidence concerning these matters if the Pauline Epistles are rejected. The fact is, that Dr. Anderson holds to the false impressions derived from the Acts of the Apostles, and as he sees that Paul and the Acts are in hopeless conflict, so that one of the two accounts must be fictitious, he prefers to sacrifice Paul's Epistles rather than the Acts. He says he is "glad that Paul did not write Galatians, for if he did either he or the author of the Acts deliberately falsified." A critic who cannot perceive that the Acts, with its long, artificial, and similar speeches put into the mouths of Peter and Paul and James alike, and its reckless use of the miraculous, is the fiction, and not Paul's Epistles, is, I think, hopelessly at sea.

It seems to me that Paul must have been an historical and not a mythical personage, and that his personal evidence relating to the actual Jesus is the only evidence of decisive importance or value. It is true that he never saw Jesus except in a vision, but he tells us that he saw Peter and "James the Lord's brother" on his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, and on his second visit, fourteen years later, he saw them again and John also (Gal. i. 18, 19; ii. 9). He refers elsewhere to the "brethren of the Lord" (1 Cor. ix. 5). He constantly refers to the Crucifixion of Jesus as a literal fact, and if his Epistles are not forgeries the early Church at Jerusalem must have felt absolutely certain of the actual crucifixion of an actual Jesus. While Paul never pretends to have seen Jesus in the flesh, he adopted the beliefs of the Church he had persecuted,

* If established, the persecution of the Christians at Rome by Nero, who reigned from 54 to 68 A. D., would settle this point. Since Gibbon's time, however, the account of this persecution in the "Annals" of Tacitus, and also the "Annals" themselves, have been more than suspected of being a forgery. Gibbon tells us that "the diligent and accurate Suetonius" also "mentions the punishment which Nero inflicted on the Christians, a sect of men who had embraced a new and criminal superstition." But there still remains the question whether these criminal "Christians" were adherents of Jesus, or of some other Christ, such as Judas of Galilee, or were confused with the followers of Chrestus, who had caused much rioting in Rome by Jews during the previous reign.

together with very important additions and interpretations of his own, which proved the making of Christianity in more senses than one. Paul, in fact, was the Founder of Christianity rather than Jesus, who obviously had no conception or anticipation of its distinctive features, and therefore never was a Christian, but only a Jew of specially religious and perhaps advanced tendencies, like the Essenes and others. If the religion were named after its founder, it would, indeed, be called Paulianity or Paulism, and not Christianity. A certain half-measure of justice or truth may be noted in the fact that it never was called after the name of Jesus, the only important body to adopt his name having been the Jesuits. The Gentile term "Christ" which ultimately gave the new religion its name, and which merely means "anointed," was probably as unknown to Jesus as to his countrymen in general.

W. P. BALL.

(To be continued)

My Aunt.

WILL it be believed that there are people still living who take the literal interpretation of each and every word in the Bible as their spiritual guide? Yet such is, undoubtedly, the case. While on a visit to my Aunt and Uncle a few days ago, I was particularly impressed by the astounding assumption of godliness on the part of the former, and the almost as hopeless position of mental subjection of the latter. They are very good people. *Very good.* At least, *they* think so. The observer, of course, is free to draw his own conclusions.

I have met this kind of folk before; and the more often I meet them the more often I think of those occasional reminders of our Editor's that we are wrong in supposing that the crude old theology has almost entirely given place to the new and saner brand.

I had not seen my relatives for a matter of seventeen years or so, being a mere child when last we met, and consequently quite unable to offer any resistance when the drugged rag of Christianity was pressed under my nostrils.

On this occasion, however, we met on equal terms, so far as choice of a religion goes. And O, what a change was there! I may say, in passing, that I hardly believed that there existed on our planet ignorance so crass, stupidity so dull, credulity so colossal, verbal trickery so finished as I discovered in my Aunt. The completeness of the intellectual bankruptcy of these people is like the love of God—it "passes all understanding." In a word or two the argument is like this. Were you ever so pure, ever so righteous, ever so "godly" (and there is a difference), should you once put a question to my Aunt which, despite all her verbal gymnastics and her powers of evasion, she fails to find an answer for, you immediately become a unit in Satan's legions, and in every respect a "wicked man." The method then adopted is to quote a text (relevant or irrelevant—it matters little) and give a tract, which latter is invariably dotted all over with notes of interrogation and inverted commas, and generally appeals to the Christian element only. Only the Devil would put such questions into my head, and his Satanic Majesty must assuredly be sitting at my side. And so on, *ad lib.*

All this, of course, though interesting up to a point and amusing beyond measure, is scarcely convincing. But to convince an Atheist must surely be impossible, since we are so often told that we are not willing to learn. And we are so "illiterate," and our questions and inquiries all display such lamentable "ignorance." Willing to learn, forsooth! I think it has been the inordinate desire to learn on the part of inquiring men and women that has given us the major portion of Freethinkers to-day. And I must confess my amusement at the spectacle of such notorious ignoramuses as John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, Kari Marx, Herbert Spencer, and the like, meekly kneeling at the penitent-form of a giant of intellect such as "the pious savage who rejoices in the name of Torrey," and humbly asking for information on the problems of the day "through the grace of God and the light of his holy spirit."

I say it is distinctly amusing to be told that "the Holy Word can give us teaching and guidance upon any subject we may desire information upon," and when we ask what guidance it can give us on Astronomy, with or without special reference to Joshua, to learn that "only by faith can we be saved."

But there is an aspect other than amusing to this case. This wretched superstition is exercising a baneful influence

over the minds and lives of those who have become so deeply saturated with its poison. We have heard of the "coldness" of science, and the "unhappiness" of the unbeliever. Yet I do not remember my Aunt or my cousins smiling. And as for a *laugh*, it was out of the question. The only person in the company, other than myself, whose temperature was above zero, was my Uncle; but as he was an individual of no importance, the Devil didn't mind. A person of some importance was my eldest female cousin. A woman of "uncertain age," she is the proud possessor of a facial expression that must have been conceived in the nether regions of Dante's Hell. She stubbornly refuses to look pleasant. Her one intrusion into the discussion was of a decidedly peremptory nature, and served to liven for a moment the somewhat dull proceedings. "My dear Mother," she expostulated; "my dear Mother, it is absolutely a waste of time to attempt to teach him anything; nothing will ever convince him except the spirit of God." Upon my remonstrating with her for treating me in this characteristically un-Christian fashion so usual with Christians, I was told I was "not willing to learn." Such is the wisdom of our betters.

But to return to the Aunt who, after all, is the heroine of this narrative. She played with me, fenced with me, wrestled with me, chided me, coaxed me, threatened me, compared me to the very Devil himself, but all to no purpose; though like the much advertised Bible-banger, whose initials are very appropriately R. A. T., she still believes that she has "yet to find the first sceptic, Agnostic, Infidel, or Christian Scientist whom she cannot convince that Jesus Christ was the Son of God."

And what effect has all this religious tomfoolery upon me? With every day that passes I become more convinced that the Christian religion is an imposture and a lie founded through, and kept going by, the hysterical ravings of half-demented fanatics, aided by not a few who are too deeply sunk in the mire to see any way out, and who, on the whole, are better than their gods. Every day I find that the more deeply I look into the lives of these people, who usurp the name of Christian, the more I discover of hypocrisy and deceitfulness in their natures. I am sure there is little that is malignant in my nature since I grasped the theory of Determinism, yet the very existence of Christianity, with its host of faithless, soulless, hopeless devotees, brings a cloud to my face and hatred to my heart. I could not persecute—I leave that to Christians of the "meek-and-lowly" order—but I can wage relentless war against the greatest curse of all ages—the religion that has set nation against nation in a bloody death-struggle for supremacy: the creed that has raised up son against father, brother against sister, wife against husband, and lover against his lass: the faith that has painted upon its banner *in blood* the skull and crossbones of a compassionless deity: the superstition that has been the sworn and relentless foe of all human progress and discovery, and has wrecked the careers and blighted the lives of thousands of well-meaning and noble individuals of both sexes: the *catastrophe* that has produced the creatures who held the red-hot crucifix to the lips of the Infidel martyr—in short, the cancer of Christendom; this, this religion I can wage war against while I am able to wield a pen or use my tongue. The words which Robert Blatchford put into the mouth of the seamstress in *Dismal England* to express her contempt for the land that so ill-treated her may well be applied to the religion that is recognised in that land:—

"I curse it, leaf and bud,
I curse it, fruit and seed,
I curse it by the blood
It sheddeth in its greed."

And what have we to put in the place of the Christian religion? We have the desire to do right for right's sake. The incentive to do right, through the knowledge that we possess that right, tends to the greatest happiness of mankind, and wrong to universal conflict. We have Ingersoll's "Creed of Science" and the "Declaration of the Free." We have Paine's "The world is my country, to do good my religion." We have Bradlaugh's "Let us aid each other, and grow strong by each other's help." We have Burns's "Whatever mitigates the woes, or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness; and whatever injures Society at large, or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity." We have the undying inspiration of the lives and works of the noble dead. And, finally, we have the beautiful words of our beloved editor and standard-bearer, G. W. Foote: "And if the world can never be quite the paradise of dreams: if a certain measure of evil and misery is indestructible, we may console and support each other, and apply to the worst wounds the antiseptic of sympathy."

But, after all, it was a *cheerful* welcome after seventeen years, wasn't it?

HERR NEFFU.

Correspondence.

NOTES FROM IRELAND.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Although all the papers in this country maintain a strict silence on all advanced thought, there is yet evidence that the great ideas of the age are beginning to work their way into the minds of the people.

When I was at Belfast in October, I attended a crowded Socialist meeting, and found a reverend gentleman chairman of the meeting. After discussing the principles of Socialism on Christian lines, I was surprised to hear Mr. Walker, on arising to address the audience, inform the worthy pastor that he should be ashamed of his profession instead of exulting in it. But of all the priests, clergymen, and ministers in Belfast, only two, said Mr. Walker, gave him any support in his struggle against caste, privilege, and industrial monopoly. I considered that a fair start. After the speeches were over, questions were called for. I quietly asked the rev. gentleman if it was not a fact that Socialism arose out of Rationalism, and, further, I asked him what had Christianity done during the last 2,000 years to ameliorate the social condition of the masses? You would hardly believe it, but he had the audacity to affirm that Christianity had produced Socialism. There was great applause at this sally of assumed smartness.

For a week after, the *Belfast News Letter* had many letters disowning our friend the chairman as a Christian, and I was pleased to note that the 2,000 years of Christianity appeared not to be at all relished by either party in the dispute. One infuriated old gentleman declared Mr. Blatchford to be a blackguard and a scoundrel for propagating Atheism in his Socialistic propagandism. Mr. Pete Curran, one of the speakers, however, soon settled the unspeakable Christian by informing the audience that Atheism has nothing to do with Socialism, for Mr. Bradlaugh had been an inveterate enemy to Socialism, that Mr. Morley could not endure it, and that Mr. Balfour, if not an Atheist, was next door to it, being a philosophic doubter. This wise rebuke, added to the remark that Mr. Blatchford was as good-living a man as could be found in all London to day, non-plussed any further Christian malice.

At Sligo, I fell in with a small crowd of Sinn Feiners, amongst whom I found a very intelligent American Freethinker—one who had heard the late Robert Ingersoll. We had quite a warm debate on religion in a friendly way, and our friends were surprised, and could not rebut the arguments adduced, most of them being Catholics. I feel certain that Freethought is slowly, but surely, making way into Sinn Feinism, and more Catholics will be made Freethinkers quickly than will be possible among the Protestants of Ireland. The priests give Sinn Feinism a wide birth, thus indicating the trouble they apprehend from this source in the future.

One remarkable instance of nascent Freethought came to my notice, and quite unsolicited. One day, travelling in a train, a farmer got into the carriage, and he bid me good-day. After a while he became chatty, and told me that the priest had called upon him yesterday. Oh, said I, what then? "Well," said he, "he came collecting money in order to build the Bishop's palace." I answered that it did not appear to me to be a bad idea—from the Bishop's point of view. "Well," said he, "I told the priest that he might go, but that I had no money to give him, and, further, I let him know that I had all I could do to feed and clothe the children. Besides, I asked him who was going to build me a palace to live in." I gave that man a *Freethinker*, and I hope, for his sake, the priest does not see it when he calls next time. The fact is, that now the farmers are getting some sort of an opportunity of securing the results of their toil for themselves in this land, they give rather reluctantly to the Church; they look forward to the time when their farms will become their own, and their children are likewise benefiting at the expense of the Church.

Catholicism will last some time in Ireland, but when it does go it will follow the example of France, but can never be replaced by a hypocritical Protestantism. The average Catholic Irishman is a clear thinker when he starts for himself, and I am certain the secularisation of the schools is the one thing needed to give the Irish Roman Catholic Church its quietus.

W. C. SCHWEIZER.

In man's slow ascent self-love and love of others have ever been, and in the future will be, intricately intertwined. A world of unselfish activity, from which self-love should be wholly shut out, may be dreamed of; but it is not, and never will be, ours. Of ours what can be said is that the nobler element flashes out the brighter for the darkness; or rather, like the bullet in the rifled barrel, it gains efficiency from the resistance.—*J. H. Bridges.*

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.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Robert Blatchford's Disavowal of Atheism."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 3.15, Freethought Parliament—H. Pulling, "Christianity at Home and Abroad."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, R. Rosetti, "The Pagan Origin of Christianity." Selections by the Band before Lecture.

COUNTRY.

ABERDARE BRANCH N. S. S. (New Theatre): J. T. Lloyd, 2.15, "Theology Discredited"; 6, "Religion and the Joy of Life."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales' Assembly Room): 7, Mr. Bouchier, "Why I Object to Christianity."

BRISTOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Labor Party's Hall, 21 King-square-avenue): Thursday, Dec. 5, at 8, Discussion Class—B. G. Brown, "Secularism and its Aims."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, J. Ralph S. Ommundsen, "A Reply to J. Hutcheson: Christianity or Secularism—Which Presents the Highest Morality?"

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, J. Harney Simpson, "Cremation in Manchester and Elsewhere." Illustrated by lantern.

GLASGOW: Secular Hall, Brunswick-street—H. P. Ward, 12 (noon), "Did Jesus Ever Exist?" 6.30, "How Christians Got Their Bible." Illustrated by many unique limelight views.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): H. S. Wishart, 3, "New Gods for Old"; 7, "Atheism and Socialism Progress: I. Mr. Wise's Unwise Bigotry."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): C. Cohen, 3, "Sex and Religion"; 6.30, "Socialism, Atheism, and Christianity." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Dec. 12, at 8, G. T. Shyvers, "The Factor of Ability in Production."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Final arrangements—Mr. Lloyd's Lectures.

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