

# THE Freethinker

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*Clergymen consider this world only as a diligence in which they can travel to another.—NAPOLEON.*

## Lovely Stories.

SURELY, as a gentleman in Shakespeare says, good phrases ever were commendable. For this reason we were rather pleased at the way in which a New Theology editor skipped over a difficulty the other day. This friend (or factotum) of the Rev. R. J. Campbell had to explain that the New Theologians were obliged to reject a lot of what Matthew Arnold used to call the fairy tales of the Bible. Instead of doing this plainly and bluntly—which would have given pain to pious souls, besides bringing odium upon the editor himself—he indulged in cloudy rhetoric, and praised the “lovely stories” which had been woven about the birth of Jesus. This struck us as being extremely neat; and, if we make a clean sweep of all considerations of honesty, that editor deserves credit as a clever journalist. He knows how to temper the wind to his shorn lambs.

“Lovely stories.” We like that phrase. Our own volume called *Bible Romances* has been censured as having a too-alarming title. That word “Romances” enables the orthodox to smell trouble at the first sniff. We ought to have called the volume *Bible Stories*. “Stories” is such a good word. It may mean historical narrative, deliberate fiction, or downright falsehood. Yes, we shall have to think the thing over. “Romance” is such an aggressive word. People understand at once what you mean. And that is always dangerous in matters of religion.

The narratives of the birth of Christ are all “lovely stories.” Not history, but fiction; and this, in time, means falsehood. But the time is not yet. At least, it is not yet to the New Theologians, although it arrived long ago to the Freethinkers.

You see a New Theologian is a half-and-half Freethinker; and a Freethinker is (so to speak) a whole-hog New Theologian. The difference between them is only one of degree. We might express it differently, and say that the difference between them is one of brains, courage, and honesty; but that might be rather rude, although it is so perfectly true.

Mr. Campbell gave up the Virgin Birth in his *New Theology*. He declared that it was “apparently unknown to the primitive Church,” and said it was “strange” that the belief “should ever have been held to be a cardinal article of the Christian faith.” Fortunately, there was “not much need to combat it, for most reputable theologians have now given it up.” “The nativity stories,” Mr. Campbell said, “belong to the poetry of religion, not to history. To regard them as narratives of actual fact is to misunderstand them.” “The simple and natural conclusion,” according to the New Theology leader, “is that Jesus was the child of Joseph and Mary, and had an uneventful childhood.”

This is said by a Christian preacher to-day without fear of penalty. Yet something less than fifteen years ago, if we recollect rightly, London was convulsed by a Board School child, who, being asked to name the father of Jesus, answered “Joseph.” Heated discussions took place on the Board in con-

sequence, and a circular was sent out to all the teachers instructing them to be careful in teaching the children the doctrine of the Trinity, with special emphasis on the deity of Christ. A leading Christian preacher, in one of the principal places of worship in London, says the same thing now, but there is no convulsion. Why? Because the spirit of Freethought has done its work, and the New Theologians simply start up for the overthrow of a defeated enemy.

All that Mr. Campbell says about the Virgin Birth of Christ, critically and mythologically, was said—and much better said—by Thomas Paine in the first half-dozen pages of the *Age of Reason*. Mr. Campbell says it *now*, and loses nothing; Thomas Paine said it *then*, and lost friends, and reputation, and political and social position—and when he died a mountain of calumny was heaped upon his grave. That great man paid the penalty of being a hundred years before his time. He did not enter the field when the victory was nearly won. He was of the great and glorious race of Pioneers.

Mr. Campbell has just been dealing with another “lovely story”—the feeding of the five thousand with a few mouthfuls of fish and bread, and the picking up of twelve baskets of fragments when they had done eating. This also never occurred; the story is symbolic; it is meant to direct our attention to the bread of life. Mr. Campbell does not say where the fish comes in. Was it meant to suggest “an ancient and fish-like smell”—such as hovers round the adventures of Jonah?

What does all this mean? It means that Matthew Arnold was right, nearly forty years ago, in saying that the Bible miracles were doomed. He knew that Freethought criticism had settled their fate on the Continent, and would eventually do so in England. It was merely a question of time. Now the hour is striking, and Mr. Campbell is only a part of the striking apparatus. He helps to tell the time; he does no more.

What is the value of the “poetry” of these “lovely stories”? Is not all such talk a temporary thing? When the deity of Jesus is going we hear all the more of his wonderful manhood. That is because the supernatural glamor does not perish immediately with the supernatural belief. The marvellous Jesus is the afterglow of the sinking Christ. In the same way, the “poetry” of the “lovely stories” is the afterglow of their sinking truth.

For our part, we prefer our poetry to be genuine—and original. Stories of children begotten by ghosts, and born of mothers who remain virgins, are not good enough poetry for those who can read *Hamlet* and *Othello*, and *Prometheus Unbound*—yes, and *Don Juan*. The “lovely stories” of the Gospels were not intended to be “poetry.” They were meant to be history. As such they made their way in the world, and have held their ground for the best part of two thousand years. They were not poetry; they were simply superstition—pious tales for the ignorant and credulous multitude. Mr. Campbell may be right in classing them *now* with “the poetry of religion.” But religion itself is only the poetry of unpoetical minds. Those who want real poetry go elsewhere.

G. W. FOOTE.

## The Social Function of Religion.

DURING the course of a recent lecture I had occasion to point out that, historically, "religions had all along discharged the function of subduing the mass of the people to the interests of a class. Amongst my audience was a gentleman, well known as one of the English translators of the works of Nietzsche, who objected to the statement as being of too sweeping a character. He submitted that while the generalisation held good of some religions it did not apply to all. There were some forms of religion which represented the triumph of what he and Nietzsche called the "slave virtues," and so expressed the mental attitude of the many rather than that of the few. In such cases the mass actually dominated the select few, and so obstructed the real development of the race. This criticism misinterpreted somewhat my meaning in saying what I did, but it contains enough of a too-much-neglected truth to render it worthy of a more careful reply than one could give in answering several critics at the close of a lecture.

The statement that religions have always guarded the interests of a class against the legitimate necessities of the mass, seems to me one that, for various reasons, is very much of an historical truism. An established religion is of necessity the religion of the State; and this is only another way of saying that it is the religion of the ruling class. And its support by the ruling class makes it obvious that, at the very least, it shall not run counter to their interest, and, at most, that it shall positively guard their position. A religion that was not passively or actively favorable to the claims of a ruling class would, at any period of history, have been treated as an insurrectionary movement, and suppressed. Further, once a religion becomes established, it acquires vested interests of its own, and thus from both within and without it is forced to play the same part. The interests of a priesthood becomes identified with the maintenance of the existing order, and it is driven to resist any movement for its alteration or modification.

Moreover, it is in the very nature of religion that it should resist, so long as it is possible to resist, any alteration in the general structure of society. For religious beliefs have direct reference to conditions—psychological and social—that belong in an increasing measure to the past. Beyond the savage state religious beliefs are not created—they are only developed or modified. They are brought into existence amid conditions that can only exist once in the history of a people. The fear and ignorance that gives birth to such things as the belief in gods or a soul once removed, can never be recreated. It follows, therefore, that religious beliefs are dependent for their vitality upon a perpetuation of the past, and not upon a development either in the present or in the future. It is this reason that lies at the root of all the opposition shown by religions of all kinds to progressive ideas of all descriptions. Instinctively it is felt that the new is the dangerous, and that to cease to follow the past with absolute submission is to cut the ground from under religious beliefs. In opposing new ideas, religion has been all along obeying the instinct of self-preservation. Religion is thus the most conservative of forces; and it is not without its significance that, the more tyrannical the ruler or the ruling class, the greater the endeavors made to keep the mass of the people religious. The religious opinions of many a tyrant the world has seen may be a matter of doubt, but there is no question as to his regarding religion as a most serviceable instrument for the maintenance of his power.

The social function of religion is, then, a question that is quite distinct from the value of the virtues taught by religion. Here and there, of course, there are individuals belonging to the dominant religion who play a more socially useful part, and these may succeed in gathering together enough followers to

create a "movement"; but, in the main, the position stated remains true.

The position is confused somewhat by the fact that in their beginnings religious revolts very often appeal to the masses, instead of to the ruling class, for support. But this is a mere political accident, and by no means disproves what has already been said. The ruling religion is, in the main, the religion of the ruling class, and for anyone who is in revolt against it to appeal to the ruling class for support would be absurd and useless. It would be to invite this class to commit political suicide. The religious rebel is, therefore, necessarily thrown for support upon those who have reasons for discontent with the existing order—which is nearly always, unfortunately, the larger number. It is for this reason that the originators of a new religious movement always seek support among the masses of the people—they cannot possibly expect to get it from any other quarter. But once the religious revolt is accomplished, and it takes rank as part of the established religion—if not as *the* established religion—we find it playing the game of conserving class interests as energetically as its deposed rival.

The assumed sympathy of English Nonconformity with the democracy furnishes a good illustration of this principle. Fighting a church that was essentially a church of the governing class, Nonconformity was compelled to look for support to the people who were outside that class. Hence its appeal to the people as a whole, hence, also, its indirect and generally unwilling furtherance of democratic ideals. How little is the difference between Nonconformity and the established religion may be seen from two things. First, where there is no incentive to injure its religious rival, English Nonconformity has shown very little more sympathy with democratic movements than has the established Church. And, secondly, in America, where the political conditions are different, there is no difference whatever between the attitude of the Episcopal Church and other Christian bodies.

That Christianity involved the triumph of what Winwood Reade called the "Lickspittle virtues," or, to use Nietzsche's phrase, the "Slave virtues," may be true enough; but this, when examined, only further supports what has been said. The emphasis of Christian teaching upon the virtues of meekness and obedience, upon the sanctifying power of suffering and the purificatory nature of oppression, has been as constant as it has been, on the whole, unwholesome. These virtues have, it is true, been given a premier place, but they certainly cannot be said to have been preached for the benefit of the mass. Had they really had this effect, Nietzsche's indictment of Christianity would be quite without strength. As it is, it requires no very profound study of history to perceive that it was the use of these "slave virtues" by the governing class that served to make the lot of the people the more hopeless. Nothing but the dominance of this teaching, together with the prevailing ignorance, could have given the mediæval Church the power it possessed. And even with the secular powers it remains true that no other religious teaching gave them the same hold over the people that Christianity gave. No other religion had ever given to rebellion quite the same quality of religious evil that Christianity gave, and no other religion ever so impressed upon its followers the religious value of obedience and submission to injustice. From this point of view, Christianity was indeed a triumphant success. There were, of course, many qualifying conditions that prevented Christian teaching being always and permanently successful. The facts of life are ultimately more powerful than the teachings of creeds, and here and there men were stung into revolt, or rulers seized with a tolerable conception of their duties to those over whom they ruled. But so far as it could be accomplished, Christianity gave tyranny a complete religious sanction—not so much in name as by sanctifying the conditions that made misrule and oppression possible.

Nietzsche may, then, be quite correct when asserting that the triumph of Christianity meant the victory of the "slave virtues." But it meant also the exercise of these virtues in the interest of the ruling class, and as a further means of keeping the people in subjection. The complete disappearance, during the ages when the Church was most powerful, of the ancient notions of civic independence and indignity, with the harking back to Pagan models when the power of the Church was weakened, are sufficient to show how disastrously effective was the policy of the Christian Church. Mentally, Christianity demoralised the race by placing a veto upon the free exercise of reason, and its careful weeding-out of the strongest and most independent type of intellect. Morally, it made for disaster by placing in a premier position those qualities which are at once the outcome and the condition of injustice and wrong. And, socially, by its withdrawal of attention from the task of social improvement, by the preaching of the equality of all before God, while emphasising the divinely-ordained social and political inequality of men on earth, it gave injustice in the western world a security of tenure it could not otherwise have easily attained.

C. COHEN.

### Dateless Christianity.

To ordinary Christians, and to the majority of professional theologians, events are all-important. It is contended that Christianity is based on purely historical facts. There was a time when it was not. B.C. and A.D. are genuine historical signs which cannot be overlooked. They both point to a veritable end, and to an equally veritable beginning. They are quite right who speak of the alleged birth of Jesus as the greatest and most momentous event in the history of the world: they only err in their *interpretation* of its importance. It is the conviction of all self-consistent divines that Christianity stands or falls with the birth and resurrection of Jesus. If he was not supernaturally born and supernaturally raised from the dead, that is to say, if he was not a supernatural, Divine Being who came to earth on a specific mission, the Christian claims utterly collapse. The birth and resurrection of Jesus are, therefore, two dates of vital importance. The birth marks the entrance of the Supreme Being into the limitations and restrictions of humanity, and the resurrection, his glorious emancipation from his self-imposed bondage. Now, if the birth did not occur, or was merely an ordinary birth, and if the resurrection was not a physical event established on unimpeachable evidence, is there any possible escape from the conclusion that Christianity is a house built upon the sand of superstition, and that when the rain of knowledge descends, and the floods of criticism come, and the winds of reason blow, and beat upon it, it must inevitably fall and become a shapeless heap of ruins? It is upon the belief in those two supernatural events, whether they ever took place or not, that Christianity has always rested, and prior to that belief it was non-existent.

But to-day there are a few unintellectual divines who rhetorically maintain that Christianity has never had a beginning; and this contention they base upon the metaphysics of the fourth Gospel, and particularly upon the highly mystical phrase, "In the beginning was the Word." They do not pause to consider that in the fourth Gospel no mention whatever is made of Christianity as a distinct religion. The only thing it insists upon is the pre-existence of the Founder of Christianity, not of Christianity itself. But listen to the following passage from a sermon recently delivered and published:—

"Christianity was not founded two thousand years ago any more than steam was founded by Watts, electricity by Cyrus Field, or the motion of the stars by Galileo. You may, if you like, use the formula B.W. before Watts, but not B.S. before steam. Say, if you

like, B.T. before telegraph, but not B.E. before electricity. Alexander Pope said of Isaac Newton:—

'Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night.  
God said, Let Newton be! and all was light.'

And if you choose you may write B.N. or B.G. before Newton and Galileo, but not B.L. before law. The dates are recent, astonishingly recent. But the things have no dates. They lose themselves in eternity and God. In the beginning they were."

From every point of view, that extract is indescribably silly. Who was Watts? We never saw his name before in connection with steam. Watts the hymnologist, and Watts the artist we know, but Watts the "founder" of steam—who is he? But let that pass. Who ever said that steam, electricity, and the motion of the stars were ever "founded" at all? Certainly no one in his senses. But it has been the boast of theologians in all ages that Christianity was founded by Jesus of Nazareth. And yet here is a twentieth-century pulpiteer who has the audacity to tell us that it was never founded at all, but "is the true order of life—life indeed and in full—and therefore eternal." What, then, *is* Christianity?

Here is another quotation from the same foolish discourse:—

"Well, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Judæa, two millenniums ago, but he said, 'Before Abraham was, I am!' We must not date Christianity. We must not put down the Beatitudes as 1907 years old. We know approximately how long it is since He died on Calvary. A schoolboy could in a little time tell you the number of months, days, hours, and minutes [clever school-boy!]. But has self-sacrifice a date? Is the love of God a comparatively recent thing? 'In the beginning was the Word.'"

That may strike some people as an amazingly smart utterance, but we are obliged to pronounce it exceptionally absurd. It is false to say that "self-sacrifice in its earthly forms has no beginning." Why, the earth itself has had a beginning, as well as all forms of activity upon it. But, in any case, self-sacrifice and Christianity are not synonymous; and if they had been, the life and work of the God-man would have been a culpable waste of Divine energy. If what the preacher says is true, then the New Testament is a gigantic lie. According to the testimony of the latter, Christianity is a scheme which makes salvation objectively possible. Christ is represented as doing for man what man could never have done for himself. Christ's death brought a new thing into being—Divine merit which alone avails for man's restoration to Divine favor. That merit is said to inhere in Christ's person, and to be the objective ground on which alone God can forgive sins.

This teaching of the New Testament is flatly contradicted by the twentieth-century pulpiteer now under consideration. What he says is that Christianity is "the revelation of an order of life, of a world, nay, of a spiritual Universe, which order is eternal. Only so can you live. There is no other way of life." The only legitimate inference from such a statement is that Christianity is so belated as to be practically worthless. After all our pulpiteer does date his Christianity, and by dating makes it of no avail. If it is "the revelation of the order of life," it follows that as a revelation it must have a date; but as the pulpiteer himself admits, "the date is recent, astonishingly recent," and we add that the date is so astonishingly recent as to rob the thing dated of all value. This also is virtually admitted by our pulpiteer when in another part of his sermon he says: "How did the world get along before Christ? Many then did magnificently well. The world had heroes and saints. They bore fruit and glorified God." What enabled them to do it? Jesus is represented as saying, "Apart from me ye can do nothing," and Peter is made to tell the Jews that "in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." How then did so many of the people of ancient times succeed in living such simple, beautiful, and noble lives? Our pulpiteer is seen here at his very weakest. The

meaning of those exclusive terms attributed to Jesus and to Peter, he informs us, "is not that the name 'Jesus' is a talisman or shibboleth having some inexplicable and arbitrary significance." Then he continues in this luminous fashion:—

"It is the same thing as saying without arithmetic you cannot count, without geometry you cannot make measurements, without astronomy you cannot navigate, without obedience to the laws of life you cannot live. Ignore arithmetic, and the result is confusion in your books. Disregard astronomy and the alternative is not some other way of steering, but shipwreck. Transgress the laws of life, and you don't live some other way, you die."

Now, mark, our pulpiteer gives us two different definitions of Christianity. The first is this: "Christianity is the true order of life—life indeed, and in full—and therefore it is eternal." The second is as follows: "Christianity is the revelation of an order of life, of a world, nay, of a spiritual Universe, and that order is eternal." Well, surely, Christianity is fatally wounded in the house of its friends! Before Christ, the order of life, which is eternal, and which cannot be broken, was unknown; it lay hid in night; and yet countless myriads of people observed it in the most perfect and beautiful manner possible. There were good men and true in all parts of the habitable globe thousands of years before Christ. Then at length Christ came, and *revealed* this eternal order of life; but if man had always been following it without knowing what it was, what need was there for a revelation of it? "The Word of God, the order of the world cannot be broken, nor can the order of the spiritual world which Christ reveals." The whole case is now before us, and it is a hopelessly bad case. There are two Christianities, the one dateless, and the other dated; and the latter is nothing but a revelation of the former. "We must not date Christianity," says our pulpiteer, and then forthwith he proceeds to date it. There is no before Christ, he says, and then passes on to describe how Christ came and lived and died for our salvation, and is Son of God and hope of the world. But this is empty rhetoric, with no reality at the back of it. The order of life is not eternal, but only coeval with life. Nothing is eternal but Nature. Life began to be; and when it first appeared, its order, like itself, was simple in the extreme. Life and its law have grown together, and are both still growing. Jesus threw absolutely no new light on human problems. What was new in his teaching was not true, and what was true was not new. Dateless Christianity is only another name for the Nature of Things, while dated Christianity must be put down as a mass of exploded superstitions.

Our twentieth-century pulpiteer pretends to be grandly superior to all fear, and then falls to ranting. Listen: "When men say that Christianity is played out, and that the religion of the past will be followed by the no-religion of the future, I am no more terrified than when some anarchist cries, 'Down with law! Down with order!'" He will not admit it, but the fact is that dated Christianity is already a spent force, an exhausted faith, while dateless Christianity is advocated only by sentimental dreamers or monistic idealists. The only thing that flourishes to-day is Science. In proportion as knowledge grows from more to more, faith dwindles from less to less. The better man understands himself, the weaker is his trust in God. The preacher is fully aware of all this; but as long as his own church is full he affects ignorance of it. And where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Christmas Eve in the Upper Circles.

[By the late James Thomson ("B. V.")—first published forty-two years ago, included in the volume of *Satires and Profanities*, and now reprinted for the delectation of a new generation of Freethought readers.]

POOR, dear God sat alone in his private chamber,  
moody, melancholy, miserable, sulky, sullen, weary,

dejected, supernally hipped. It was the evening of Sunday, the 24th of December, 1865. Waters continually dripping wear away the hardest stone; year falling after year will at length overcome the strongest god: an oak-tree outlasts many generations of men; a mountain or a river outlasts many celestial dynasties. A cold like a thick fog in his head, rheum in his eyes, and rheumatism in his limbs and shoulders, his back bent, his chin peaked, his poll bald, his teeth decayed, his body all shivering, his brain all muddle, his heart all black care; no wonder the old gentleman looked poorly as he cowered there, dolefully sipping his Lachryma Christi. "I wish the other party would lend me some of his fire," he muttered, "for it is horribly frigid up here." The table was crowded and the floor littered with books and documents, all most unreadable reading: missionary reports, controversial divinity, bishops' charges, religious periodicals, papal allocutions, and encyclical letters, minutes of Exeter Hall meetings, ponderous blue books from the angelic bureaux—dreary as the humor of *Punch*, silly as the critiques of the *Times*, idiotic as the poetry of *All the Year Round*. When now and then he eyed them askance he shuddered more shockingly, and looked at his desk with loathing despair. For he had gone through a hard day's work, with extra services appropriate to the sacred season; and for the ten thousandth time he had been utterly knocked up and bewildered by the Athanasian Creed.

While he sat thus, came a formal tap at the door, and his son entered, looking sublimely good and respectable, pensive with a pensiveness on which one grows comfortably fat. "Ah, my boy," said the old gentleman, "you seem to get on well enough in these sad times: come to ask my blessing for your birthday *fête*?" "I fear that you are not well, my dear father; do not give way to dejection, there was once a man—" "O, dash your parables! keep them for your disciples; they are not too amusing. Alack for the good old times!" "The wicked old times you mean, my father; the times when we were poor, and scorned, and oppressed; the times when heathenism and vain philosophy ruled everywhere in the world. Now, all civilised realms are subject to us, and worship us." "And disobey us. You are very wise, much wiser than your old, worn-out father; yet perchance a truth or two comes to me in solitude, when it can't reach you for the press of your saints, and the noise of your everlasting preaching and singing and glorification. You know how I began life, the petty chief of a villainous tribe. But I was passionate and ambitious, subtle and strong-willed, and, in spite of itself, I made my tribe a nation; and I fought desperately against all the surrounding chiefs, and with pith of arm and wile of brain I managed to keep my head above water. But I lived all alone, a stern and solitary existence. None other of the gods was so friendless as I; and it is hard to live alone when memory is a sea of blood. I hated and despised the Greek Zeus and his shamless court; yet I could not but envy him, for a joyous life the rogue led. So I, like an old fool, must have my amour; and a pretty intrigue I got into with the prim damsel Mary! Then a great thought arose in me: men cannot be loyal to utter aliens; their gods must be human on one side, divine on the other; my own people were always deserting me to pay homage to bastard deities. I would adopt you as my own son (between ourselves, I have never been sure of the paternity) and admit you to a share in the government. Those infernal Jews killed you, but the son of a God could not die; you came up hither to dwell with me; I the old absolute king, you the modern tribune of the people. Here you have been ever since; and I don't mind telling you that you were a much more lovable character below there as the man Jesus than you have proved above here as the Lord Christ. As some one was needed on earth to superintend the executive, we created the Comforter, a prince royal and plenipotentiary; and behold us a divine triumvirate! The new blood was, I must own, beneficial. We lost Jerusalem, but we

won Rome; Jove, Neptune, Apollo, Bacchus, and the rest, were conquered and slain; our leader of the opposition ejected Plato and Pan. Only I did not bargain that my mistress should more than succeed to Juno, who was, at any rate, a lawful wife. You announced that our empire was peace; you announced likewise that it was war; both have served us. Our power extended, our glory rose; the chief of a miserable tribe has become emperor of Europe. But our empire was to be the whole world; yet instead of signs of more dominion, I see signs that what we have is falling to pieces. From my youth up I have been a man of war; and now that I am old and weary and wealthy, and want peace, peace flies from me. Have we not shed enough blood? Have we not caused enough tears? Have we not kindled enough fires? And in my empire what am I? Yourself and my mistress share all the power between you; I am but a name at the head of our proclamations. I have been a man of war, I am getting old and worn out, evil days are at hand, and I have never enjoyed life; therefore is my soul vexed within me. And my own subjects are as strangers. Your darling saints I cannot bear. The whimpering, simpering, canting, chanting blockheads! You were always happy in a pious miserableness, and you do not foresee the end. Do you know that in spite of our vast possessions we are as near bankrupt as Spain or Austria? Do you know that our innumerable armies are a Chinese rabble of cowards and traitors? Do you know that our legitimacy (even if yours were certain) will soon avail us as little as that of the Bourbons has availed them? Of these things you are ignorant: you are so deafened with shouts and songs in your own praise that you never catch a whisper of doom. I would not quail if I had youth to cope with circumstance; none can say honestly that I ever feared a foe; but I am so weak that often I could not walk without leaning on you. Why did I draw out my life to this ignominious end? Why did I not fall fighting like the enemies I overcame? Why the Devil did you get born at all, and then murdered by those rascally Jews, that I who was a warrior should turn into a enivelling saint? The heroes of Asgard have sunk into a deeper twilight than they foresaw; but their sunset, fervent and crimson with blood and with wine, made splendid that dawnless gloaming. The joyous Olympians have perished, but they all have lived and loved. For me, I have subsisted and hated. What of time is left to me I will spend in another fashion. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." And he swallowed hastily a bumper of the wine, which threw him into convulsions of coughing.

Serene and superior, the son had let the old man run on. "Do not, I entreat you, take to drink in your old age, dear father. You say that our enemies lived and loved; but think how unworthy of divine rulers was their mode of life, how immoral, how imprudent, how disreputable, how savage, how lustful, how un-Christian! What a bad example for poor human souls!" "Human souls be blessed! Are they so much improved now?.....Would that at least I had conserved Jove's barmaid; the prettiest, pleasantest girl they say (we know you are a Joseph, though you always had three or four women dangling about you); fair-ankled was the wench, bright-limbed; she might be unto me even as was Abishag, the Shunammite, unto my old friend David." "Let us speak seriously, my father, of the great celebration to-morrow." "And suppose I *am* speaking very seriously, you solemn prig; not a drop of my blood is there in you."

Here came a hurried knocking at the door, and the angelic ministers of state crawled in, with super-elaborate oriental cringings, to deliver their daily reports. "Messages from Brahma, Ormuzd, etc., to congratulate on the son's birthday." "The infidels! the mockers!" muttered the son. "Good words," said the father; "they belong to older families than ours, my lad, and were once much more powerful. You are always trying to win over the parvenus." "A riot in the holy city. The black angels organised

to look after the souls of converted negroes having a free fight with some of the white ones." "My poor lambs!" sighed the son. "Black sheep," growled the father; "what is the row?" "They have plumed themselves brighter than peacocks, and scream louder than parrots; claim precedence over the angels of the mean whites; insist on having some of their own hymns and tunes in the program of to-morrow's concert." "Lock 'em all up, white and black, especially the black, till Tuesday morning; they can fight it out then—it's Boxing Day. We'll have quite enough noise to-morrow without 'em. Never understood the nigger question, for my part: was a slave-holder myself, and cursed Ham as much as pork." "New saints grumbling about lack of civilised accommodation: want underground railways, steamers for the crystal sea, telegraph wires to every mansion, morning and evening newspapers, etc., etc.; have had a public meeting with a Yankee saint in the chair, and resolved that heaven is altogether behind the age." "Confound it, my son, have I not charged you again and again to get some saints of ability up here? For years past every batch has been full of good-for-nothing noodles. Have we no engineers, no editors at all?" "One or two engineers, we believe sire, but we can't find a single editor." "Give one of the *Record* fellows the measles, and an old *Univers* hand the cholera, and bring them up into glory at once, and we'll have two daily papers. And while you are about it, see whether you can discover three or four pious engineers—not muffs, mind—and blow them up hither with their own boilers, or in any other handy way. Haste! haste!" "Deplorable catastrophe in the temple of the New Jerusalem: a large part of the foundation given way, main wall fallen, several hundred workmen bruised." "Stop that fellow who just left: countermand the measles, the cholera will be enough; we will only have one journal, and that must be strictly official. If we have two, one will be in opposition. Hush up the accident. It is strange that Pandemonium was built so much better and more quickly than our New Jerusalem!" "All our best architects and other artists have deserted into Elysium, my lord; so fond of the company of the old Greeks."

When these and many other sad reports had been heard, and the various ministers and secretaries savagely dismissed, the father turned to the son, and said: "Did I not tell you of the evil state we are in?" "By hope and faith and charity, and the sublime doctrine of self-renunciation, all will yet come right, my father." "Humph! let hope fill my treasury, and faith finish the New Jerusalem, and charity give us peace and quietness, and self-renunciation lead three-quarters of your new-fangled saints out of heaven; and then I shall look to have a little comfort." "Will you settle to-morrow's program, sire? or shall I do my best to spare you the trouble?" "You do your best to spare me the trouble of reigning altogether, I think. What program can there be but the old rehearsal for the eternal life (I wish you may get it)? O, that horrible slippery sea of glass, that bedevilled throne vomiting thunders and lightning, those stupid senile elders in white nightgown, those four hideous beasts full of eyes, that impossible lamb with seven horns and one eye to each horn! O, the terrific shoutings and harpings and stifling incense! A pretty set-out for my time of life! And to think that you hope some time or other to begin this sort of thing as a daily amusement, and to carry it on for ever and ever! Not much appearance of its beginning soon, thank goodness—that is to say, thank badness. Why can't you have a play of Aristophanes, or Shakespeare, or Molière? Why should I meddle with the program? I had nothing to do with first framing it. Besides, it is all in your honor, not in mine. You like playing the part of the Lamb; I'm much more like an old wolf. You are ravished when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks; as for me, I am utterly sick of them. Behold what I will do; I must countenance the affair, but I can do so without disturbing myself. I'll not go thundering and roaring in my

state-carriage of the whirlwind; I'll slip there in a quiet cloud. You can't do without my glory, but it really is too heavy for my aged shoulders; you may lay it upon the throne; it will look just as well. As for my speech, here it is all ready written out; let Mercury, I mean Raphael or Uriel, read it; I can't speak plainly since I lost so many teeth. And, now I consider the matter, what need is there for my actual presence at all? Have me there in effigy; a noble and handsome dummy can wear the glory with grace. Mind you have a handsome one; I wish all the artists had not deserted us. Your pious fellows make sad work of us, my son. But then their usual models are so ugly; your saints have good reason to speak of their vile bodies. How is it that all the pretty girls slip away to the other place, poor darlings? By the bye, who are going on this occasion to represent the twelve times twelve thousand of the tribes of Israel? Is the boy Mortara dead yet? He will make one real Jew." "We are converting them, sire." "Not the whole gross of thousands yet, I trust? Faugh! what a greasy stench there would be—what a blazing of Jew jewelry! Hand me the latest bluebook, with the reports..... Ah, I see; great success! Power of the Lord Christ! (always *you*, of course). Society flourishing. Eighty-two thousand pounds, four shillings, and twopence three-farthings last year from Christians aroused to the claims of the lost sheep of the House of Israel. (Very good.) Five conversions!! Three others have already been persuaded to eat pork sausages. (Better and better.) One, who drank most fervently of the communion wine, suffered himself to be treated to an oyster supper. Another, being greatly moved, was heard to ejaculate 'O Christ!'.....Hum, who are the five? Moses Isaacs: wasn't he a Christian ten years ago in Italy, and afterwards a Mohammedan in Salonica, and afterwards a Jew in Marseilles? This Mussulman is your oyster-man, I presume? You will soon get the one hundred and forty-four thousand at this rate, my son, and cheap too!"

He chuckled, and poured out another glass of Lachryma Christi; drank it, made a wry face, and then began coughing furiously. "Poor drink this for a god in his old age. Odin and Jupiter fared better. Though decent for a human tippie, for a divinity it is but *ambrosie stygiale*, as my dear old favorite chaplain would call it. I have his devotional works under lock and key there in my desk. *Apropos*, where is he? Left us again for a scurry through the more jovial regions? I have not seen him for a long time." "My father! really, the words he used, the life he led; so corrupting for the young saints! We were forced to invite him to travel a little for the benefit of his health. The court *must* be kept pure, you know." "Send for him instantly, sir. He is out of favor because he likes the old man and laughs at your saints, because he can't cant and loves to humbug the humbugs. Many a fit of the blues has he cured for me, while you only make them bluer. Have him fetched at once. O, I know you never liked him; you always thought him laughing at your sweet pale face and weebegone airs, laughing '*en horrible sarcasm et sanglante derision*' (what a style the rogue has! what makes that of your favorite parsons and holy ones so flaccid and flabby and hectic?) 'Physician, heal thyself!' So, in plain words, you have banished him; the only jolly soul left amongst us, my pearl and diamond and red ruby of Chaplains, abstractor of the quintessence of pantagruelism! The words he used! I musn't speak freely myself now, and the old books I wrote are a great deal too coarse for you! Michael and Gabriel told me the other day that they had just been severely lectured on the earnestness of life by one of your new *proteges*; they had to kick him howling into limbo. A fine set of solemn prigs we are getting!" "My father, the holiness of sorrow, the infiniteness of suffering!" "Yes, yes, I know all about it. That long-winded poet of yours (he does an ode for you to-morrow?) began to sermonise me thereon. By Jupiter, he wanted to arouse me to a sense of my inner being and responsibilities and so forth. I very soon packed him off to the infant school, where he teaches the

alphabet and catechism to the babes and sucklings. Have you sent for my jovial, joyous, jolly Curé of Mendon?" "I have; but I deeply regret that your Majesty thinks it fitting to be intimate with such a free-liver, such a glutton and wine-bibber and mocker and buffoon." "Bah! you patronised the publicans and sinners yourself in your younger and better days. The strict ones blamed you for going about eating and drinking so much. I hear that some of your newest favorites object to the wine in your last supper, and are going to insist on vinegar-and-water in future."

Whereupon entered a man of noble and courtly presence, lively-eyed and golden bearded, ruddy complexioned, clear-browed, thoughtful, yet joyous, serene, and unabashed. "Welcome, thrice welcome, my beloved Alcofribas," cried the old monarch, "very long is it since I last saw you." "I have been exiled since then, your Majesty." "And I knew nothing of it!" "And thought nothing of it or of me until you wanted me. No one expects the King to have knowledge of what is passing under his eyes." "And how did you manage to exist in exile, my poor chaplain?" "Much better than here at court, sire. If your Majesty wants a little pleasure, I advise you to get banished yourself. Your parasites and sycophants and courtiers are a most morose, miserable, ugly, detestable, intolerable swarm of blind beetles and wasps; the devils are beyond comparison better company. "What! you have been mixing with traitors?" "Ob, I spent a few years in Elysium, but didn't this time go into the lower circles. But while I sojourned as a country gentleman on the heavenly borders, I met a few contrabandists. I need not tell you that large, yea, enormous quantities of beatitude are smuggled out of your dominions." "But what is smuggled in?" "Sire, I am not an informer; I never received anything out of the secret-service money. The poor angels are glad to run a venture at odd times, to relieve the tedium of everlasting Te Deum. By the bye, I saw *the Devil* himself. "The Devil in my kingdom? What is Uriel about? he'll have to be superannuated." "Bah! your Majesty knows very well that Satan comes in and returns as and when he likes. The passport system never stops the really dangerous fellows. When he honored me with a call he looked the demurest young saint, and I laughed till I got the lockjaw at his earnest and spiritual discourse. He would have taken yourself in, much more Uriel. You really ought to get him on the list of court chaplains. He and I were always good friends, so if anything happens.....It may be well for you if you can disguise yourself as cleverly as he. A revolution is not quite impossible, you know." The Son threw up his hands in pious horror; the old King, in one of his spasms of rage, hurled the blue-book at the speaker's head, which it missed, but knocked down and broke his favorite crucifix. "Jewry fiction *versus* crucifixion, sire; *magna est veritas et prevalebit!* Thank Heaven, all that folly is outside my brains; it is not the first book full of cant and lies and stupidity that has been flung at me. Why did you not let me finish? The Devil is no fonder than your sacred self of the new opinions; in spite of the proverb, he loves and dotes upon holy water. If you cease to be head of the ministry, he ceases to be head of the opposition; he wouldn't mind a change, an innings for him and an outings for you; but these latest radicals want to crush both Whigs and Tories. He was on his way to confer with some of your Privy Council, to organise joint action for the suppression of new ideas. You had better be frank and friendly with him. Public opposition and private amity are perfectly consistent and praiseworthy. He has done you good service before now; and you and your Son have always been of the greatest assistance to him." "By the temptation of Job! I must see to it. And now no more business. I am hipped, my Rabelais; we must have a spree. The cestus of Venus, the lute of Apollo, we never could find; but there was sweeter loot in the sack of Olympus, and our cellars are not yet quite empty; We will have a *petit souper* of ambrosia and nectar."

"My father! my father! did you not sign the pledge to abstain from these heathen stimulants?" "My beloved Son, with whom I am not at all well pleased, go and swill water till you get the dropsy, and permit me to do as I like. No wonder people think that I am failing when my child and my mistress rule for me!"

"Let him go and try on his suit of lamb's wool for to-morrow," said the old monarch. "I have got out of the rehearsal, my friend; I shall be conspicuous by my absence; there will be a dummy in my stead." "Rather perilous innovation, my Lord; the people may think that the dummy does just as well, that there is no need to support the original." "Shut up, shut up, O, my Curé; no more politics, confound our politics! It is Sunday, so we must have none but chaplains here. You may fetch friar John and sweet Dean Swift and the amiable parson Sterne, and any other godly and devout and spiritual ministers you can lay hold of; but don't bring more than a pleiad." "With Swift for the lost one; he is cooling his 'sæva indignatio' in the Devil's kitchen furnace just now, comforting poor Addison, who hasn't got quit for his death-bed brandy yet." "A night of devotion we will have, and of inextinguishable laughter; and with the old liquor we will pour out the old libations. Yea, Gargantuan shall be the feast; and this night, and to-morrow, and all next week, and twelve days into the new year, the hours shall reel and roar with Pantagruelism. Quick, for the guests, and I will order the banquet!" "With all my heart, sire, will I do this very thing. Parsons and pastors, pious and devout, will I lead back, choice and most elect souls worthy of the old drink delectable. And I will lock and double bolt the door, and first warm the chamber by burning all these devilish books; and will leave word with the angel on guard that we are not to be called for three times seven days, when all these Christmas fooleries and mummeries are long over. Amen. Selah. *Au revoir*. Tarry till I come."

### The Star of Christ.

LIKE other distinguished persons, the Prophet of Nazareth had to make a fuss, not only in the world, but in the universe; and his biographers (especially Matthew) duly provided him with extraordinary incidents. Not only was he born, like so many other "saviors," without the assistance of a human father, but his birth was heralded by a celestial marvel. There was a star of his nativity. The wise men from the east called it "his star." This puts him in the category of heroes, and bars the idea of his being a god. It also shows that the Christians, amongst whom this story originated, were devotees of astrology. Fortune-tellers still decide your "nativity" before they cast your "horoscope." We are aware that many commentators have discussed the star of Christ's birth from various points of view. Some have thought it a real star; others have had enough astronomy to see that this was impossible, and have argued that it was a big will-o'-the-wisp, created and directed by supernatural power, like the pillar of day-cloud and night-fire that led the Jews in the wilderness; while still others have favored the idea of a supernatural illusion, which was confined to the wise men—and thus it was that the "star" was not seen or mentioned by any of their contemporaries. But all this is the usual mixture of Bible commentators. There is really no need to waste time in that fashion. The Star of Bethlehem belongs to the realm of poetry, as much as the Star of Cæsar, to which the mighty Julius ascended in his apotheosis.

Thousands of sermons have been preached on that Star of Bethlehem, and these also have been works of imagination. We have been told, for instance, that it was the morning star of a new day for humanity. But this is a falsehood, which the clergy palmed off on ignorant congregations. The world was happier under the government of the great

Pagan emperors than it has ever been under the dominion of Christianity. For a thousand years the triumph of the Cross was the annihilation of everything that makes life pleasant and dignified. The Star of Bethlehem shone in a sky of utter blackness. All the constellations of science, art, philosophy, and literature were in disastrous eclipse. Cruelty and hypocrisy abounded on earth, toil and misery were the lot of the common people, and bloodshed was as common as rain.

Religions, said Schopenhauer, are like glow-worms; they require darkness to shine in. This was quite true of Christianity. It was splendid when it had no competitor. To be visible—above all, to be worshiped—it needed the sky to itself.

One by one, during the past three hundred years, the stars of civilisation have emerged from their long eclipse, and now the sky of humanity is full of countless hosts of throbbing glories. The Star of Bethlehem is no longer a star of the first magnitude. It pales and dwindles every year. In another century it will be a very minor light. Meanwhile it is drawn big on the maps of faith. But that little trick is being seen through. Once it was the Star of Bethlehem first, and the rest nowhere; now it takes millions of money, and endless special pleading, to keep its name on the list.

G. W. F.

### Freethought Saves.

FREETHOUGHT is the real Savior. When we make a man a Freethinker, we need not trouble greatly about his politics. He is sure to go right in the main. He may mistake here or falter there, but his tendency will always be sound. Thus it is that Freethinkers always vote, work, and fight for the popular cause. They have discarded the principle of authority in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, and left it to the Conservative party, to which all religionists belong precisely in proportion to the orthodoxy of their faith. Freethought goes to the root. It reaches the intellect and the conscience, and does not merely work at haphazard on the surface of our material interests and party struggles. It aims at the destruction of all tyranny and injustice by the sure methods of investigation and discussion, and the free play of mind on every subject. It loves Truth and Freedom. It turns away from the false and sterile ideas of the Kingdom of God and faces the true and fruitful idea of the Republic of Man.

G. W. F.

### Sayings of Napoleon.

Impossible—a word found only in the dictionary of fools.

More head and less tongue.

Do you know what is more difficult to bear than the reverses of fortune? It is the baseness, the horrible ingratitude of men.

What makes me think that there can be no God who metes out punishment, is that good people are so often unhappy and rascals prosperous.

I never attached much importance to life. I would not make a step—I have never made a step—to shun death.

Imagination rules the world.

Events that seem very small often have very great results.

We must look upon things as they are, and not as we would wish them to be.

A beautiful woman pleases the eye, a good woman pleases the heart; one is a jewel, the other a treasure.

## Acid Drops.

Thomas Carlyle—as Moncure D. Conway relates—went out for a little air one evening, and noticed an unusual number of tipsy people about. He could not understand it, until he suddenly reflected that they were celebrating the birthday of their Redeemer. This was a celebration that Carlyle was unused to. He came from puritanic Scotland, where the "heathen" festival of Christmas was ignored. The Scottish Puritans kept the new year's festival instead—which was just as "heathenish," although they did not know it.

Getting tipsy on and about the birthday of one's Redeemer does seem rather odd. But then the Christians were always an odd lot of people. Their pious festivals, including Christmas, are all relics of ancient nature-worship. Christ only gave the new name to the so-called Christmas festival. The thing itself was ancient before J. C. was born. Eating, drinking, evergreens, etc., are parts of old worship of the sun—that is, of the vital, generative powers of nature.

The *Vegetarian Messenger* for December contains a long and stupid sermon on "The Fear of the Lord." What it has to do with Vegetarianism we fail to understand. Piety, indeed, is scattered all over this curious magazine. We suppose its conductors are looking for a snug place in heaven in the sweet by-and-by; though when they sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb they will have to make a meal (we presume) off the mint sauce.

Rev. Canon John Allen, of Merlewood, Chiselhurst, left £141,721. After this whale we note a sprat. Rev. F. C. Cardew, of Truro, Cornwall, left £3,858. Oh the sweet gospel of Blessed be ye poor!

Judge Willis has been explaining in the *Morning Leader* that he was suckled (if we may so put it) on the Bible and has never had any taste for slang. But there is slang and slang. Some slang is mere silliness; other slang is the birth of new words and phrases in the language. A pious poet like Milton always uses irreproachable diction; when he ceases to be dignified he loses all his charm. But your universal, humanist poet like Shakespeare uses every resource of expression. Hamlet might get along with Judge Willis's vocabulary; but how about Jack Falstaff? The Bible Dictionary would be of little use to the fat knight—except when he wanted to swear.

Mrs. Eddy has issued a Christmas message through the *Ladies' Home Journal*. We never read greater "piffle." Pious twaddle—and badly expressed at that. Yet this old lady is the despotic head of the Christian Science movement. What a thing religion is, to be sure!

The splendid new infirmary at Newcastle-on-Tyne has a chapel connected with it. The House Committee allowed it to be consecrated, and therefore used by the Church of England. This made the Nonconformists angry, and they have been agitating against it for months. Now they have got the Court of Governors to undo the work of the House Committee, and St. Luke's Chapel, as it is called, will be available to Dissenters as well as Churchmen. And the Dissenters are delirious with joy. Nobody seems to trouble about what the poor people in the infirmary think.

The Court of Governors mean by their resolution to "secure equal rights to all sections of the community." "All" is good. One would think the Churchmen and Dissenters made up the nation between them. But they don't. There are others.

Count d'Haussonville, of the French Academy, has been writing in the *Gaulois* on the Salvation Army. He praises the Salvation Army girls for their "task of rescue in the vicious scenes which London streets reveal at night." We do not wish to detract from that praise. The Salvation Army girls are brave enough in their own way. But the question of the value of their permanent work still remains. It is perfectly evident that they make no real impression on the great body of vice and crime. Even if they did, it would prove very little in favor of Christianity. For the truth is that Christianity has had control of all the educational and moulding influences, and is radically responsible for the very state of society which the Salvation Army aims at improving. Here in London it is still an insult to call a man an "infidel," a serious slur to call him a Freethinker, and a deadly insult to call him an Atheist. This shows which is the predominant power. It is religion in general,

and the Christian religion in particular. And what is the state of things under this predominant power? Count d'Haussonville admits that "No capital in the world presents such a spectacle of repulsive, flaring vice as the capital of the British Empire."

There was a great crowd outside the Old Bailey during the last stages of the trial of Robert Wood, and exciting scenes occurred after the jury's verdict of "Not Guilty." Both the judge and his own counsel pointed out that the worst part of the case against him was his own lying. Add to this the kind of life he confessed he had been leading, and there is hardly the making of a popular hero in him. Yet the mob shouted applause in the most frantic manner, as if he had just performed some splendid deed, or conferred some grand benefit upon the nation. It would make another good illustration for Gustave Le Bon's book on *The Crowd*.

The descriptive reporter of the *Daily News* went into raptures over the spectacle. Never was there such a crowd, or such a tumult of enthusiasm; those who witnessed it are never likely to witness anything like it again. There must have been 15,000 people. The traffic was suspended. And so on. But the writer's experience is evidently limited. He does not recollect the vast crowd that surged outside the Old Bailey while the Editor of the *Freethinker* was being tried for "blasphemy" there—nearly twenty-five years ago; how the traffic was suspended for hours; how the people in court hurled passionate words at the Roman Catholic judge who sentenced the Freethinker who had attacked and satirised his creed; and how it took a mob of police a good while to clear the "mob" out of the court, before Mr. Justice North could pass sentence on the Editor's two associates. George William Foote was a young man then, but he was not exactly a Robert Wood. So you see there are crowds and crowds.

"There is a lot of humbug in our profession of religion." So says the Rev. John Morris, M.A., in the *Narbeth Parish Monthly Magazine*. And we quite agree with him. The living of Narbeth, we understand, is worth something like £700 a year. Mr. Morris lives in the best house in the town and keeps four servants, besides a tame animal called a curate. This is pretty good for a preacher of the gospel of "Blessed be ye poor." Yes, there is a lot of humbug in the religious profession.

By the way, what is the matter with the *Daily News*? Has it been seized by compunction, or has it simply had a moment of forgetfulness? Its long boycott of Mr. Foote's name was broken the other morning in the course of a review of Professor Wendell's highly interesting book, *The France of To-Day*. "Somewhat unexpectedly," the reviewer says, "he agrees with Mr. Foote and other anti-clerical writers in denouncing the recent action of the French Government in respect to the Church as persecution." It is good to see the *Daily News* breaking through its own silly boycott, if only for a minute. All the same, we must observe that the reference to Mr. Foote is too sweeping. He heartily approved the Separation Law in itself. Church and State ought to be divorced from each other. What he denounced was the incidental law as to the projected Associations Cultuelles, which would have kept up a perpetual relation between the Church and the State in spite of the ostensible Separation. Mr. Foote also said it was bad policy to alienate religious buildings from the religious people. Such buildings were useless for other purposes—and a little give and take is necessary in human affairs. When it comes to State action, Freethinkers must be as considerate of their fellow-citizens who happen to be Christians as they would expect consideration shown to themselves in similar circumstances. The fact that Christians have injured Freethinkers is no reason why Freethinkers should injure Christians. The world will never advance while all men are enmeshed in the evil net of retaliation. Freethinkers must act on their own principles—not on the wicked principles of their enemies. Such was Mr. Foote's argument.

Just as this number of the *Freethinker* is going to press, we hear that Mr. H. Boulter has been arrested for "blasphemy" in his lectures at Highbury Fields—no doubt in response to the incitements of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. We know nothing more of the case than we see in the papers, and are ignorant of what he is alleged to have said. Mr. Boulter does not belong to the National Secular Society, and we have received no communication from him. Should our assistance be desired in any way we presume it will be invited. Mr. Boulter has apparently undertaken not to repeat his "offence," whatever it is, while his case is pending. Such an undertaking was not given in our own case in 1882. We went on with what we held we had a right to do.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

January 5, Kennington.

## To Correspondents.

J. S. (Christchurch).—Colonel Ingersoll did not write the diatribe against alcohol quoted as his in the copy of the *Vanguard* you send us. Its pious expressions, and its general style, are enough to disprove his authorship. It was written by some Temperance advocate in America, and tacked on to something that Ingersoll *did* say, and thus it went the round of the newspapers. Ingersoll publicly repudiated it.

FREDERICK DIXON.—There is nothing in your second letter which was not in your first—and our space is limited.

G. G. ROWNTREE.—Your letter was dated Dec. 15, but your envelope was post-marked Dec. 17. That is why you could not be answered last week. Your friend's letter would have been seasonable in the paper he first sent it to; it would not have been seasonable in our columns. If you are not "interested" in the *Freethinker* for what it does contain, by all means drop it. We never tempted readers with other inducements.

P. STACEY.—Pleased to hear that you have got to like the *Freethinker* so much after reading it for six months, although you had little liking for it at the beginning.

A. M. W.—It is impossible to use "private" information in that way—as we think you will see on reflection.

P. H. GOLDBERG.—Rev. Conrad Noel is a decent man in his way, but you shouldn't expect him to talk anything but nonsense about Bradlaugh or the Bible.

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## Sugar Plums.

This number of the *Freethinker* had to be printed several days before the usual time, in order that the wholesale news-agents ("the trade") might be able to handle it before the Christmas holidays. This necessitated our getting one copy of the paper ready right on the heels of another, and it was simply impossible to bring the Christmas week number up to the ordinary level. There are few "Acid Drops," instead of the usual liberal supply, few "Sugar Plums," and few of "Answers to Correspondents." There are also no Lecture Notices. Nevertheless, we believe this week's *Freethinker* will not be found uninteresting.

Next week's *Freethinker* will be the new year's number. It will contain special articles by the editor and the principal contributors; and as this will be a good number for passing round, and introducing to outsiders, we shall print an extra supply in order to meet an increased demand.

South London "saints"—and perhaps some from other parts of London—will please note that a special course of Sunday evening lectures at the "Horns" Assembly Room, Kennington Park, during January, is being organised by the Secular Society, Ltd., with the co-operation of the Camberwell N. S. S. Branch. The opening lecture, on January 5, will be delivered by Mr. Foote, whose subject will be "The Paradise of Fools"—the subject that drew such a crowded audience at the Stratford Town Hall in September, and such an immense audience at the Birmingham Town Hall in November. The "Horns" Assembly Room is a well-known place of assembly in South London. It is also easily acces-

sible. Buses and trams pass the doors from all the bridges, and the "Kennington Oval" Tube Station is within a minute's walk.

Woolwich "saints" will note that the Secular Society, Ltd., is organising a special series of Sunday evening lectures in the Town Hall during February.

London Freethinkers should carefully note that their Annual Dinner takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday, January 14. We remind them of it in order that they may keep that evening open, and not be able to say that they missed the dinner through an unfortunate prior engagement. For the sake of those who have not yet attended the Annual Dinner, we remark that it is always a most enjoyable function; at least, those who do attend invariably say so. There is sure to be a good dinner, and after the dinner there is good music, both vocal and instrumental, and a little speech-making to suitable toasts by leading Freethinkers. The 4s. ticket covers the whole evening's entertainment.

Mr. F. J. Gould has done an excellent thing. During the late municipal election in the Castle Ward, Leicester, he was grossly misrepresented by his orthodox Liberal opponent, Mr. Councillor Barlow. The misrepresentation chiefly related to Sex and Religion; and, as it took place (of course!) on the eve of the election, Mr. Gould had no opportunity to set himself right with the electors; yet, in spite of that fact, he polled 718 votes, which brought him within measurable distance of his successful misrepresenter. Mr. Gould has now issued a "Plain Account" of his views to the electors, and relies on honest men and women judging him by his own words. We wish we had space to reproduce the document in full. It must be sad reading for Councillor Barlow, and an eye-opener to all who listened to his misrepresentations. Mr. Gould states that "The ideal of marriage is the life-long marriage of one man with one woman (monogamy), and we should seek to promote this ideal." "Woman," he says, "as representing the affectionate spirit which is the noblest part of human nature, deserves superior respect. To enable woman to fulfil her duties of affectionate service, man should provide for her material support, keeping her free from drudgery in factories, mills, and all forms of competitive wage-earning." Happy families are the foundations of social order. England is full of the ruins of families at present, and social reformers should endeavor to "restore the family, which has been injured by the competitive system of industry." "I believe," Mr. Gould adds, "in the Religion of Humanity, in the Brotherhood of Man, in International Peace." "We belong to Humanity," he concludes, "in Life and Death. After our so-called death, we share the enduring life of Humanity itself, since our love, and our best thought and work, leave their results in the social order and progress of posterity." Mr. Gould says that Mr. Evan Barlow and the Rev. F. B. Feist told the electors that he held "alarming views." "I must leave you, as fair-minded men and women," he tells them, "to judge for yourselves."

The December number of the *Searchlight*, edited by Mr. J. D. Shaw, at Waco, Texas, gives the place of honor to a reproduction of Mr. Foote's criticism of Sir Oliver Lodge's *Catechism*. "The importance attaching to Sir Oliver Lodge," the editor says, "as the only really distinguished scientist who makes any pretence of harmonising religion with science, will, I think, justify the publication here of Mr. G. W. Foote's able review of his catechism.....The review reprinted here ran through several issues of the *Freethinker*, of which Mr. Foote is editor, and makes for a single issue of the *Searchlight* an unusually long article. However, it is believed that this will be thoroughly overcome and entirely compensated for by its careful perusal."

Mr. Shaw discontinued the *Searchlight* after the May number. He was unable to bear the financial strain. "At first," he says, "I thought the suspension would only be for a short time. Later, I believed it would be for good and for all time to come. I was heart-broken over what I believed to be a final failure." Some good friends wrote to him, however, and he explained to them that if 300 dollars were raised by December, and 500 dollars more were guaranteed for 1908, he would resume the publication of his magazine. In a month the entire amount was subscribed, and Mr. Shaw is once more a happy man. We also rejoice in his joy. And we feel that this incident will be a touching episode in the history (which will be written some day) of the pioneer age of Freethought. We wish our American comrade a happy new year in the shape of an ever-lengthening list of subscribers.

## The Actual Jesus.—V.

(Concluded from p. 811.)

JESUS was by no means an only son. Paul mentions the "brethren of the Lord." The Gospel passages which preserve the taunts concerning the occupation of Jesus and his father, continue the taunt with disparaging references to his being the brother of "James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas" (or "Juda") and of sundry sisters (Matt. xiii. 55, 56; Mark vi. 3)—so that the "Virgin Mary" of orthodox theology was mother of a tolerably large family and a good example of the fact that the Jews are a prolific race. Three of the four brothers of Jesus bore the same names as Judas of Galilee and his sons, and may have been named after them. James and Jude—the latter form of the name being ultimately adopted by the Church to distinguish Judas the brother of the Lord from Judas the betrayer—figure as leaders in the early Church and their names have been attached to Epistles which may represent views held by them or attributed to them. To James, according to the Clementine Homilies, xi., 35, "was confided the ordering of the Church of the Hebrews in Jerusalem" (*Supernatural Religion*, p. 319). According also to Hegesippus, James the brother of the Lord, also called James the Just, was the chief of the Apostles, and received the government of the Church after the death of Jesus (*Supernatural Religion*, pp. 268, 269). Surviving fragments of the "Gospel according to the Hebrews" show the same tendency to give pre-eminence to James (p. 271). Paul, too, speaks of "James, Cephas and John" as leading Apostles who seemed to be pillars of the Church (Gal. ii. 9), and he shows that Cephas (Peter) gave way to the authority or influence of James the brother of the Lord (Gal. ii. 11-14; i. 19). And yet the Gospels never distinctly mention James the brother of the Lord, except in the disparaging taunts concerning the occupation and parentage and family relationships of Jesus, and never refer to him as one of the Apostles. In the lists of the Apostles (Matt. x. 2-5; Mark iii. 14-19; Luke vi. 13-16; Acts i. 13) we find James and John, the sons of Zebedee, a fisherman, and "James, the son of Alphaeus," but no James the brother of Jesus or son of Joseph the carpenter. The "Peter, James and John his brother" who are special confidants of Jesus (Matt. xvii. 1; Mark v. 37) obviously do not include James the brother of Jesus, but only James and John the sons of Zebedee. The three names in conjunction are evidently used as the equivalent of the "James, Cephas and John" who were pillars of the early Church according to Paul's account, in which the James of Gal. ii. 9 is evidently the "James the Lord's brother" of the preceding chapter, verse 19. (Cephas, of course, is usually identified, rightly or wrongly, with Peter, both words signifying a rock or stone). Assuming, as we must, that Paul is the only trustworthy witness—and indeed the only witness of any kind—as to the actual circumstances of the case, the Gospels and Acts are clearly guilty of a deliberate falsification of the facts.\* And the Acts, apparently

\* Further instances of the suppression of James as the brother of Jesus are apparently to be found in the Gospel statements concerning the women present at the Crucifixion or soon afterwards. "Mary the mother of James and Joses" (Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40) and "Mary the mother of James" (Mark xvi. 1; Luke xxiv. 10) and "Mary the mother of Joses" (Mark xv. 47) are probably modifications of Mary the mother of Jesus and James and Joses—the relationship of James to Jesus being (I suspect) purposely obscured and practically suppressed by anti-Judaic alterations of earlier accounts. The alterations include the putting of Mary Magdalene first, thus changing the original order, in which Mary the mother of Jesus naturally came first, so that the reader may not suspect that the Mary thus treated as a subordinate person can be Mary the mother of Jesus as well as of James and Joses. This conclusion is at least confirmed by the fact that the writer of the independent Gospel according to St. John (xix. 25) mentions the mother of Jesus first and Mary Magdalene last as present at the Crucifixion—thus repeating, as I suppose (though perhaps for purposes of his own which still did not include any mention of James as brother of Jesus) the original statement and order of statement of earlier narratives.

yielding to facts probably too well known in those days to be entirely ignored, still brings in James as companion to Peter in the leadership of the Church (chapters xv. 13-21; xxi. 18) after killing "James the brother of John" in a previous chapter (xii. 2), but it never explains who this still surviving and leading James can be, and says nothing to lead an ordinary reader to suspect that this James could be a brother of the Lord or that he exercised greater authority than Peter. Evidently this authoritative brother and practical successor of the Lord Jesus was systematically omitted or rendered unrecognisable in the Gospels and the Acts because his Judaic tendencies were so pronounced and so well known then to enemies or objectors as to be in the highest degree inconvenient to the early Church.\*

Seeing these persistent efforts to obliterate the objectionable "brother of the Lord" from the Christian records, I think we may conclude that the reference in Josephus as to James "the brother of Jesus who was called Christ" is not forged or interpolated by the Church. A Church which suppresses the brother of the Lord in its own documents would be more likely to suppress any mention of him by Josephus than to invent or insert such a passage. It would hardly fabricate the very kind of evidence it was endeavoring to destroy. The section or paragraph in question (*Antiquities*, XX., ix., 1) narrates how Ananus, a young and insolent high-priest, brought James "and others" before the sanhedrim of judges; "and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned." The more equitable of the citizens thereupon complaining of this abuse of power and "breach of the laws" by Ananus, he was dismissed from his office after he had ruled three months.† As a Christian forgery such a passage would be singularly, and indeed incredibly, modest and reticent. If the text has been tampered with, it can only have been (I think) by the insertion or substitution of the words "the brother of Jesus who was called Christ"; and, as we have seen, there is good reason for believing that the Church would rather suppress than favor such an identification of James as the brother of Jesus. The passage therefore seems to me to be genuine as it stands. The death of "St. James the Great," if thus historically fixed, is assignable to 62 A.D., which, allowing for the "three years" and "fourteen years" (Gal. i. 18; ii. 1) and other periods of time indicated by Paul's narrative, must have been at least some twenty years, and may well have been thirty years or even more, after the crucifixion of Jesus. ‡

\* "St. Jude the Apostle" and brother of Jesus is similarly omitted from the New Testament lists of the Apostles. Luke, however, both in his Gospel and in its continuation the Acts, introduces into his lists a "Judas the brother of James." But as he has previously mentioned no James except "James the son of Alphaeus," and "James and John" who are obviously coupled together as sons of Zebedee (Luke v. 10), this Judas is evidently not put forward as the brother of Jesus. The introduction of this Judas as an Apostle and as "brother of James" is apparently a concession to fact purposely put in a form that will conceal the truth. The anti-Judaic suppression of the brothers of Jesus may have been aided by the tendency which at a later period made Roman Catholics claim that the Virgin Mary had no other children besides Jesus and that the "brothers" and "sisters" of Jesus were only cousins.

† Ananus was not the only high-priest who abused his power in those days. Josephus tells us of one high-priest who seized the tithes, whereby many of the humbler priests, deprived of their sole means of subsistence, were left to starve to death. If not due to personal jealousy or hatred, the "martyrdom" of James may have resulted from the bitter sectarian quarrel between the Sadducees and Pharisees. James's Judaic Christianity or Messianism would "give offence only to a small party among the Jews," but that small minority apparently came into power for once in the person of the arrogant and violent Ananus, who, being a Sadducee and a rigorous upholder of the ancient ways and doctrines, would detest and despise, not the belief in a coming Christ, which was thoroughly Jewish and unimpeachably orthodox, but the new-fangled belief in resurrection or immortality, which was held by most of the Jews as Pharisees, as well as by James, who merely added a definite instance in support of the popular belief. What exact breach of the Mosaic Law was alleged against James is not mentioned. The charge may purposely have been kept vague and general.

‡ Jesus would be about thirty-one when he died if we take Luke's account, or thirty-three (the age usually accepted) if we

When Paul refers to the "brethren of the Lord" he speaks of them as being married men (1 Cor. ix. 5). We hear of two grandsons of Jude, the brother of Jesus, in the pages of Gibbon. Brought before the procurator of Judæa, the meanness of the garb and the simplicity of the answers of these alleged descendants of King David soon convinced him that they were neither desirous nor capable of disturbing the peace of the Roman Empire. While confessing their belief that Jesus was the Messiah and their near relation to him, they protested that his kingdom, which they devoutly expected, was purely of a spiritual and angelic nature. "When they were examined concerning their fortune and occupation, they showed their hands hardened with daily labor, and declared that they derived their whole subsistence from a farm near the village of Cocaba, of the extent of about twenty-four English acres, and of the value of nine thousand drachms, or three hundred pounds sterling. The grandsons of St. Jude were dismissed with compassion and contempt" (*Decline and Fall*, ch. xvi.).

This story is from Hegeppus, the "first ecclesiastical historian of Christianity." He was a Jewish convert with a strong prejudice, common to Judaic converts, against the Pauline doctrines. While he represents James the brother of the Lord as the head of the early Church, he also represents him as discharging priestly offices in the Jewish religion; so that he evidently saw little difference between Christian and Jew. He appears to have collected a large amount of information concerning Christian affairs, and to have been a writer deserving of much respect (see *Supernatural Religion*, Part II., ch. iv.). He gives an account of the stoning to death of James. Unfortunately only fragments of his works have been preserved. We may suspect that the "mysterious veil" cast over the infancy of the Church by the wise dispensation of Providence (as Gibbon sarcastically puts it) is partly due to the intentional non-preservation or actual suppression of Judaic Christian writings—such as those of Hegeppus and the Gospel according to the Hebrews—owing to their being unwelcome to the triumphant Gentile Church founded on Paul's teachings. Thus in the fifth century Bishop Theodoret confiscated more than two hundred copies of a gospel (supposed to have been a modification of the Gospel according to the Hebrews) which he found in use in the churches in his diocese. He put away these mischievous Gospels, as he considered them, and replaced them by copies of the four canonical Gospels (*Supernatural Religion*, p. 372). Probably the earliest and most primitive of the gospels or accounts of Jesus would be suppressed still more rigorously. Originating, or finding their primary biographical material, as they must have done, in Palestine among Jews, they would naturally be deeply tinged with Judaism, and, besides being weak and often puerile in their earlier presentments of the mythical elements, they would be apt to include too many genuine details of the history of Jesus and the early Church. They would therefore be highly objectionable to the heads of the Church, to whom nothing would be more offensive than an approximation to a truthful account of a Jesus who may have differed but little from many other Jewish devotees, except in his final fate and the combination of circumstances which converted him into the "God the Son" of a new and successful re-combination of mythical elements common to many religions because springing from tendencies common to human nature in all parts of the world.

also admit John's account. As it is now assumed that Jesus was born four years "before the birth of Christ," this would make the date of the Crucifixion 27 A.D. or 29 A.D., and not 33 A.D. as usually given. But, independently of other circumstances, the indefinite language in Luke's statement that Jesus "began to be about thirty years of age" is quite sufficient to show that the attempts to fix the exact age of Jesus and the exact date of his crucifixion are little better than guesswork—a remark applying also to the date of his birth, concerning which a blunder of four years by those working on orthodox data has already had to be acknowledged and corrected.

If asked to name the specially favorable circumstances that brought about or facilitated the exaltation of the man Jesus into the God of a great world-religion, I should specify the following, in addition of course to the striking and pathetic death on the Cross and the personal piety which caused his companions to regard him as a crucified martyr:—(a) The Roman Empire, which protected the new-born religion from suppression by local bigotry, especially Jewish, and afforded means for its diffusion and development among people of many nationalities. (b) The decay (under advancing civilisation and culture) of belief in definite Pagan mythology, then merging into a vague kind of monotheism, which like the idea of the Fatherhood of God and the belief in immortality and heaven and hell and various ethical and philosophical elements (all then developing among Jews and Gentiles alike) only awaited a systematisation or popular presentment in a newer, more credible, more captivating, and more ethical and universal form than Paganism had supplied. (c) Judaic monotheism with its partially ethical scriptures and its prophecies of a divinely-appointed Messiah or Deliverer. (d) The fact that the Jews commonly used the term "Son of God" to mean merely a righteous man, so that the great distinguishing feature of Christian theology could readily arise by insidious exaltation or literalisation of meaning. (e) The combination of Hellenic and Judaic influences in the formation of a new religion. (f) The special personality of Paul.

It was the insignificance of the crucified Jesus that fitted him to be the originating basis or starting point of a religion developing from Judaism to a widely different creed. If he had been a man of mark or position, holding doctrines fixed for all ages by his own writings, or by those of eminent contemporaries, or by a long public career of definite and well-known teachings and actions, he would have remained only one out of many Jewish prophets or preachers of whom the world has taken but little notice. If he had become prominent as a genuine Hebrew Messiah or Christ—that is, as a military deliverer like Judas of Galilee and many other Christs, committed to warlike ideals and fierce Judaic revolt against the Romans—he could not have developed into a peaceful world-Christ. On the other hand, a comparative nonentity, of whom little or nothing was known by the world at large, could be moulded to whatever was required. The obscure Jesus could thus be made the representative or embodiment of various views or schools of thought, including the Jewish Messianic idea, deferred and spiritualised as a consequence of the failure of the fighting Christs and the proven hopelessness of physical struggle against the Romans—of the more advanced Pauline views—of the neo-platonism of the Alexandrian school—of many ideals or beliefs taken from Paganism—and of the mythical, moral, and doctrinal products of many minds and of the general tendencies of the age. Whatever may have been the case with other religions, Christianity certainly did not come into existence as a finished system, moulded, perfected, and launched into the world by one individual. Jesus, especially, was far from being such an originating and systematising individual. He was apparently little more than the convenient speck of dust around which the suspended elements of current religious and philosophic thought and emotion could crystallise—the needed personal centre determining their precipitation in a tangible, coherent, and unified form. This theory of the insignificance of the actual Jesus is amply supported by an analytical examination of Christianity and the history of its development; and it fully agrees with, and explains and is confirmed by, the general silence of Josephus and the other historians of the time.

W. P. BALL.

Disdain hatred; hear both sides, and delay judgment until reason has had time to resume her sway.—*Napoleon*.

## In Defence of Doubt.

CERTAIN greybeards are alarmed at the prospects of the present generation. From one point of view, it seems, we, the present generation, are the victims of a disease, from another—the addicted to a vice. But be it vice or disease, there is unanimity among our self-appointed mentors as to its presence and all-pervading influence. They also agree as to its appellation—doubt.

It is wrong, it would appear, to stroll lightly and good-humoredly through this severe existence. It is impertinent constantly to be inquiring into the parentage of the most respectable of realities, when we meet them. We should, in good morality, take other than a waggish interest in the words of holy ones when they deign to rebuke us. It is unseemly to offer the arm of jovial confraternity to tremendous representatives of authority. And we, of this generation, must admit that we do these things; only we question the necessity of the sequence of abuse. Doing these things, in short, are we impertinent? Are we immoral? Is our conduct really unseemly? If the use of the word can be pardoned, we *doubt* it.

As we are acting on the defensive, we naturally choose to await the attack on our own ground, and the ground of doubt is on the outskirts of metaphysic.

Old greybeards, you will get from us neither excuses nor promises of amendment. If our attitude is wrong, on your grey beards and bending shoulders lies the weight of responsibility. We ask you, where are the romances entrusted to your care? What have you done with the mysteries that came down to you so carefully wrapped up, from the ages? You dare not answer, but *we know*.

You yourselves, when you were young, lived in romances, dreamed among mysteries; but when you reached middle-age, the period when men are afflicted with life-weariness, when the soul becomes chilled and the imagination dies, then you began to coldly unwind the golden threads of romance, you carefully probed and analysed the mysteries, and having done so, you wound the former on wooden reels and pinned the dissected parts of the latter under logical headings in stilted categories for evermore.

Then came we, the children, and demanded our patrimony of illusion, and, of course, you could not give it. You offered us instead the reels and the categories, calling them truth, and so we wept. But we soon tired of weeping, and then we laughed. We have been laughing ever since. At what do we laugh? At nothing in particular, only at everything that seeks to become pretentious. It is this aspect of our imbecility that annoys you, is it not, old greybeards?

Furthermore, it was almost dishonest for you to call that silliness "truth." Truth, in times gone by, was a maiden born in the East, whose head wore a reflection of light from heaven. She came heralded by a trumpet, through which a voice said it was the voice of God. And men were glad to prostrate themselves before the maiden, partly on account of her radiant beauty, partly from fear of the trumpet. She has gone now; where, no man knows. Perhaps she grows old and withered in some quiet corner of the universe; it is also rumored that she is dead, and that she died about the same time that Kant, according to Heine, slew Jehovah.

We should have preferred the maiden; but, failing her, we wanted the mysteries. Men with unchilled souls must have mysteries—or their equivalent, and that is doubt.

Now, if you could get into conversation with one of these apparently flippant young men—a very difficult thing to do, by the way—and if you questioned him closely and intelligently, you might discover, to your amazement, that he is at once a metaphysician, an explorer, and a priest; that is to say, he has the secret of a new state of existence, he has discovered a new region, and he possesses a new religion that he can change at will—a truly priestly

prerogative. If I may be permitted to make more compact my metaphors, doubt is at once a region, a purpose in life, and a religion.

The young sceptic is an explorer. The man who has once started out to explore the region of doubt never turns back. Music alone might succeed in describing that wild journey, words, of course, cannot. It is a land of high peaks, deep chasms, and endless abysses; only shadows and deeper shadows. The soul of the man hangs for a moment on the edge of the precipice, and then drops; there is a mad sensation of destruction, generally a painless fall, immediately followed by a feverish search for new depths and more lasting sensation. That is all. The soul never climbs, but hurls itself ever deeper and deeper. It is down among the foundation piles of the universe, it is on its way towards the lower end of infinity, and it knows, go fast, go slow, the journey is certain to outlast its existence.

What is its purpose? What is it seeking? It is seeking for illusions. Now *real* illusions can only be found incidentally in a search for truth; if I were a scholastic philosopher I would say, *therefore*, it is seeking for truth. At any rate, it has found a new joy—a joy unknown to love or art. Here is an emotion of the pure intellect—if ever there was one—the only emotion as yet out of reach of the analytical psychologist, the one emotion that cannot be objectively viewed in the brute creation. It is admittedly unfortunate that its surface appearance is apt to take the form of mere irreverent flippancy.

In condemnation of this attitude of mind, it is stated that it leads to a paralysis of fruitful action, either mental or physical. This may possibly be so to some extent; certainly the number of zealots and enthusiasts in religion and politics is decreasing. Zeal and enthusiasm in the young most commonly takes the form of energetically minding the business of their sires—that *rara avis*, the zealot who minds his own business is, broadly speaking, always elderly. For this reason, the generation about to disappear very wisely prefers to find these qualities in its heirs and successors. Again, there is no one so teachable and tractable as a young zealot, for a zealot is essentially a man who asks no questions, and this will easily account for his popularity in the sphere of religion. Thus the condemnation on utilitarian grounds is weakened by at least a suspicion of self interest.

Still nothing is claimed for doubt in the way of *results*; as we have seen, it seeks for nothing tangible. Yet, in passing, it is well to note that, in history, though it is always the enthusiast who builds up religions and empires, it is just as certainly the work of another enthusiast to demolish them. The sceptic rarely appears in history—he writes it.

But though doubt seeks only for illusions, it is the experience of all real, active sceptics that it finds everything worth finding; that is to say, all the imaginative realities, intangible but permanent, in the world of mind.

The explanation is simple. The chain of inference is interminable. Looking along the other way, this is the only commonplace that the final "why?" is never answered—in fact, is never reached. If we do come across an end of that chain, it means simply that a saintly pragmatist has broken it—someone has made a creed. If we meet suddenly a final "why?" accompanied by a plausible "because," we may be confident that it is the work of a dogmatist. There are only two kinds of dogmatists, the one *cannot* and the other *will not* understand that the "plausible" is not the "true"; the one is a type of intellectual ass, the other, of intellectual mule. Something, indeed, can be said for the breaker of the chain, the maker of the creed, for he has kept people together for practical ends, and further, a creed is not so bad as a dogma, being less definite; but all dogmatism is bad, because deficient. The sceptic, however, knows there is much more remaining to be learnt along that chain; he has found out that the recurring "why?" is only the tempting call to new realms of interest.

An unflinching sign of a great religion has ever been the spirit of "other-worldiness" displayed by its devotees, this amounting to nothing more than a realisation that the material side of existence is really "vanity of vanities," and a consequent determination not to be all-absorbed in it. For this reason I am inclined to describe doubt as a religion, indeed, as the oldest religion.

It is thought that because Lucifer was seen falling like lightning from heaven, he eventually reached this earth. Foolish error! Lucifer, the instant he turned his eyes from heaven, espied the beautiful, black land of doubt, and fled for refuge there for evermore.

And the sceptic is a priest; companionless, without creed or sacrament, on lonely hills he offers his sacrifice—that which he values most—the peace of his soul.

Nevertheless, up here in the daylight, they call him flippant!

STEWART CAVEN.

### Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—On page 807 of your current issue you make reference to a review from my pen, and give a quotation: "The selfishness and atheism of the rich." Then follows your own comment: "Atheism! No insolence is equal to Christian insolence!" May I point out that it was the author, and not the reviewer, who spoke of the "atheism of the rich"? I should be sorry to speak of the atheism of anyone, either rich or poor; not from any dread of the word itself, but because of the opprobrium which is always attached to its use. Apart from this, I have no quarrel with your comment, and will subscribe heartily to it if you will further qualify "Christian insolence" by the addition of the word "orthodox." As my review was anonymous, it compels me to subscribe myself to your readers as

REVIEWER.

### GOD'S PERFECT WORKS.

Let man just take counsel with himself and inquire whether, if God created him with a view to happiness, well-being and knowledge, he might not have formed him in a far more perfect and suitable fashion? Why should not man have four eyes, one for each side of the body, instead of the two with their limited range? Why cannot he fly like the birds? Why has he not the swift legs of the stag, and the muscular strength of the lion? Why cannot he live on air, instead of working the greatest part of his life tied to the ground, merely to satisfy the insatiable cravings of his stomach? Why has he no more than five senses? and why can he not perceive the phenomena of electricity and magnetism by means of a special sense, the same as he does those of light and heat? Why is his knowledge so very circumscribed? and why is his life so short, and his intellectual capacity so limited? Why do thousands upon thousands of natural objects stand in the way of the free working of his powers? Why is he left a prey to tyranny, malice and every kind of injustice? Nobody can satisfy these questions from the teleological or theological standpoint, whereas they meet with the most plausible solutions when looked at from the point of view of a natural order of things, proceeding from a gradual and spontaneous evolution.—*Büchner, "Force and Matter."*

### CHRISTIANITY AND DEATH.

Even of death Christianity has made a terror which was unknown to the gay calmness of the Pagan and the stoical repose of the Indian. Never has death been the cause of such craven timidity as in the Christian world, to which, if Christians believed any part of what they profess, it would be the harbinger of glad tidings, the welcome messenger of a more perfect life.....The Greek and Latin gave dignity to death, and awaited it with philosophy and peace; but the Christian beholds in it innumerable fears like a child's terror of ghosts in darkness, and by the manner of the funeral rites with which he celebrates it contrives to make grotesque even that mute majesty which rests with the dead slave as much as with the dead emperor.—"*Ouida.*"

When one cannot arrange matters with God, one comes to terms with the Devil.—*Napoleon.*

### Is the Paine House Doomed?

THE old house in North-street, New Rochelle, formerly the home of Thomas Paine, author of the *Age of Reason*, has just been sold for \$100, and it is reported that the purchaser will dismantle it and use it for firewood. The owner of the house, Charles W. See, has just completed a new residence, and as there is not room for two buildings on his land, the Paine house, which has been one of the landmarks of New Rochelle for nearly 200 years, will have to go.

According to the records in New Rochelle, the house was built about 1720 by Huguenot refugees who fled from La Rochelle, in France, following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and settled in upper New Rochelle. At the time of the Revolution, the house was occupied by Frederick Deveaug, a Tory. At the close of that struggle it was confiscated by the American Congress, and together with 365 acres of land, given to Paine for his services. Paine lived in the house at various times until his death in New York about 1809. The house was then sold to the Paine Association, which held it for several years and then sold it to William Hayes, who in turn sold it to Wesley See, father of the present occupant, who has sold it to a contractor.

The See family found Paine's old brass andirons and Franklin stoves in a closet in the room which he formerly occupied as a study, and gave them, with other relics, to a plumber, who has for several years had them on exhibition in his shop. Imbedded in the walls of the old house are two bullets which were fired at Paine while he sat by his window writing his memories of the French Revolution. The house has been remodelled until hardly a vestige of the original remains. The farm, with the exception of an acre or two reserved by Mr. See, has been sold to a realty company which is now engaged in cutting it up into building plots.—*New York Times.*

### A PASSING HAIL.

Let us rest ourselves a bit!  
Worry—wave your hand to it—  
Kiss your finger tips and smile  
It farewell a little while.

Weary or the weary way  
We have come from Yesterday,  
Let us fret not, instead,  
Of the weary way ahead.

Let us pause and catch our breath  
On the hither side of death,  
While we see the tender shoots  
Of the grasses—not the roots—

While we yet look down—not up—  
To seek out the buttercup  
And the daisy where they wave  
O'er the green home of the grave.

Let us launch us smoothly on  
The soft billows of the lawn,  
And drift out across the main  
Of our childish dreams again:

Voyage off, beneath the trees,  
O'er the field's enchanted seas,  
Where the lilies are our sails,  
And our sea-gulls, nightingales:

Where no wilder storm shall beat  
Than the wind that waves the wheat,  
And no tempest-burst above  
The old laughs we used to love:

Lose all troubles—gain release,  
Langor, and exceeding peace,  
Cruising idly o'er the vast,  
Calm mid-ocean of the Past.

Let us rest ourselves a bit!  
Worry—wave your hand to it—  
Kiss your finger-tips and smile  
It farewell a little while.

—*James Whitcomb Riley.*

The great man and the great woman should say to the world: "Think of me what you choose. It is indifferent to me. You are not my master, and I shall never accept you as a judge." This should be the attitude of all royalty, whether that of the king, the hero, or the genius.—"*Ouida.*"

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