

THE Freethinker

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Bloody quarrels for religion were unknown to the ancients.—BACON.

MARIE CORELLI

ON

Men and Monkeys.

PERHAPS I ought to say *Miss Marie Corelli*, but the Mr., Mrs., or Miss is usually dropped in the case of consummate genius. We do not say Mr. William Shakespeare, and why say Miss Marie Corelli? This juxtaposition of names need not sound at all strange; for, by one of those sure instincts which are at once higher and deeper than any reason, the great Corelli recognises her own spiritual kinship to the great Shakespeare, and has taken up her abode at Stratford-on-Avon, partly to become the guardian of his memory, partly to go down the vistas of eternity with him in one immortal companionship, and partly to save the time and money of pilgrims from all parts of the world who will be able to visit both transcendent shrines with the same railway ticket.

When I saw lavish announcements of "A Few Christmas Reflections" by Marie Corelli I licked my lips in anticipation. Now, I said to myself, we shall have something worthy of the high occasion. The last word will be uttered on this subject. All its poetry and all its pathos, all its ravishing grace and all its shuddering mystery, will be gathered up in a scintillating gem of English prose. Dickens will be outclassed. What he began Corelli will finish; what he wrought at she will perfect. After the long line of diligent craftsmen comes the born artist, who works not by effort but by inspiration, and swiftly produces the unquestioned masterpiece.

Incidentally I rejoiced that genius was getting its material reward. A piece of writing so extensively advertised by its publishers must be commercially valuable. The lady had therefore received a handsome cheque for her labors. Which was as it should be. And I felt something like the dear Lord himself must have done when he looked round upon his brand-new creation and pronounced it "very good."

But how my expectations were disappointed! When I opened the Christmas Supplement of *Lloyd's Weekly News* for December 22 I discovered the truth of an ancient proverb. Homer sometimes nods; Shakespeare now and then demonstrates his absolute universality by writing balderdash; and Marie Corelli is capable of falling into paltry twaddle and sheer vulgarity. Her Christmas article proves it.

As I do not wish to misrepresent the lady, and as I always desire my readers to form their judgment upon the facts, I reproduce her opening paragraph (there are eight of them altogether) *in extenso* :—

"Some three or four weeks ago, there was a meeting in Birmingham of certain individuals calling themselves 'Secularists,' that is to say, members of a large and increasing Sect whose only little God is Self. They assembled in a godly crowd to hear an avowed Atheist blaspheme Christ. He, the Atheist, addressed them with a blatant boldness:—standing on a public platform in the centre of the so-called 'Christian' city, he mocked and jeered at the Christian Faith, amid laughter and loud applause. In his one pitiful Ego he imperson-

ated 'they that passed by' on the day of the Crucifixion, 'wagging their heads and saying—Thou that destroyest the Temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross.' As he threw his poor handfuls of mud at the Divine Friend and Brother of sorrowing and sinful Humanity, he was warmly cheered. His profane jests at the Virgin-Birth on the first Christmas morning of the world were enthusiastically received—some of his audience going so far as to augment them by vulgar, personal banter such as is common to the street rough and bully. The more he sought to belittle and degrade the Founder of Christianity the more he was applauded and encouraged by his audience. The curious part of it was that these men—for they were all of the stronger sex—saw no shame in their own attitude. That they, who had never done anything to help or comfort the world, should be banded together to ridicule and oppose the noble influence of the whitest Life that was ever lived on earth did not, to themselves, seem an absurd position. They could not see that as they sat in their self-satisfied groups, impotently mouthing and grinning at Christ, they had really ceased to be men, and had become like Carlyle's Apes by the Dead Sea—'sitting on the trees there, grinning now in the most unaffected manner, gibbering and chattering very genuine nonsense—finding the whole Universe now a most indisputable Humbug! The Universe has become a Humbug to those apes who thought it one.' And then, suddenly, amid all the monkey-house noise, came the voice of a Man. 'Say what you like, I am a Christian!'—and the speaker rose to face the music—a young fellow, clear-eyed, clean-limbed, and fearless—'I have thought for myself, and I am a Christian by my own choice and conviction!' Then followed hubbub and laughter and hustling—while the 'Christian' calmly walked out, caring nothing how the Dead Sea Apes might jeer at him."

There are some fine flowers of personal abuse in that paragraph. Marie Corelli is a wonderful genius. Of course! I have admitted it. But humor is not one of her gifts. She lays her satire on with a heavy hand. When she is in a temper she scolds. It is natural to most of her sex. A man tries to knock you down; a woman gives you the length of her tongue; each sex uses its own weapon. And the divine Marie calls names in a passion as naturally as a dog growls or a cat spits. There is something positively touching in the simplicity of her wit. Children cry "monkey face!" to children they detest; the divine Marie calls those who share her faith Men and those who reject it Monkeys.

In this childish division of the human species she undoubtedly has the countenance of her Savior, who said that all mankind at the resurrection of the dead would be divided into two sections, the sheep and the goats, one booked through to heaven and the other to hell. Only two divisions of the infinitely various human race; all the good people this side, all the bad people that side! What a puerile philosophy! And what an apt pupil the Master has in Marie Corelli! She actually betters his instruction. "Men and monkeys" is a decided improvement on "sheep and goats."

Further on in her article this Christian lady speaks of the wild beasts of the Roman arena and "the wilder beasts of infidel men." We are the "Simian herd." And the best of the joke is that the lady talks in this way in her reflections on Christmas, which she says "is the celebration of the birthday of the world's betterment, and is above all high services, a Service of Love." A Service of Love!

Well, if this is how Christians speak of their intellectual opponents in moments of love, is it any wonder that they imprison, torture, and murder them in moments of hate? Thomas Hood exclaimed—

“ Alas or the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun ! ”

But it is really a matter for congratulation that there is less of it than there used to be, and the world will be far happier when it has died out altogether. Charity is all right by itself; but “Christian charity” is one of the instances which support Dr. Johnson’s remark that the adjective is the natural enemy of the noun.

Marie Corelli sadly admits that Christianity is going under, and nothing but a miracle can save it. She recognises that the Secularists are “a large and increasing” body. Later on, she acknowledges that the “Star of the East” rose at Christmas, 1907, on “more than half an atheistical world.” She declares that the time is at hand when Christians “will have to fight for their faith.” But this is mere hysteria. Freethinkers are not going to take a bad leaf out of the Christian book. They intend to give their religious fellow citizens fair play. No more—and no less.

Now let me say that I am the “blatant” Atheist of Marie Corelli’s diatribe. I knew that something would happen when, after continued visits to Birmingham, I had worked up immense meetings in the Town Hall, without a particle of help from the local press. I was boycotted all the time, and when my success could no longer be denied I was misrepresented. The *Weekly Post* broke through the conspiracy of silence with a grossly biased descriptive report, and I believe that Marie Corelli is simply trusting to that report for all the materials of her romantic narrative. I am sure she was not present. She refers to the audience as “all of the stronger sex,” whereas the *Weekly Post* deplored the fact that the audience included so many ladies.

My “profane jests at the Virgin Birth” are efforts of Marie Corelli’s imagination. The subject was only referred to incidentally. I had to point out that the Virgin Birth had long been repudiated by Sir Oliver Lodge and was now denied by the Rev. R. J. Campbell. The only “jest” I introduced (not that I object to jests) was a statement that Mary herself, according to the Gospels, told Jesus that Joseph was his father; and I said I would take her word for it—not only against “Matthew” and “Luke,” but against the world. I hope the ladies of England will not think the worse of me for defending the honor of a respectable married woman and the mother of a large family.

A man did get up and say he was a Christian. He also kept on talking, although the chairman told him that the Birmingham authorities only allowed questions, and not discussion, after my lectures. The “hubbub” was caused by his defiance of the chair. There was no “hustling.” The man sat down at last. It was another man who walked out—and slammed the door after him; which led me to remark that, whatever might or might not benefit the world, it was certain that nothing but mischief could result from the unlovely temper displayed by the Christian who had just left the meeting. And that remark was unanimously applauded. The audience could not help seeing that Freethought had scored.

I want to finish with a word on another matter. Marie Corelli says “there is something higher than the making of money.” I agree with her. My life has proved the sincerity of my belief. I have turned from all the world’s “prizes” and devoted myself to the service of unpopular truth. But what of her sincerity? How much did she get for this Christmas effusion? How many thousands of pounds has she made by exploiting Jesus Christ; working Him—her God!—into her novels, and drawing big profits from the most flagrant blasphemy? She has the money—and the manners! I have my self-respect.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Dead Year.

ONE of the marked features of 1907 has been the growth of interest in social problems and the rapid development of Socialism. All Freethinkers will have observed this with satisfaction. On the contrary, they will see in it some of the fruits of the vigorous and uninterrupted campaign against supernaturalism that has been carried on for over a hundred years. All along, the work of militant Freethought has been for a social end. Christianity, as a mere speculative system, with no influence on life, or no controlling power in politics, would have roused little opposition. But Christianity, in alliance with the State, or fighting to gain a recognised control over secular affairs, was a very different thing. Freethinkers saw that if social work was to go steadily forward, sane ideals must be encouraged, and something done to minimise the distracting waste of energy on “other-worldism.” The work of Paine and his successors, of Robert Owen and his followers, all had this note; and it is as much a characteristic of Freethought now as it was in the past.

In the increased attention to social work, therefore, we have one of the proofs of the weakening of the theology and of the success of the Freethought attack. People are realising, in an increasing measure, that it is neither the question of a God nor a future life that are of primary importance to mankind. The really important questions are those of a human and terrestrial character. Our concern lies less with God than with man, less with the existence and nature of a future life, than with the betterment of an existence that bears alike upon all, and with natural forces with which ignorance is an unforgivable sin.

Freethinkers have also cause to congratulate themselves that one section of the Socialistic world—that represented by Robert Blatchford and the *Clarion*—recognise the necessity of clearing Christianity out of the way if their end is to be realised. For long enough, a different policy was followed, and attacks on Christianity avoided. Apparently, the mistaken nature of this policy is now recognised. With Socialism gaining in strength, and with Church and Chapel bidding for its support, there arose the danger of the Socialist movement being dragged along at the heels of religious corporations. And, thanks to those Socialist leaders who, either from mental weakness or the desire to cut a more prominent figure than they would otherwise, the danger has become a very real one. Were this to transpire, Socialists might say good-bye to whatever of real usefulness it contains. Under the circumstances, Blatchford’s anti-Christian campaign came as a welcome reminder from within of a real enemy to be feared, and a real danger to be avoided. To Freethinkers, it was a repetition of an old story, but it was none the less welcome on that account.

In any case, the Freethought gain is a real one. Historically, misery and suffering, weakness, helplessness, and ignorance have been the conditions of Christian supremacy. The slow permeation of the mass of the people by scientific knowledge, a recognition of the truth that all natural forces are ultimately knowable, and therefore controllable, with a growing consciousness of the fact that all social ills may prove ultimately amenable to human energy and intelligence, involves as an ultimate, the concentration of the entire social consciousness on social life, leaving religion as a mere speculation without any practical value whatever. Let theologians delude the people as long as they may, this result is bound to ensue. For religious beliefs, like most other things in life, have their foundations in utility, however much this may be disguised. People originally believed in gods because of the good or ill they believed these mythical beings might do. They may continue to believe in them for a while even after that belief has disappeared. But as the consciousness that the gods do nothing and control nothing, that human welfare is essentially a matter of human

control, becomes more firmly established, there is nothing to save religion dying from sheer disease. It is for this reason that every step in social development and enlightenment may be safely counted as one more nail in the coffin of superstition.

The weakening of theology and its relation to social movements may provide at least a word on another subject that has been kept before the country during the past year. Mr. Charles Booth has pointed out, in his colossal work on London, that but for the supposed value of its social work, the Salvation Army must have collapsed, as a religious movement, years ago. What is true of the Army is true of all churches and chapels in a degree. Social jerry-mandering is enabling religious organisations to display a strength they would not otherwise possess. And from both the purely social and the purely Freethought points of view, it is important that this social charlatanism should be kept well before the public. In the case of the Salvation Army, the publication of Mr. Manson's book, *The Salvation Army and the Public*, with the wide circulation of an eight page pamphlet of my own, has had the effect of bringing a considerable amount of criticism to bear upon the Army and its methods. The Trades Union Congress passed a special resolution calling for a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry, and special meetings have been held in various parts of the country. A maintenance of the agitation would, I am sure, have the effect of forcing the Army to make its methods public, decreasing the extent of such organisations, free sociology, lying, and social quackery, and so make strongly for the growth of enlightenment and Freethought.

The impossibility of religion living by its own strength is well illustrated by the New Theology movement. There are two aspects to Mr. Campbell's crusade. One is the extent to which professed believers are "jibbing" at Christian doctrines. In spite of all that has been done in the shape of boycotting Freethought criticisms of Christianity, they have spread, until Christian preachers are driven to their wits' end to hit on some method of combining knowledge that is no longer confined to a few with teachings which for generations have been taught from thousands of pulpits and infallibly true. Harmonising has been tried, and failed. Mr. Campbell's novelty—if there be any—consists in throwing overboard a large number of specific doctrines and teachings, and proclaiming as genuine Christianity something which really ignores the essentials of that religion. What is true, and what will stand, in his teaching have long been commonplaces on the Freethought platform; and for that reason we have every cause for pleasure. Our teaching is invading the pulpit, and that it can be preached there is proof of its still stronger hold on the mass of the people.

The other aspect of the matter is that the New Theology, had it been purely doctrinal, might long ago have fizzled out. What has really kept it alive has been its association with a certain social teaching, although in this field Mr. Campbell has a number of competitors. Still, Mr. Campbell, by leaving the supernatural discreetly alone, or by expressing his doctrine of Deity in a way that few understand and many may read into almost any meaning they like, has undoubtedly managed to keep a number of people who are interested in social questions in touch with the New Theology, while supplying them with the comforting feeling that they are still profoundly religious—all the more comforting, perhaps, because few of them understand it. The gratifying feature is that not even a popular preacher in a well-known pulpit can keep people interested in theology. Jesus the thaumaturgist few care about. Jesus the pioneer Socialist, the advocate of land nationalisation, State education, and State maintenance of hungry children, may still attract many—until they find out what a farce the whole business is.

The growth of liberal thought during the past year has been most marked. From one point of view it is pure gain; but from another it may threaten loss. For, unfortunately, a liberalising of

thought does not always mean stronger or more robust thinking. Sometimes it acts in quite the contrary manner. Most men are intellectually lazy. If there is an active stimulus at work they may work their mental machinery for all it is worth, and may be induced to carry their ideas to their logical conclusions. But if the stimulus is withdrawn the activity ceases, and they stagnate until some new force operates on them. While Christian doctrines were obviously barbarous, and organised Christianity openly oppressive, there existed plenty of incentive to keep intellectually active such as were capable of the effort. But with Christian teaching humanised—while yet as intrinsically objectionable, and Christian organisations professing liberalism—although really as hostile to genuine liberty as ever, there is a very real danger of effort being relaxed. In this respect every step in the liberalising of Christian teaching promises danger. Thousands who would otherwise be actively engaged in aggressive Freethought work are, by such tactics, induced to hold their hand, imagining that the fight is over. Never was there a greater mistake. The intellectual and social danger of organised superstition is not destroyed because it no longer dares to achieve its ends by open methods. Religion is never so dangerous as when it professes a tolerance it cannot appreciate and will not exercise. And there is always the possibility of a reaction.

In the New Year, as in the old, our work is to keep the old flag flying, and the old movement afoot. That work has in the past borne splendid results, and it will bear still greater ones in the future. These results were not always easily apparent, but they were none the less real. It has been the lot of the fighting section of the Freethought world to initiate many movements of which others have reaped the benefits, and others often claimed, and received, the credit. It is when one looks back and considers what things were, and then looks round upon what things are, that we realise how great the advance has been. That advance has been won—so far as it has been due to conscious action—by the efforts of a mere handful of men in conflict with one of the greatest and the most unscrupulous of organised superstitions. Those pioneers, who fought with their lives and liberties in constant danger, are, we hope, not without their representatives to-day; and it is at least something to a nation that there exists within it a party free from, and superior to, all sectarian entanglements, but who stand simply for the right of truth against error, of reason against superstition, and for the supreme value of human dignity and justice.

C. COHEN.

A New Beginning.

TIME is ever on the wing, and the sluggard is left behind. Friar Bacon, according to tradition, made a brazen head, and the prediction was that if he heard his head speak he would succeed in his work, if not he would fail. Miles was instructed to watch the head; and while the Friar was asleep, the head cried out, "Time is." Half an hour later it exclaimed, "Time was." In another half hour it said, "Time's past." Then it fell down and was broken to pieces. In "Don Juan," Byron says:—

"Like Friar Bacon's brazen head, I've spoken;
Time is, time was, time's past."

In reality, however, time and life are coeval, and both are in the process of passing until they are no more. Many are familiar with the saying attributed to Thales of Miletus, "Take time by the forelock," which means that success never comes by accident, but is always the reward of incessant struggle. As Somerville says, in his *Sweet-Scented Miser*:—

"For the next inn he spurs amain,
In haste alights, and scuds away—
But time and tide for no man stay."

Life is a warfare in which only the valiant fighter wins. Shakespeare calls time "that bald sexton"

but though represented as an old man, time is not quite bald, for there is one solitary lock of hair on his forehead, by which he may be seized by every earnest pursuer. The truth of this comes home to us with special force at the beginning of the new year. Whether we look backwards or forwards we realise that achievement, progress, growth, is invariably the outcome of taking time by the forelock, that is, of never-ceasing exertion.

At the commencement of the year, it is customary to review the past and to forecast the future; but both tasks are extremely difficult, and are but seldom performed with anything approaching adequate efficiency. As a matter of fact, most of us are the slaves of prejudice. Looking at everything through colored spectacles we are perpetually making erroneous deductions. To every Roman Catholic and High Anglican, the Protestant Reformation is one of the most regrettable events, while all lovers of liberty regard it as the dawn of intellectual emancipation and true ethical progress. To the theologian, Freethought is unspeakably hateful, and, consequently, a gigantic failure. On Christmas Day, the Bishop of London spoke contemptuously of it, as a thing cherished by ignorant people who do not understand the signs of the times. "You Agnostics," he said in effect, "utterly underrate the slowness with which God works." The truth, however, is that the Bishop underrates the force of the Agnostic's argument, which is, not that God works too slowly, but that there is not in all history a single indication that there is a God who works at all. "It is a favorite scoff of the unbeliever," his lordship is reported to have said, "to point out how utterly unjustified the song of the angels, 'Peace on Earth,' has been by the course of events." The Bishop readily admits that "after two thousand years, every nation in Europe is armed to the teeth"; and the only justification of the song of the angels his ingenuity can find is in the alleged fact that "there is not a ruler in the whole of the civilised world who is not passionately set on peace." Is it not clear, beyond dispute, that Dr. Ingram's judgment is hopelessly vitiated by professional prejudice? He accepts the facts but rejects their only legitimate significance. Jesus is called the Prince of Peace, and yet Christendom has always been the scene of bloodiest wars. "The God of peace reigneth," the pulpit dogmatically declares; and yet even Christian nations devour one another on cruel battlefields.

At the beginning of another year, it is comforting and encouraging to know that the number of the people who allow facts to have their due weight with them is steadily increasing. For every *ipse dixit* of the pulpit there is now a clamorous demand for the *dicta probantia*; and because the latter cannot be produced, the preacher's utterances are being treated with cold indifference, if not with open contempt. During the last few years, the man in the pew has been slowly learning the art of thinking, with the inevitable result that the pew is getting to see less and less of him. Technical proof-texts have utterly lost their authority, and the preacher, having no other proof to lean upon, is rapidly going out of vogue. He may still claim to be God's spokesman, whose vocation is to deliver messages supernaturally entrusted to him; but his hearers, discovering that his so-called messages are but so many expressions of his own views, opinions and prejudices, are turning their backs upon him and beginning to look at life and its problems through their own eyes.

It is quite safe to affirm that Freethought is now in the air, permeating the whole of life. It is a leaven implanted in the meal of modern society, invisibly but mightily working and transmuting it. It is impossible to gauge its strength with any degree of accuracy; but it is absolutely certain what the final result will be. The process is necessarily slow, but it is also sure. The appeal to reason is never followed by a sudden revolution. The reason has been so long asleep that it is by no means easy to waken it. The appeal of the pulpit has always been to the emotions, never to the intellect, as such.

The pulpit found the emotions, in the raw, untutored state, and played upon them with great skill until they became its willing slaves. That was the way in which it gained its phenomenal power, and became the preacher's throne. We know what capital it made of the fall in Eden, of the essential lostness or total depravity of the race, of the wrath to come, the danger of hell fire, and of the possibility of escape alone through child-like submission to its authority! The sources of its despotism were the fear of hell and the hope of heaven kindled in the minds of ignorant people by its own ingenuity. Now, Freethought has no direct dealings with the emotions. Its one object is to quicken and enthrone the reason that it may duly guide and control the emotions and make them its own ministers. Once the reason mounts the throne and begins to reign, all superstition is doomed and the dominion of the pulpit is at an end. Till then, Freethinkers must persevere in their propagandism, confident of the ultimate triumph of their cause.

The prospects are exceedingly bright and reassuring. The Freethought Party may not be growing, nor Secular Societies multiplying, but the principles of Freethought are gaining ground everywhere. Even the Pope is fully aware that within the walls of the Holy Catholic Church, Secularism has lately been alarmingly successful, and his last Encyclical may be regarded as a magnificent testimonial which ought to be beautifully framed and exhibited in every Secular Hall. Modernism, which his Holiness so vehemently condemns and is determined to crush to death, is an intellectual force that makes for the mental and moral emancipation of mankind. It represents a movement that is omnipotent and cannot be effectually resisted. Neither the prohibition of the sacraments nor excommunication shall prevail against it. Science, Modernism, and Freethought are blood relations, and cannot be separated. They are as irresistible as the tides. The spirit of inquiry has awakened never to be put to sleep again, and all inquiry is fatal to faith. Every critic is an incipient Freethinker. To ask questions is to be on the road to unbelief. As a matter of fact, the number of genuine believers is to-day extremely small. The bulk of the people are now anxious inquirers, not ardent believers; seekers after truth, not proud possessors of it. Instead of accepting, without question, the preacher's dogmatic assertions, as their forefathers did, they turn round and say, By what authority do you thus speak? The persistence of this attitude of inquiry and of criticism is the most hopeful sign of our times. Already, theology has been completely discredited in so many directions that people are losing confidence in it altogether. On every subject concerning which its teaching can be scientifically tested, it has been found to be in grievous error, and we have absolutely no guarantee that its deliverances on any other theme are any more reliable. When speaking of actual discoveries the scientist has a perfect right to be dogmatic; but the theologian has never made one discovery, and consequently his dogmatism is simply ridiculous. And this is the explanation of the theologian's present unpopularity. The things whereof he speaks, if they exist at all, transcend knowledge, and necessarily his description of them is unauthorised and of no practical value. The wares he offers for sale are but theories, hypotheses, conjectures, speculations which possess no interest whatever except as metaphysical curiosities. It is knowledge, the knowledge of Nature, which science provides, that is of real value to the world.

It is thus in a mood of cheerful confidence that Freethinkers should enter upon a new year of active opposition to the superstition that still lingers round about them. Let us take comfort from the fact that the fabric of the faith is everywhere breaking up. The work we have at heart is at last beginning to tell even upon the holy of holies of supernatural religion. This is the reason why the leaders of the churches try hard to ignore us and to minimise our successes. In their hearts they know

that Secularism is a power to reckon with, that it is spreading more rapidly than they care to acknowledge, and that they have no suitable weapons with which to fight it. Therefore, let us greet the future with a cheer, and march, breast forward, never doubting the worthiness of our cause, but doubly sure of final victory. Without a taint of bitterness, without ever descending to angry personalities, but with an all-absorbing devotion to the interests of the faith that is in us, let us embrace another year of patient and earnest battle for right and truth.

J. T. LLOYD.

Grandfather.

NOT long ago, in the presence of a somewhat critical audience of ladies and gentlemen, mostly teachers, I gave what is known as a "specimen lesson" to a class of children, in order to demonstrate to the listeners what is meant by non-theological moral instruction. There was, of course, no intention to use the occasion for any attack on theological beliefs. The object was purely and simply to show how a teacher might deal with ethical subjects of everyday interest without the employment of supernatural ideas or sanctions. Such lessons should be suited to children of any denomination, and might (so many of us hope) provide a solution of the scandalous "religious difficulty" in our national elementary school system. We feel that a large number of parents who now hesitate to secularise education are prompted by a natural fear lest their children should grow up uncultured on the humane and social side of character; and that they might be brought to see the wisdom of secularisation if they were assured that the schools would give a sensible and serious training in citizenship apart from the orthodox doctrines.

The particular topic was Gratitude, and I will lay before the reader a brief abstract of what I said by means of stories, questions, and blackboard:—

1. An ancient Persian king received gifts from his subjects, such as a crown, a vaso, etc. A poor man offered a cup of water. The king repaid him with a cupful of gold coins.

This was gratitude, but somewhat excessive.

2. A fable by Krilof relates how a young man and an old man—Russian peasants—went out into a forest, and encountered a bear. Young Stefan slew the brute, who had fastened his claws upon the older peasant. To make sure of the creature's death, Stefan strikes a farmer's fork into the body. "You stupid!" shouts the old man. To Stefan, who is astonished, he explains that he is angry at the selling value of the skin being damaged by the holes made by the fork!

In this case, there is entire absence of gratitude. Neither example is quite satisfactory. Each errs to an extreme. We should prefer the Golden Mean.

3. George Stephenson, when a young man, walked from Montrose to Newcastle, carrying his savings with him to his parents. One night, he begs shelter at a lonely farmhouse, and is at first refused by the farmer, but, on the wife's intercession, is allowed to come in for supper and bed.

Many years afterwards, the famous engineer passed that way, and presented the old couple with a substantial token of his grateful appreciation.

This is a normal and agreeable example of thankfulness.

[At this point, I might easily have closed the lesson, but I endeavored to lift the subject to a higher level by adding the next illustration.]

4. The celebrated journalist, Douglas Jerrold, when a little boy, looked yearningly over a cottage gate at the brilliant flowers. The owner culled a red and white carnation, and, without a word, handed it to Douglas. Without a word, the boy, full of delight, ran away holding the flower.

He never saw the man again, and no repayment took place as in the previous cases recounted. But he told the reminiscence to his friends, and said, "The carnation has long since withered, but now it blooms again."

Thus (so I commented) a kind action renews its beauty in years to come, and may inspire people to pass on the generous impulse. We may not be able to repay the

precise person who benefited us, but we may pay the debt to some member of the human brotherhood to which we all belong. And thus the carnation blooms again.

When the children were dismissed, the meeting was invited to criticise. It is unnecessary to repeat all that was said in praise or blame. I was struck, among other impressions, by the singular pertinacity with which several persons maintained that the king's gift was not at all excessive, since he was a royal personage, and owned a large amount of wealth. I suggested that even kings held their wealth in trust for the social welfare, and therefore should not spend or give extravagantly; but this reasoning appeared ineffective.

However, the incident that most interested me was the solemn censure which a gentleman flung at my heretical head, because I had "spoiled" the lesson by the omission of any allusion to God the Father. In vain did I plead that my purpose was merely to kindle admiration for honest and sincere thankfulness on the part of one man towards another. My critic maintained that the whole thing had been deprived of its value by this unfortunate absence of reference to the divine power.

The reader has the full material before him. Look over the notes which I have set out above, and ask at what point the introduction of the God-idea appears necessary. Does the structure of the lesson appear to need filling up anywhere with theological doctrine? If my critic had given the lesson himself, I wonder where he could legitimately and rationally have inserted such ideas? All the good actions were performed by human hands, and to the human agents the thankfulness was justly due. I am not now arguing that gratitude is under no circumstances to be displayed towards a bounteous Heaven. All I say is that, in this particular lesson, the intrusion of theological conceptions is uncalled-for. How could the beautiful little story of Douglas Jerrold's carnation be improved by footnotes on the Fatherhood of God?

My critic said that since I had spoken of the "brotherhood" of man, I must necessarily imply the relationship to a common father. This, of course, was only playing with a figure of speech. But if one is expected to be so severely exact, I might retort that brotherhood would also involve the idea of a mother, and a grandfather, not to go further back in an indefinite ancestry. Only by the goodwill of grandfathers are any of us in the world at all. If it was a proper thing to relate the lesson on Gratitude to a divine Father, it could not have been improper to connect it with the idea of a divine Grandfather. My critic would probably have regarded this hint as strongly indicative of blasphemy. Of course, and in just the same way I should regard the importation of theology as alien to the subject under consideration. I shall not affirm that a theologically-minded teacher could not arouse in his pupils a sense of the comeliness and duty of recognition of kindness shown towards us personally; though, for my own part, I cannot see that any good is gained by the attempt to hang an earthly morality upon a celestial hook. It is perfectly certain that our fellow-men think all the better of us when we show a genuine impulse of thanks. We are so constituted that this mutual passage of fraternal feeling is a noble support of social and individual happiness. It is difficult, and indeed impossible, to conceive that an Infinite God, the possessor of all things, can be pleased at our tributes or disappointed at their absence. In any case, for educational purposes, the simple question is, whether, without any reliance on supernatural motives, the child's imagination may be touched to fine issues, and its will inclined towards a love of the true, the beautiful, and the good.

F. J. GOULD.

HEATHEN, n. A benighted creature who has the folly to worship something he can see and feel.—Ambrose Bierce.

Acid Drops.

Lloyd's Weekly News published Marie Corelli's vulgar and malicious attack on Mr. Foote and the Birmingham Secularists. Mr. Foote sent round a brief letter to the editor asking whether its columns would be open for a reply. A verbal answer of "No" was sent back by the bearer. The editor of *Lloyd's* is a—Christian!

Friends and admirers of the Bishop of London are raising a subscription in order to present him with a nicely painted and handsomely-framed portrait of—himself! No doubt he will hang it up in his palace as the counterfeit presentment of one of the greatest men of the twentieth century. Those who are making the presentation probably knew what would give him the most pleasure.

This noble Bishop of the greatest city in the world preached a sermon (of course!) on Christmas Day, and talked incredible folly—as usual. Referring to the herald angels who sang of peace and goodwill at the birth of Christ, his lordship said "it was one of the favorite scoffs of unbelievers to point out how utterly unjustified—nay, how falsified—that song of the angels had been proved to be by the course of events." He admitted that the state of things after nearly two thousand years of Christianity was "extremely disappointing." But they must not be in a hurry to see the peaceful prophecy fulfilled. "Let them," the Bishop added, "give God his own time." Well, if God exist, he will take his own time, whether "they" give it him or not. And it is likely to be a long one. Judging by the course of the past nineteen hundred years, the Christian God will require as many millions of years to bring about any decided improvement. Fancy the world waiting for it!

Archdeacon Sinclair, a showy ecclesiastic, contributed what we may call a five-minutes' Christmas Sermon to *Lloyd's Weekly News*. Short as it was, at least half of it consisted of extracts from Napoleon, Mill, and Carlyle. The preacher, like most of his tribe, seems to imagine that such extracts are very conclusive. It does not occur to him that extracts of an opposite character could easily be made. Or perhaps it occurs to him that his readers will never hear of extracts that tell against Christianity. Indeed, we think this is very probable; for Archdeacon Sinclair is shockingly dishonest in regard to his quotation from John Stuart Mill. He says of Mill's "posthumous essays"—although he evidently means but one of the three—that they "show that if he had not been warped to Atheism from his cradle he would have been a Christian." This is an extremely absurd statement to those who had read Mill's *Autobiography*. But our point is not its absurdity. We are drawing attention to its dishonesty. By way of proving his statement he quotes extensively from Mill's panegyric on Christ in the *Essay on Theism*. Four times the reader comes across stars showing that sentences, or parts of sentences, have been omitted. He carefully hides the fact that Mill was speaking of Christ merely as a man. Had he quoted that Mill's opinion that Christ "never made the smallest pretension to be God," and "would probably have thought such a pretension as blasphemous as it seemed to the men who condemned him," he would have shown that Mill was as far from being a Christian as ever; for Christianity does not consist in estimating Christ as a great man, but in worshipping him as the Deity. Archdeacon Sinclair, therefore, selected and doctored his extract in a way to deceive his readers; which is, in our judgment, a worse crime than burglary. It has no possible excuse, and it is an act of treachery for the worst of purposes.

The conclusion of Archdeacon Sinclair's short sermon was characteristic. Let us see to it, he said, that "on the Birthday of the Lord there is not one solitary, or outcast, or sufferer, or criminal, or sinner, to whom has not been held out the helping hand of love." There you are! That is Christian humbug all over. Keep up a state of society in which crime, vice, and misery abound; in which the luxury of the rich is balanced by the destitution of the poor; and then fling the under-dogs a mouthful of meat, or a tasty bone, one day in every three hundred and sixty-five—and flatter yourselves that you are the kindest and most generous people on earth.

Archdeacon Sinclair may as well have the truth told him for once in a way. He himself is only a Christian parasite on human society. He is one of the charlatans who preach the gospel of "Blessed be ye poor" for a handsome living. He belongs to the most disreputable profession in the world.

Dr. Clifford indulged in the usual gush on Christmas Day. The birth of the Babe of Bethlehem was "the glorification of home life." According to the narrative, there was a husband, a wife, and a ready-made baby. How this "glorifies" home life passes our comprehension.

"From that experience," Dr. Clifford is reported as saying, "there had undoubtedly come for woman—for motherhood—a new place in the life of man." When a man tells a falsehood, he generally says "S'welp me God." When a preacher tells an untruth, he generally backs it up with "undoubtedly." Dr. Clifford's statement is the opposite of the truth. Instead of mouthing dogmatic falsehoods, he should answer the Rev. Dr. Donaldson—who is a real scholar and an honest man.

"Peace Sunday" at Whitefield's Tabernacle was marked by the Rev. Silvester Horne's "powerful sermon"—as the *Daily News* called it. Mr. Horne appears to be a bit of a joker. He referred to the "haves" and "have nots" before "the Nativity," and the way in which the strong trampled down the weak. "But," he said, "in less than a century the old world of Roman domination was battling for its life, and the sword of Christian truth was doing valiant service for the new era of right and truth." It would hardly be possible to put more folly and falsehood into a single sentence.

"Roman domination" was not battling for its life within a century of the (alleged) birth of Christ. There was no political or social change for hundreds of years. And when a change did come, after the final triumph of Christianity, it was a change for the worse. The position of the slave was rendered more galling, and woman was thrust back into the position of abject inferiority from which she had emerged in the best days of Roman civilisation. As for the "new era of right and truth," we should like to know when it arrived. Mr. Horne is speaking from imagination or prophecy. And will he kindly inform us when the struggle between the "haves" and "have nots" ceased? We really thought it was going on still—in spite of two thousand years of Christianity.

Another of Mr. Horne's jokes was this. He said that the teaching of Christ was the only thing that would banish war. This is peculiarly rich. Armies have existed, and bloody wars have been going on, during the whole Christian era. Christianity, indeed, invented fresh wars—wars of religion, which were unknown to antiquity. Even now, it is the Christian nations that build the battleships, make the guns and rifles, manufacture the explosives, and organise the huge fighting forces of the world. When a heathen nation like Japan feels called upon to join in the game, she has to begin by going to Christian markets for all she wants, and hiring Christian soldiers and sailors to organise her army and navy. And the acme of the joke is that Christendom regards Japan as a Great Power, not because of her triumphs in the field of peace, but simply because she has beaten Russia and is able to build her own ironclads.

Mr. Horne could not finish without an excursion in his prophetic air-ship. He pictured the future of the world without God and the teaching of Jesus Christ—and his eloquence reminds us of the patent medicine advertisements in the newspapers. "Without God," he said, "the passions of hatred, vindictiveness, revenge, and lust would sway the world as with a devil's wand; without the Gospel of Christ war would breed war for ever. Reject the words of the Prince of Peace, and you can hand over the human race to the old world-madness of butchery and strife." With the Gospel of Christ, war has bred war for nearly two thousand years; we could not possibly do worse without it. One fancies, too, that one has met with plenty of hatred, vindictiveness, revenge, and lust in Christian history. Atheism couldn't make things worse—for it cannot achieve an impossibility. As for the Devil's wand, that also is a part of Mr. Horne's little joke. Atheism has no devil. The devil belongs to Christianity. And it has always kept the world fully conscious of his existence.

"Jesus Christ, the Socialist," says the *East Manchester Pioneer*, "formulated a clear, unmistakable code of conduct and organisation for humanity." This may be true, but it is not printed in the New Testament. Our contemporary should indicate its source of information.

We are not in favor of disturbing religious meetings—or any other kind of meetings. But we can understand the state of mind of Mr. Stewart Gray, the leader of the Manchester unemployed, who rushed into the cathedral pulpit

during service on Christmas morning, and astonished the congregation with the spectacle of a preacher wearing a Socialist red tie. His object was to denounce the worshipers for their inconsistency. They had just sung with great gusto, "Christians, awake! Salute the happy morn." And the strange occupant of the pulpit shouted to them—"I cannot understand your singing a hymn of this kind when thousands are starving in the city! I protest against the birth of the Savior being celebrated when there are so many poor people in the world who are not helped. It is blasphemy, and in the name of God I protest." That was enough for the true believers. They soon dragged him out of the pulpit and put him in his proper place—outside.

Mr. Gray's talk about "blasphemy" was, of course, all nonsense; and he had no more right to speak in the name of God than any other person in the cathedral—including the paid exhorter who was going to play the oracle. On the other hand, he had just as much right to speak in the name of God as Bishop Welldon had. It was natural, however, that Mr. Gray should grow "waxy" at seeing and hearing a lot of smug Christians rejoicing in the midst of widespread social misery. His heart appears to have been in the right place—wherever his head was.

"We want more of the thought of motherhood in God," says the Rev. R. J. Campbell. What God is, is nothing; what we want to find in God, is everything. God did not make Man. Man made God. Man is still making God. Mr. Campbell doesn't see it—but he proves it.

We were struck by the heading of a leaderette in the *Catholic Times*. "Religion and Gymnastics" was so suggestive. There is a wonderful amount of gymnastics in modern religion. Look at the New Theology.

The Bishop of Truro says he sometimes begins to think he is a mere talking machine. Flashes of truth come to every man occasionally.

"Amidst all the religious confusion of the time," says the *British Weekly*, "one thing is clear. The respectable press of the country is strongly on the side of the Christian faith." The smug hypocrisy of the passage—after Christmas, too—is enough to give one an uncomfortable feeling about the region of the stomach. That the bulk of the press professes to be on the side of Christianity is undeniable. But would this be the case if newspaper writers were able to say exactly what they believed? Newspapers are written to sell, not to teach; and to sell means that they must be on the side of public opinion—or, rather, on the side of the bundle of prejudices which the average man mistakes for opinion. We have no hesitation in saying that if the public were only enlightened enough to stand it, and pressmen could say all they believed in relation to Christianity, it would be found that a very large proportion of newspaper men—perhaps the majority—are not Christians at all. But, as Dr. Horton and other preachers have been reminding us, we have a corrupt press; and this is doubtless the condition of the *B. W.'s* feeling of satisfaction.

The *Methodist Recorder*, in noting the cheers raised for Wood (the man accused of the Camden Town murder), with the attempt to make a popular hero of him, reflects sadly upon the character of the people who could so lionise one whom it calls "a coward and a liar," "a Euston-road Don Juan," etc., and concludes that the moral of the situation is, that the "only hope for society lies in its renewal by the Spirit of Christ." We agree with what is said concerning the behavior of the public on this occasion, but what has the "Spirit of Christ" to do with it? A far more pertinent question would be to ask what effect the Spirit of Christ has had in inducing people to take a sane and sober view of life? One may safely assume that the majority who behaved in the manner complained of were Christians. The papers that lionised him, and worked up the sensation, were—we have it on the authority of the *British Weekly*—strongly on the side of the Christian faith. The scenes occurred in a country which prides itself on the practical character of its Christian belief; and yet far more interest was taken in the life and acquittal of Wood than would have been shown over the life and death of a great teacher or philosopher. Truly enough, the situation is one that gives much food for reflection.

Christianity has never tended to the development of a developed, balanced intelligence; and modern Christianity runs with increasing strength in the opposite direction. Preaching becomes more and more a matter of sensationalism. The most popular preacher is the one who can tickle

the palates of his audience most effectively. Among the better-to-do classes this takes the form of preaching innovations in doctrine. Among the lower classes peripatetic professional evangelists fulfil the same function. Men like Gipsy Smith, or the notorious Dr. Torrey, really operate disastrously in developing an unhealthy mental type. Christianity tends to lean more and more upon aids of this description. And side by side with this we have the squalid side of city life, the unhealthy pressure of business competition, with bad conditions of employment—all of which cooperate in creating a morbid craving for excitement that satisfies itself in various ways. Revivals, drinking, gambling, the taste for the morbid side of life, are all partly the expression of the conditions above sketched; and as these conditions have developed with Christianity in the ascendant, the sooner we try what a sane and exclusively humanitarian view of life will do the better.

We wish the *Academy* success in its efforts to be witty. What progress it has already made may be seen by the following specimen. In a paragraph on Robert Wood, the curious hero of the Camden Town murder trial, our contemporary says:—

"We confidently expect to hear that Mr. Wood has been offered the editorship of one of the Harmsworth organs; but we are able authoritatively to contradict the report that Lord Northcliffe has bought the *Free-Thinker* for the express purpose of finding him a suitable post."

Our readers will be able to appreciate the wit of this passage without our assistance. On one point, however, which has nothing to do with the wit, we may help them a little. The *Academy* has often been bought and sold. That is why it regards the process as so extremely easy.

The *Methodist Times* "sorrowfully" recognises that "the Roman Church has done little or nothing in recent times to promote the cause of peace." We are not at all inclined to differ with the *M. T.* on this point; but we should like to know what has been done by the other Churches in this direction. Of course, there is an annual Peace Sermon, in which the public is treated to innumerable harmless platitudes; but what Church is there that has risen up to resist the war fever when it is abroad? During the South African war, although there were individual exceptions, every Church in Britain did what it could to fan the war flame. The truth is that in these, as other, matters the Church and Chapel play to the feeling that is uppermost for the time being. And this receives more numerous illustrations as the Churches are thrown more and more upon the democracy for support.

Mr. J. D. Rockefeller has just given two millions of dollars to the McMaster Baptist University of Toronto. No one, after this, will deny that the Standard Oil Company is on the side of righteousness and democracy.

On the occasion of the death of the King of Sweden, General Booth—as one potentate to another—sent a message of sympathy to his widow. In return there was received the customary expression of thanks for "sympathy expressed." The *Daily Telegraph* heads this "General Booth's Work: a Royal Message." What on earth is meant by the heading—unless it is intended to give people the impression that there has been another royal endorsement of the value of Booth's work? Salvation Army dishonesty seems to infect everything it touches.

A religious paper calculates that during 1907 the Salvation Army received from shipping companies, railway companies, and the Canadian government no less than two hundred thousand dollars. It is no wonder that the Salvation Army booms this branch of its work. The public finds the expenses of the office, bad social conditions provide the material, and the Salvation Army pockets the profits.

General Booth expects a newspaper man to be the first to greet him when he arrives in heaven. When! But there's many a slip twixt the cup and the lip.

The vicar of Walsden, near Todmorden, refused to let the church school-room be used for an amateur dramatic performance in aid of the church funds during Advent. All the ticket money had to be refunded, and there is much heart-burning in consequence. The vicar's idea was that the season was too holy for stage plays. He forgot that the Birth of Christ is only an effort of dramatic (pious) imagination. The season and the performance were therefore entirely suitable.

Dr. Macnamara, M.P., who is holding a Nonconformist brief in the present Education controversy, has been giving some figures with regard to Denominational (Church) Training Colleges. The training college in Gray's-inn-road cost £7,600 to build, and the State found £6,000 of it. Cheltenham training college costs £7,938 annually, of which the Church of England contributed £51 last year. Chester cost £7,086, and the Church contribution was £315. Chichester, £5,149, and the Church contribution £150. This is how religious enterprises are financed by the State. Dr. Macnamara would make the Church stand in equally with Nonconformity. We would make them both stand out.

The following answer to a correspondent appeared in last week's *Clarion* :—

"A. S. Coleman.—The definition of an 'Atheist' in this column was not by Mr. Blatchford. The Editor writes only the articles which are signed by him."

Are we to understand, then, that Mr. Blatchford allows members of his staff to make irresponsible statements about his beliefs in his own paper? At any rate, Mr. Blatchford signed a statement that he is not an atheist; and both those who are atheists and those who are not (after all he has written) are entitled to an explanation. Not to perceive this is to fail in intellectual seriousness.

The *Manchester Guardian* is sarcastic at the expense of the melodrama called *When It Was Dark*, dramatised from Guy Thorne's trashy novel of that name. Our contemporary says it is a play "to which several bishops and other eminent divines have extended an approval which they would probably have qualified had they been competent literary critics." Poor bishops! Poor eminent divines!

Rev. R. Gregory, of Manchester, says that "the land question is a religious question." We suppose that is why it has been so muddled.

Queen Alexandria has many good qualities, no doubt, but a sense of humor is not one of them. In sending a cheque for £100 towards the Church Army fund, her Majesty says how much she is obliged "for the continual care and trouble taken in all the cases" which she has "referred to the Church Army for consideration." The joke is one of those unconscious simplicities at which one smiles without bitterness.

Rev. F. A. S. Savile, of Tonbridge, Kent, left £65,940. We should be sorry for him if there were any truth in what he preached.

Two more destitute men of God! Rev. T. W. Chambers, vicar of Christ Church, South Hackney, left £7,182. Rev. Alexander Cosins, Hope-terrace, Edinburgh, left £8,249.

Dr. C. W. Eliot, president of Harvard University, has been telling a New York audience that "Jews, as regarded both their physical and mental qualities, were as a class inferior to the rest of civilised humanity." Dr. Eliot may have learnt this at the Harvard University; he could not have learnt it in the outside world. It is not the vices, but the virtues of the Jew that render him hateful to the Christians. The poorest Jew children in London, and we daresay it is the same in New York, are far better fed, clothed, and taught than the poorest Christian children; and Mr. G. R. Sims, who has been writing on child-neglect in England, confesses that Jewish mothers are beyond exception in this respect—their little ones being always well cared for.

The cause of Jewish inferiority, according to Dr. Eliot, is the "centuries of oppression" which the Jews suffered. But long-continued oppression, while it undoubtedly did produce a certain cunning in the Jews who survived it, assuredly did not, and could not, deaden their mental powers; and, by throwing them exclusively upon themselves, it bred in them that power of domestic affection which is one of their most striking characteristics. It is this which keeps them so thrifty and sober in the midst of thriftless and drunken populations.

Spinoza and Heine were both Jews. Are there any two Christian names in the whole of the United States to be put beside them? Jews have been well to the front in music in proportion to their numbers. In finance they are right in the front. In politics they are not behind. The only leader of genius the Conservative party has had was a Jew. The founders of the great Social Democratic party in Germany (Lassalle and Marx) were both Jews. But why go further?

The president of Harvard University is talking nonsense. Christian nonsense—but still nonsense.

Jesus Christ said (at least they say so) "Take no thought for the morrow." The Bishop of Manchester congratulates his countrymen on the fact that they have put £152,000,000 in the Post Office Savings Bank, and £50,000,000 in other Savings Banks. Jesus Christ took no thought for the morrow. He had nothing but the clothes he stood up in. The Bishop of Manchester's salary is several thousands a year, and will always be paid regularly. And the Bishop of Manchester is reckoned an honest man.

The Rev. Dr. Ballard, Special Missioner to the Methodist Congress, has just been interviewed by a representative of a religious contemporary. One of the questions asked him was whether the discussion after his lectures had ever won over opponents to Christianity. Dr. Ballard was honest enough to admit that "it does not often occur." Of course it does not. In any discussion of Christianity *v.* Freethought the latter stands to win. One reason is that the Freethinker knows the Christian case, while the Christian does not know the Freethought case. Therefore the Freethinker hears nothing with which he is not already acquainted, while the Christian hears many things about his religion for the first time. Another reason is that the exponent of religion is forced during a discussion to "give away" more than he would on other occasions. He is forced to make more or less damaging admissions, some of which come as surprises to many of his supporters. For these reasons Christians find discussions do not pay. Hence it is nowadays that intelligent Christians will not discuss, while those who will are not worth discussing with.

Dr. Ballard has also discovered that the "average intellectual level among ministers needs to be lifted greatly..... they were hopelessly out of date." Which is what we have been saying all along.

According to one newspaper report of the Anti-Vivisection meeting at Caxton Hall, when Miss Lind af Hageby, the Swedish lady speaker was so much interrupted by noisy students—"the most persistent interrupter, strange to say, was a loud-voiced clergyman sitting in one of the front rows, who at length brought upon himself a crushing rebuke from Miss Lind for his unseemly enthusiasm in the cause of vivisection."

A Methodist lecturer, the Rev. H. Lefroy Yorke, notes that the doctrine of "Hell-fire" is now dead in the churches. We do not think it is quite true of all the churches, and hell is certainly still an important part of the preaching of the Salvation Army. Mr. Yorke denounces the teaching as brutal and inhuman, but, as usual, takes the credit for its disappearance to a more human Christianity. The fact is that the doctrine of hell was born of *real* Christian faith, and has been modified or destroyed by the development of a better human feeling. In a lower social state there was nothing specially repugnant to the people in the theory of eternal torment. As social conditions improved, and as a more sensitive condition of feeling was developed, the hideous barbarity of the teaching was so pronounced that even the churches were compelled to cease preaching it. To-day, men like Mr. Yorke are realising the benefit of the attack that Freethinkers of an earlier generation made upon the Christian citadel. They are repeating, with the air of discoverers, teachings that have long been commonplaces with all really progressive minds. Mr. Yorke also says that "All the world over men have made gods in the image of themselves." Perfectly true; but what he still has to realise is, that when the list of men-made gods is exhausted, none others are to be found.

"One of the Salvation Army Victims" wrote from Montreal a letter to *Reynolds' Newspaper*, which appeared in its issue for December 22. This is what he said :—

"Instead of certain charities starting funds for starving Chinese and Indians, they might do something for the thousands of starving English in Canada, the victims of agencies and the Salvation Army. Anyone coming out with the Salvation Army might as well throw their introduction card overboard, as it is useless. Plenty are sent from Quebec to situations which do not exist. I have just returned from Ontario, and work is worse than in England. I went to the Salvation Army headquarters the other day to see if they knew where there was work, but you cannot get a civil answer now. If you are in need of 20,000 men, they are here, wanting to get back, all willing to work, but cannot get it."

Of course the Salvation Army will make no reply. The officials will mutter about "enemies of the faith" and say "Let us pray."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 5, "Horns" Assembly Room, Kennington Park, 7.30 p.m., "Is Christianity True?"

January 12, Queen's Hall; 19, Manchester; 26, "Horns" Assembly Room.

February 2, Coventry; 9, Woolwich; 16, Glasgow; 23, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

W. C. VALE.—You may rely on our doing our best, for the sake of the cause. But we have no status in the case, and consequently no control. See our article.

J. BROUGH.—Will be useful. Thanks.

ATHEIST (Motherwell).—See "Acid Drops."

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

W. HOPPER.—Thanks for letter, enclosures, and good wishes. Sweet Marie is simply after the cash. Many have her complaint; few have her fluency and self-confidence.

MR. AND MRS. L. H. LABONE.—Glad to have your reasonable good wishes.

G. M. NICHOLLS.—You may be right, but questions of taste are proverbially difficult.

H. COWELL.—We are obliged. See article.

C. MCGOWN.—Thanks, though the subject is "off our beat" in the *Freethinker*.

W. C. SCHWEIZER.—Very sorry to hear of your bad accident in Ireland, and hope you will soon be all right again, after your very trying experience.

J. TERRY.—We are obliged to you for your trouble, but there is nothing fresh in Sir Oliver Lodge's address on "The Meaning of Manhood." We have already criticised all that he says in it.

G. E. WHITTAKER, secretary of the Clitheroe Branch of the Social Democratic Federation, begs that the *Freethinker* may be sent no more, as "neither myself nor the Branch have either time or inclination to read it." Prodigious!

HORACE PARSONS.—Your good wishes are reciprocated, and your wife's not less so.

H. SILVERSTEIN.—See our article. Thanks.

R. DANIEL is glad to hear that the circulation of the *Freethinker* has been improving. "I am sure," he says, "it is the best value for money in the country. I started reading it at 18 and I am now 34, and I think that during the last few years it has been better than ever."

R. J. HENDERSON.—Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* is indeed "a fine book." We are watching the case you refer to. Pleased to have your good wishes for the new year.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

INGOLDSBY.—Glad you also felt relieved at learning that Mr. Hubert Bland is a Christian. With regard to the other matter, you may depend upon it that the Christian effort to capture the Socialist party will continue. We told Mr. Bernard Shaw, during a chat in the train, some fifteen years ago, that the great danger ahead of his party was the very thing which is now happening. "As soon as Socialism has any political strength," we said, "the clergy will try to nobble it." And we added with a smile, "the one thing they can't nobble is Freethought; and they know it; that is why they hate us so."

E. OLDHAM.—(1) We gave the name of the book after some of the extracts—*From Matter to Man: A New Theory of the Universe*. By A. Redcote Dewar. London: Chapman and Hall. 1898. It is a work of rare ability and remarkable outspokenness. We came across it quite accidentally, having never noticed any reviews or mention of it at the time of its publication. (2) Thomas Lumsden Strange was for many years a judge of the High Court, Madras. He was the author of many freethinking works. (3) W. M. Call was a Positivist. He wrote a volume of poems called *Reverberations*, and a very able criticism of Theism called *Final Causes*. (4) We have dealt with the Boulter case this week.

T. MATHER.—May deal with it next week. Thanks for new year's good wishes.

R. H. ROSETTI.—See paragraph.

DAVID WATT.—Pleased to hear that two of the four recipients of six weeks' specimen copies have become regular subscribers. Thanks for fresh list.

H. O. W.—Sorry we cannot find room.

C. A. BAXTER.—Christians don't bear the cross; they lay it on other people, and sometimes knock them down with it. Thanks for your good wishes. We are helping to make the world more tolerant than you find it to-day.

COBEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—Previously acknowledged £22 9s. Received since: W. Hopper, 10s.; W. Garthwaite, 2s.

G. T.—Sorry we cannot do what you request. It is so far off, and no man must be condemned unheard. In a general way, of course, it is the duty of Freethinkers to be courteous to those who differ from them; but that is only a part of their larger duty to be courteous to all men.

GEORGE JACOB.—We don't agree with you; Ingersoll had courage enough for anything.

H. A. GILL.—Pleased to hear that, although you don't accept everything in the *Freethinker*, you "admire its intellectuality and fine English." Lloyd's refused to print any reply from Mr. Foote to Miss Marie Corelli's hysterical attack. This is English journalism all over. The "glorious free press" is the greatest fraud of the age.

A. A.—Shall be pleased to see you at the Dinner.

A. ADAMS.—Mr. Wishart's wife and family are not at Woolwich at all—destitute or otherwise. Don't trouble about the Christian Evidence vermin who circulate such slanders. We nail down one of their leaders occasionally, but only in the way of business.

J. BARLOW.—Glad you "enjoy the contents of the *Freethinker* very much—especially 'Acid Drops.'"

W. GARTHWAITE.—Thanks for encouraging letter.

J. KNOX.—It is you who do not understand. You are quite wrong on an important matter of fact; the Liberals were in power when we were imprisoned, and Mr. Gladstone helped to keep us in gaol for the full year, while his Home Secretary, Sir William Vernon Harcourt, labelled us in the House of Commons under the shelter of "privilege." With regard to the Nonconformists, we attack them at present because it is their treachery to their own principles which is responsible for all the religious education difficulty. Catholics and Churchmen are straightforward bigots; the Nonconformists are hypocritical bigots. And nature built us to hate hypocrisy. Do you understand now?

H. BLACK.—Certainly we shall always do all we can to defeat any "blasphemy" prosecution. Glad you "enjoyed" our article on Robert Blatchford's Disavowal of Atheism. Thanks for cuttings.

F. R. THEAKSTONE.—Pleased to have your and your wife's good wishes. Even if they are not realised, they are encouraging.

T. F. GREENALL.—You would find our *Bible Handbook* a very useful companion in discussions with orthodox believers. It is interesting to know that it was Blatchford's *God and My Neighbor* which first excited your curiosity and led you on to Ingersoll and the *Freethinker*, through reading which you are "lifted out of yourself." A very interesting letter, which we are glad to receive. For the reference, see the whole twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew.

R. CHAPMAN.—Yes, we trust we have given Marie Corelli her dose.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

We hope our friends will do their utmost to help us advertise the *Freethinker* in the new year. The resources of this journal are so limited that we cannot spend much in the ordinary commercial ways of making a paper known to the public. But most of our readers could do a little on their own account towards giving us publicity. They can devote a small amount of time, and perhaps a small amount of money—even twopence now and then—to introducing the *Freethinker* to fresh readers amongst their friends and acquaintances, or people they meet in the common intercourse of life. They might also send us the names and addresses of persons who might become regular readers if the paper were properly brought to their attention. We will send six consecutive weekly copies to such addresses gratuitously and post-free.

There was a misunderstanding as to the subject of Mr. Foote's lecture in opening the special course of Sunday evening Freethought lectures at the "Horns" Assembly Room, Kennington Park, during January. The subject we announced last week was "The Paradise of Fools," but the subject that got printed on the general announcements was "Is Christianity True?"—and this must be adhered to. The first lecture will be delivered this evening (January 5), and the hall ought to be crowded. There will be no charge for any seats; on the other hand, it is hoped that the "saints" will contribute liberally to the collection, so as to prevent too heavy a bill of costs from falling upon the Secular Society, Ltd. We may repeat that the hall is very accessible, being passed by 'buses and trams from all the bridges, while the "Kennington Oval" Tube Station is within a minute's walk.

Mr. Foote has engaged the Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday evening, January 12, in order to be in a position to address the Freethought party on the new "blasphemy" prosecution, if the defendant is committed for trial.

We are glad to know that our friend and colleague, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, is recovering from the nasty attack of bronchitis which gave him a bad time during the Christmas week. We wish him, as we are sure many others do, a busy and happy new year.

Mr. Lloyd delivers two lectures, afternoon and evening, to-day (Jan. 5) for the Liverpool Branch at the Milton Hall, Daulby-street. We hope the local "saints" will see that he has large audiences and a hearty welcome. Those who have not already heard Mr. Lloyd should not fail to do so on this occasion.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday evening, January 14. Mr. Foote, who presides, will be supported by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, Heaford, and other well-known speakers. We hope to see a big rally on this occasion. There are many reasons why there should be. One is that the spirit of persecution is in the air again, and it would be well for Freethinkers to begin the new year with a friendly social gathering, which may be the pledge of their activity and comradeship during 1908.

Vegetarians wishing to attend the Annual Dinner will be provided for if they give Miss Vance (2 Newcastle-street, E.C.) two clear days' notice. They will also ascertain from her what seats have been reserved for them.

The West Ham Branch holds a social party at the Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, on Wednesday evening, January 8. The tickets are only sixpence each, and the proceeds will be devoted to the Branch's propagandist work. Those who attend are likely to have a good time, and the two facts together ought to crowd the hall.

The *Positivist Review* for January contains some interesting articles. Perhaps the one that will attract most attention is Mr. F. J. Gould's on "Rationalism and Positivism," in which, as we think, in opposing one extreme he tends to go himself to the opposite. There is an excellent article by Professor Beesly on "Old Age Pensions." Mr. Frederic Harrison is refreshingly iconoclastic, for once in a way, in an article on "Mystery in Religion." Mr. Swinny (the editor) writes very sensibly and humanely on "Natal and the Zulus." We have pleasure in noticing this modest little magazine, which is devoted with so much ability and patience to worthy ideals.

Amongst the printed and illustrated tokens of remembrance that reached us at Christmastide was one from Mrs. Agnes T. Symes (widow of the late Joseph Symes) at Melbourne. It was "A Greeting from Sunny Australia," with pictures of the fauna of that continent. We gazed at the memento with melancholy interest, and remained wrapt in thought for some minutes, going over in memory the tragic incidents of twelve months ago. And before we turned again to our work we sighed once more over that loyal heart stilled for ever in death.

Mr. B. Paul Neuman, writing in the *Westminster Gazette*, credits George Meredith with the saying that "All great thoughts come from the heart." George Meredith is so rich that he does not want to borrow from any man. He would be quite pleased to see us pointing out that this fine saying belongs to another great Freethinker, a friend of Voltaire's, the noble moralist Vauvenargues.

The police attempt to enforce Sabbatarianism in New York has failed. Sunday is a day of freedom again. During the time that the places of innocent recreation were closed there was a great increase of drinking in the city; which proves that human nature will have some form of excitement, and that, if the higher forms are denied it, it falls back upon the lower.

A fortnight ago we explained that we were nearly £3 out of pocket over Mr. Cohen's "Salvation Army" Tract, of which we had put 60,000 copies into circulation at a cost of £25 6s. Subscriptions received amounted to £22 9s, which left a deficiency of £2 17s. Towards this we have received 12s. Surely the £2 5s. will be made up at once. We cannot afford to lose that amount personally. And how about the future circulation of this excellent Tract?

The "Blasphemy" Prosecution.

OWING to the special (holiday) circumstances in which last week's *Freethinker* had to be hurried through the press, I was only able to make a very brief reference to the prosecution of Mr. Harry Boulter for "blasphemy."

One or two cantankerous persons have found something sinister in my statement that Mr. Boulter did not belong to the National Secular Society. This is very absurd. The statement was intended to explain why I could not do anything in the case without being approached. That was all.

I received a letter from Mr. Boulter soon after last week's *Freethinker* left my hands. Mrs. Boulter had already been to the N. S. S. office, and our Secretary had instructions from me to do what she might require, and to find bail for her husband if necessary. Fortunately he was bailed out by two Freethinkers before Miss Vance had time to act. One of them is an old personal friend of mine. Mr. E. Wilson, who provided us so generously with a brake and a fine pair of horses for the N. S. S. demonstrations in the London parks.

Mr. Boulter asked for my advice. I promptly replied that I would give it as soon as I saw a copy of the "information." That was on Saturday, December 21. I did not see it until Monday afternoon, December 30, when Mr. Boulter called by appointment at my office. This long delay does not appear to have been his fault. But it confirmed my impression that his side of the case was not conducted too fortunately.

I had gained that impression by watching the case at Bow-street on Tuesday, December 24. Again and again I should have challenged the prosecution if I had been defendant. I cannot expect Mr. Boulter's solicitor, who did the talking, to have my knowledge and experience; but something decisive ought obviously to have been done (for instance) to check Mr. Musketts' cunning effort to prejudice the public mind by pretending that the "information" was too awful to be read out in open court. Mr. Musketts succeeded, and succeeded easily.

The "information," if what I saw was a perfectly accurate copy, which I presume it was, contains nothing of the character so pertinaciously hinted at by the prosecution. To call anything in it "obscene" is a monstrous abuse of language; and Mr. Boulter is not being prosecuted for "obscenity." There are expressions that some might call "inelegant" and some "indiscreet." But if men are to be put in prison for inelegance or indiscretion there will be very few people outside.

I had a long talk with Mr. Boulter, and I stated my attitude very clearly. My interest in the case is a public one. I want to see every "blasphemy" case defeated. That is what I really care about. That is what I fought for in 1883—to my own personal disadvantage, as I shall have to explain later on. I gave Mr. Boulter certain advice, and I made him a certain offer—on behalf of the party I represent. I cannot say more just now—except that I shall be in court again on Thursday (Jan. 2).

Meanwhile, I am not inviting subscriptions. I understand that Mr. Boulter is collecting enough for immediate requirements. Whatever appeal I may have to make will be made only in the name, and with the authority, of the N. S. S. Executive.

Generally speaking, the Freethought party may rest assured that I should never allow any "blasphemy" prosecution to go unchallenged. It must always be remembered that, from the very nature of the case, we are never able to choose the field of battle. Our action is necessarily defensive; the bigots choose the point of attack, and our only option is to fight or run away. We must resist the imprisonment of any Freethinker in the name of religion. That is the essence of the situation.

G W. FOOTE.

Freethought Work in Germany.

THE Freethought movement in Germany has for many years past been making very rapid extension. At the present time, the movement is carried on by several organisations, hitherto unconnected with each other. The Deutsche Freidenkerbund, *e.g.*, is a national union of most of the Freethought Societies in the various towns. The late Professor Büchner was much interested in its foundation in 1881, and during many years the Freethought and the Socialist movements were closely connected—the latter receiving much support from the former—but the Socialists finally abandoned active Freethought whilst retaining the principle that “religion is a personal matter.” The political objects of the Freidenkerbund are to secure the separation of the churches from the State and the schools, and these are also a part of the Socialist program.

Next in importance to this league is the “free-religious” movement, which dates from the middle of last century, but had many more supporters then than it has now. It is quite frankly and outspokenly Freethought, but retains certain features which are, at best, but feeble imitations of church ceremony, and its leaders are, in some cases, bound by the statutes or constitution of the Society to the position that Christ is the greatest moral reformer, and that the moral teaching contained in the New Testament is the basis of ethics. German Freethinkers, as a rule, regard these two movements as complimentary to each other, the free-religious Societies representing the much-talked-of element of “emotion,” while the other is, of course, all of “intellect”; but they work to a great extent hand-in-hand, and this could not better be illustrated than by the fact that the President of the Freethought League (G. Tschirn) is, at the same time, one of the most influential leaders of the free-religious societies. There are also scattered over Germany many Societies for Ethical Culture, which, however, have not the influence that our own English Ethical Societies have, and a Secular and Moral Instruction League, for which the English Leagues are more or less models and precursors. Of late there have sprung up many “Monist” Societies, which are united in a “Monistenbund.” Professor Haeckel’s more popular writings, which have had very extensive circulation in cheap editions, have done much to promote the establishment of the Monist Societies. Positivism has but a comparatively small following in Germany.

Of late the need has been keenly felt for a union of all the various Freethought organisations in the country. Each of the Societies working along its own lines has, however, a constantly-increasing influence, and this influence may be, in part, measured by the fact that within the past few months an organisation has been formed in Germany for the purpose, ostensibly, of spreading the study of natural science, but really for the purpose of combating the Freethought movement.

It is well known that the governing classes and the churches are much disturbed by the activity and success of Freethought propaganda; and last year, owing to the introduction of a retrogressive education measure in the Prussian Landtag, large numbers of people took the serious step of formally leaving the churches. This, as is known, necessitates a formality involving an application to the authority in Berlin, and a personal statement before a magistrate four weeks, and not later than six weeks, after the application. The number of withdrawals last year and the year before gave rise to serious alarm (at Frankfort in one week there were 800 withdrawals), and one of the immediate results was the sending of police officers to some of the meetings to see what kind of revolutionary doctrine it was that was being preached.

It is a very healthy, not to say stimulating, sign that a League has been formed for the purpose of

bringing the stragglers back to the churches—not on the lines of the old creed, but under the pretence that “science” is on the side of faith. Some time back we witnessed the spectacle of the clever Jesuit scientist, Father Wassmann, on a lecturing circuit, trying to demonstrate the essential distinction between human and animal mental phenomena. In Berlin, however, he met with considerable opposition, resulting in his refutation. He is still on the sick-list. Still more recently in the Prussian Upper House, Professor Reinke, a botanist at Kiel University, distinguished himself by his attacks on Monism and his bad taste in his very personal attack on Haeckel.

The “Keplerbund for the Promotion of Natural Science” is the name which the new apologists have conferred on their organisation, and it is characteristic of their audacity that they should appropriate the name of a great man who, however, is to-day of little interest apart from his astronomical discoveries. Like most of his contemporaries, Kepler suffered much hindrance from the churches, and was not free from the astrological superstition of his time. The formidable list of supporters of the Keplerbund, with Professor Reinke at the head, contains the names of about forty theologians, a large number of physicians, university professors, headmasters of schools, not to mention many high public officials and politicians. All these are deeply concerned in diffusing scientific knowledge! The basis of the Band is to be the “Freedom of Science” and its objects the “service of Truth”; at the same time, it states its conviction that the facts of natural science are in perfect harmony with religious experience. The “religious experience” in view is, of course, Christianity—though of what particular kind is not quite clear. The English “Bridgewater Fund” of 1825 is actually given as an example of what the Keplerbund might do! A bold program is also under consideration—among other things, an institute for scientific training, having as object the promotion of Christianity with the aid of Natural Science. The Keplerbund announces that it will be in a position to give to inquirers information on all kinds of science matters—especially those touching religion. It will have a scientific library, watch the press and correct it, publish cheap popular writings, spread “tracts,” lend lanterns and slides and lecturers too, found museums, educate teachers, clergymen, and others in Natural Science, all, of course, according to the ideas of the governing body of the Keplerbund, which has carefully made provision for co-opting new workers instead of electing them.

One of the most active members is a Dr. Dennert, who spends much time denouncing the evolution theory and Darwinism, and insisting on the Design argument. According to Dr. Dennert, even if Natural Selection be true, it presupposes a selector! Certain other teleological phrases in current use by biologists are seized upon and made to perform good work for the cause. He is further characterised by a crudity which English apologists have, for the most part, had to outlive; such crude accusations, *e.g.*, as that persons of lax morals are predestined for scepticism, that the supporters of Haeckel’s Monism are chiefly “ethical” (*i.e.*, those of lax morals), “political” (the Socialists), and juveniles with no experience.

A large public meeting was held to inaugurate the Keplerbund in Frankfort, at which this satellite lectured on “Natural Science and the Belief in God.” It was a feat of the simplest intellectual conjuring, and a rehash of the Design argument in all its former crudity. Representatives of the local Freethought group were present, but the astonishment may be imagined when the chairman of this “Free Science” meeting disallowed all questions and discussion. The Keplerbund, he said, had rented the hall! Within a day or two the Freethinkers had “rented the hall” too and placarded the town with invitations to a “free” debate, which took place on December 9, 1907. The hall accommodates more than a thousand people, and the meeting was so

great a success that there was not even standing-room left.

The Keplerbund sent a local clergyman to pour oil on the troubled waters, and the Freethinkers' chief speaker was so disposed to compromise that after the first two speakers everything seemed very amicably settled. Noteworthy exceptions, however, were Dr. Westphal, W. Klauke, and E. Vogtherr, who succeeded in showing plainly what the Keplerbund really is. It is an organisation for rehabilitating worn-out religious doctrines which can no longer bear modern criticism; and it is, moreover, capable of adapting its tactics to circumstance.

Needless to say, every attack on Freethought by the Keplerbund will be met by redoubled counter-attacks, and the movement will but hasten the formation of a general league of all Freethought organisations in the towns and throughout the country for propaganda purposes—in a similar way to that which has already this year partly been done in Munich.

G. CAFFEY.

A Freethinker's Childhood.

A TRUE STORY FOR THE YOUNG ONES.

THAT secular education is of paramount importance, and that religious education—if any—should be left to the parents to instil, are reasons for setting forth here what befel me as a child. Unfortunately, I was reared in an atmosphere of extreme orthodoxy, and was crammed with every atom of superstition that could be got from the older-fashioned Christianity which was rampant in those days.

Those of you whose parents do not have nurses to look after you, are possibly better off morally and physically than I was—certainly you are if your parents are Freethinkers. My brothers and sister and myself had two nurses, Nurse Mary and Nurse Bundock—"Buttery Bundock" we called her, and the reason for this appellation will appear afterwards. They used to wash and dress us, and prepare us to appear in the dining-room after dinner, where we sat at the table and partook of dessert. Well, the preparation was often an agony, for every time Nurse Mary washed my face it seemed to me that she put the soap purposely into my eyes to make them smart; and every time, of course, I cried. But she always said that crying was a merciful dispensation of Providence, because the tears washed out the soap. Now you will agree that mothers are usually kinder than this, are they not?

Every day at our dinner in the nursery we had to say "grace," and we repeated the words without much thought as to their meaning. I fancy, though, we were in reality more thankful to cook when she sent in what we liked, though, on the other hand, we were ready to fight her after she had given us what she knew we didn't like. Tapioca pudding was one thing I hated. But Nurse Mary always watched my efforts to get it down until it became cold and stodgy and doubly unpleasant, at which time, in a feeble voice, I told her I couldn't eat it. Her invariable reply was: "Then sit there till you do!" With that she left the table, on which occasions I was able to put the remainder in my pockets to afterwards throw away. This treatment, as you can readily see, was bad, for it made me artful, without any consideration of the fact that cold tapioca pudding is awkward company with other and more ordinary articles in one's pockets.

We had a "Nursery Yacht"—a boat-like piece of furniture with a curved bottom like a huge rocking-chair. Three of us sat in it, and we were allowed to use this on Sundays on the sole condition that while in it we sang "There is a happy land, far, far away!" We never attempted any other tune, and now, after all these years, whenever I see a rocking-chair, the words "far, far away" ring in my ears.

On fine afternoons we were taken for walks—usually to the cemetery to see the burials. Nurses then were especially fond of weddings and funerals. These were mainly their fancies by day, and at night, for light recreation, the reading of *Napoleon's Book of Dreams*. It was a somewhat morbid taste with nurses then, and is not quite extinct to this day, perhaps. Well, we watched the burials, gazed into deep graves, and heard, with open mouths, the dismal sing-song of the clergyman until it was time to go home. To make matters worse, and to further put a damper on any exuberance of spirit we might have developed, at tea, afterwards, Nurse Mary repeated all over again the burial service we had already inwardly learned and digested, but with a

peculiarly melancholy intonation all her own. This was very wrong, for as Wordsworth says:—

"A simple child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?"

No doubt it was done without the knowledge of our parents, and largely, as the lawyers say, of purpose and malice aforethought, to quell any possible effort on our part to be jolly. It is quite certain that *Mothers* do not so treat their children. All the while this dismal chanting of the Service for the Dead proceeded, Nurse Bundock uttered no sound. She sat with her elbow on the table, and the tea cup and saucer balanced on her fingers high in air, with her eyes fixed in an immovable and unblinking stare at the butter. She was infatuated with butter, ate an enormous quantity, and her face shone with it like the face of the Madonna. This is why—as I told you before—we called her "Buttery Bundock."

Nurse Mary, who was very pious, frequently made distressing allusions to the "end of the world." She declared that God, having drowned the world once, would never do so again. This seemed satisfactory as far as it went. But she always finished up with the harrowing intelligence that he would "burn it instead next time." I don't know that it was exactly good theology—it was certainly not the New Theology—but she said it. She might have had some kind of astronomical reason, and possibly thought the earth would finally plunge into the sun. She used to say, "God will burn the earth next time!" *Earth* meant to me *mould*, and I used to run to the window and look at the geranium-beds, and almost fancy I could see little flames spurting out. When there was a thunder-storm it was her grand opportunity. She absolutely terrified us, for she always announced the alarming fact that God was angry and would strike us dead! Now, the lightning we didn't mind so much; it was really too quick to bother us, because before it happened it left off—it was the *thunder* that appalled, during which time we were speechless with fright. Only when we got much older were we bold enough to laugh at the thunder as it rolled across the heavens and died away in the distance, and ventured to suggest that it was God having his coal in.

Talking of coal reminds me of the great old coal-cellar at home. In mortal dread did I go of that coal-cellar; and usually, if the door was open, would peer in from a distance. To this day I cannot tell the actual reason, but it is a fact, nevertheless, I always thought the Holy Ghost lived there! This was no naughty state of mind; *I actually thought it*. And the Holy Ghost was in my estimation a kind of fluffy animal, of which I went in mortal dread, especially when being put to bed. Whether I pictured him thus because of the fungoid growths discernible from the garden through the big grated window of the coal-cellar, I don't know. Who knows? Perhaps an unusually vivid dream had begun the trick, and a rotten superstition delivered out of the mouths of the ignorant Mary and the slippery Bundock had perpetuated it.

In the nursery hung a chronological chart of the Kings and Queens of England, by Mrs. Daunan. The dates were in large figures, and the Kings and Queens were represented in flaming colors—the earlier ones with great swords and battleaxes and funny dresses and crowns. I had a vague idea that *William the Conqueror* was like *God*, whether because he looked so stern, or because he was represented with a background of wild nature and rocks and lightning, or because "*William and Anne*" lower down seemed so pleasant and homely—William so gentlemanly and Anne so like an ordinary lady—I may never know. But this shrouded, this indistinct and undefinable idea of the Scriptural God always arose whenever I looked high up the chart and gazed on the "Conqueror." It might have been something in the word *Conqueror*.

Once we all had scarlet fever. This was when little Franky died. I perfectly well remember Nurse Bundock at teatime, with resplendent countenance born of the consumption of that comestible without which she would have pined and died, and never once removing her gaze from it, saying: "Little Franky has gone to heaven!" I asked, "Where is that?" Still immobile, she replied, "Above the clouds." After this definite information as to the whereabouts of Franky, I looked for a long time at the sky, and expected every instant to see Franky pop his head through a cloud. But he never did.

Then we went into the country to recover from our illness. It was here that the gardener explained that green paint was made from ivy leaves, and wall nails were cloves baked hard. We didn't quite credit all this, but it serves to illustrate the absurdity of belief without inquiry.

When a fresh little brother or sister was announced we were taken to see the "new baby." Of course, we asked where it came from, and were met with the somewhat plausible statement that the doctor brought it in his bag.

There seemed some reason in this, for we had seen the bag. Then we asked Nurse Mary, "Where did *he* get it?" and she replied with a peculiar emphasis, "Bought it!" But this was hardly satisfying. So we approached the Goddess of Butter in desperation, and repeated our question. "Oh! out of the parsley-bed"—and my sister and myself forthwith went and raked about in the parsley-bed to see if there were any more. In such matters it is always right to be satisfied with the answer that you will be "told some day."

Later on I went regularly with my parents to church, where we had a pew. We had to walk quite a long way, and in hot weather the gravelly path seemed so irksome. When we were in the church the faint smell of *crêpe* and kid gloves and perfume, and the rustle of silk and satin, quite overcame me. I was not strong, and think I must have looked ill, for friends always said: "How delicate dear Arthur looks!" The Reverend William Chapman preached, and it seemed to me always the same sermon. It lasted, too, such a long, long time! And I was admonished not to gape. To prevent gaping—when I felt it coming on—I used to bite my tongue or press my upper lip with my finger. One summer day, during the interminable sermon, I amused myself by watching the sun's rays through the stained-glass windows making blurred patterns on the walls and columns. The sermon dragged on in monotonous, dreary and meaningless to me. Then I gazed up into the great carved roof of the church, and tried to imagine how, if I could only get out of the pew unobserved, I should be able to climb along the arches and manage to struggle through that round hole and clamber along where once I had seen a bird flying; how I might hold myself back with one hand, and with the other reach an ornamental spike and pull myself up, when, to my astonishment, there was a loud crackling noise in the roof, and a great space appeared, through which I could see the blue sky—and I cried out! Instantly my mother bent over me and whispered me to be quiet; and Mrs. Garland, in the pew behind, handed over her smelling-salts; and when I looked again the roof had all shut up and was just the same as ever, and Mr. Chapman was still droning on. This shows you how the nerves can be worked upon and visions seen and voices heard. Once in church a man kept shouting something in a loud, wailing voice, disturbing the rest of the congregation. At last he threw himself on the ground, and appeared to be crying; but it seemed so strange for a man to cry. But Ellis, the verger with the braid on his coat, led him out, and all was quiet again—except, of course, for Mr. Chapman, still going on with his thirdly-fourthly, fourthly-fifthly sermon.

Every night before we went to bed we each read a portion of the Bible aloud to our parents. Sometimes we asked questions, but they were not always answered. When I persisted in asking about some word or other, my mother at last said: "Well, dear, it means that if you are wicked God will wither you up!" After this, whenever I saw the dead leaves in the garden I always thought of it. There were other questions to which we had no answers, and my father often made some remark which made me think he was tired of it. And I really didn't believe he was so religious after all, because once he sawed a piece of wood on Sunday, and I said: "Ma told me not to laugh, not to fight, and not to use my tool-box on Sunday"; but he said: "Nonsense; all days alike!" and went on sawing. Had Ingersoll lived then, my father would probably have quoted his words: "No day can be so holy but the laugh of a child will make it holier still."

George Eliot somewhere says, "There are moments when we contradict our past selves, when a fit of passion, like a lava stream, lays low the work of half our lives"; and it must have been some such moment when, during a quarrel with my brother Duke, I got very angry and shouted: "You fool! You fool!" Immediately afterwards, though, I recollected the text we had read, "Whoso calleth his brother a fool shall be in danger of hell fire," and forthwith repaired to my bedroom, and there, kneeling beside the bed and with my hands flat together above my forehead, exclaimed, "Please God, forgive me for calling Dukey a fool." I felt relieved after this, although my belief in some kind of a God, somewhere or other, was little better than belief in a magnified pa or ma.

Some day I may tell you of what befel me when I got older and deliberately refused the Sacrament or Communion at Confirmation. How the Reverend William Chapman preached sermons about me, and how "with strong speech I tore the veil that hid Nature and Truth and Liberty," and left the church never to return. How a book, entitled *Superstition Unveiled* (which had been presented to my father by the author), remained untouched by me among all the other books to which I had access, because my mother told me it was not a good book for me to read [this book is now issued by the Freethought Publishing Company under the title *The Religion of the Heavens*, by Logan Mitchell], and how, at eighteen years of age, I determined

to open it and see for myself. When I did so, the first words I read were these:—

"Lest you should start at these bold truths, and fly
These lines as maxims of impiety;
Consider that religion did, and will
Contrive, promote, and act the greatest ill."

And how, to this day, it takes the premier place on my own book-shelves having a history all its own, making it of priceless value to me.

A. FAGG.

Obituary.

Another of the "Old Guard" has gone from among us. Mr. Wortley, late Inspector at King's Cross Station, was well-known at the old Hall of Science, and of late years, in Finsbury Park, as an ardent Freethinker. He died on Wednesday, December 18, and was buried the following Saturday at Finchley. The funeral oration was given by Mr. W. J. Ramsey in the presence of a number of friends. Mr. Pottage, an intimate friend and fellow Freethinker, regrets that he was unable to be present to pay the last token of respect to an old comrade in the good fight.—W. R.

The death of Capt. William Bowery Duncan, at the age of 73, which took place at his residence, 27 Winterbottom-street, on December 12, removes an old and useful worker from the list of the South Shields Branch. Starting life on Tyneside as a shipwright, Mr. Duncan rapidly gained promotion at sea, and was still a young man when he commanded his first vessel. He was engaged a great deal in the Mediterranean trade, and studious all the while, obtained the position of assistant master at the local Marine School. Afterwards, he opened a Navigation School, and for many years his nautical academy was the successful resort of students from all parts of the country. Capt. Duncan was well-known as an expert and capable teacher, equally at home upon many other subjects besides his own special department. His religious beliefs having gradually weakened, he joined the Branch in 1884, and after that date, his schoolrooms became the permanent home of the local Society. Here the later and younger members found a real school and gathered wisdom and entertainment from its versatile master, who often discoursed to a select class on the Sabbath as a rest and recreation from weekday labors. As an interested pupil, I can vouch personally for his painstaking method, clearness of exposition, and also the enthusiasm for the acquisition of knowledge which he passed on to his hearers. For a few years, failing sight and other infirmities of age had limited his range of action, but until within a very short time of his death, the *Freethinker* was faithfully read to him, and the chief topic at a visit was the progress and position of the cause to which he had rendered such valuable service. The local newspaper gave a highly complimentary sketch of his career, but, perforce, omitted to mention his connection with the Secular party, which, no doubt, hindered to some extent his work. He was long a member of the Free Library committee. The interment took place on Wednesday (Dec. 18) at Westoe Cemetery, and by the courtesy of his widow and grown-up family, Mr. S. M. Peacock read Mr. Gould's Burial Service at the graveside. Among those present at the ceremony were a large number of members—two only, older workers in the ranks than himself—and friends from various parts of the district, besides many old pupils, and his sorrowing relatives. Mr. Peacock gave his usual, impressive reading of the Service, which was heard for the first time, followed carefully, and well appreciated by his audience.—R. CHAPMAN.

With deep regret I have to announce the death of another old Freethinker and member of the N. S. S., in the person of Mr. Thos. Whitely, of Almondbury. Although he had been ailing for some weeks, he had been able to get about, and practically died whilst removing from one seat to another in his room. He was about seventy-five years of age and a deep admirer of our President.—W. H. SPIVEY.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.

HORNS ASSEMBLY ROOM (corner of Kennington and Kennington Park roads, opposite Park Gates): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Is Christianity True?"

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 3.15, Freethought Parliament—Guy A. Aldred, "Why a Socialist must be an Atheist."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, C. Cohen, "A New Year's Address." Selections by the Band before Lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales' Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): A Social. Tea at 5, followed by Entertainment.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, W. M. Bushby, "Bible and Beer."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Club, 125 Albion-street): Friday, Jan. 3, at 8, H. S. Wishart, "Ballard, Blatchford, and the 'Bottom Dog': a Freethought Missionary's Reply to a Free Church Missionary."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Religion and the Joy of Life"; 7, "The Triumph of Freethought."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, J. R. Ferrey will recite Charles Dickens' "Christmas Carol."

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (The Meadows): 2.30, Meets for Discussion.

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