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*Virtue owns a more eternal foe
Than force or fraud : old Custom, legal Crime,
And bloody Faith, the foulest birth of time.*
—SHELLEY.

The "Blasphemy" Case.

I AM going to lecture at the Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday evening (Jan. 12), when I shall be in a position to say a good many things that I am not in a position to say now. I may add that I am writing on Tuesday (Jan. 7), which is press-day with the *Freethinker*. The paper always leaves my hands on Tuesday night, and is printed on Wednesday morning.

What I want to say at present about the Boulter case is in continuation of what I said last week, and preparatory to what I shall have to say on Sunday evening.

I stated last week that Mr. Boulter had asked for my advice, and that I had given it. I also said (and as I desire to be very careful I will repeat it) :—

"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."

Let me give at once the explanation of how I acted in 1883 to my own personal disadvantage; in other words, how I fought for the cause instead of for myself.

I was prosecuted for "blasphemy" in connection with the *Freethinker* in 1882. The indictment in that case was removed by *certiorari* to the Court of Queen's Bench—as it was then. It went down on the cause list and did not come up for trial until April, 1883. Meanwhile another prosecution was started. I applied for a *certiorari* to remove the fresh indictment to the higher court. But I happened to make my application before two of the worst judges I could have met. One of them was a notorious bigot; the other was a Roman Catholic. The latter, Mr. Justice North, knew what I did not know, namely, that he was going to try me in a few days at the Old Bailey. He was looking forward to the luxury, and was not going to be baulked. I was therefore tried on that second indictment at the Old Bailey. I defended myself and got the jury to disagree; which was all I could hope for, as an acquittal was not within the range of possibility. Mr. Justice North was in a hateful temper. He refused to renew my bail, although I had duly surrendered, and my "offence" was only a misdemeanor; and he prolonged the sessions in order that he might have the pleasure

of trying me again himself. I daresay he thought that four days and nights in Newgate would put me at a serious disadvantage in defending myself. But I did not care a straw for that. What crippled me was something very different. My case was the only one to be tried on the day I had to appear again, and the fresh jury was admirably adapted to the end in view. I challenged one of them, and I found out afterwards that I might have challenged three or four more. The result of such a trial was inevitable. But even then there were four jurymen who would not have returned a verdict of Guilty if they had foreseen the judge's vindictive sentence, and they subsequently signed the memorial for my release. For the first time, I believe, in the history of "blasphemy" prosecutions, Judge North gave me a sentence of twelve months' imprisonment like a common criminal. Previous prisoners for "blasphemy"—including George Jacob Holyoake—had been treated as first-class misdemeanants. Well, I disappeared behind the prison bars; and six weeks afterwards I was brought up to the Court of Queen's Bench for trial on my first indictment, which had been standing over so long. On the bench, for a change, was a gentleman—and he was Lord Chief Justice of England. Lord Coleridge was shocked to learn the truth as to Judge North's sentence. He broadly hinted as much in open court, and he plainly told the Governor of Holloway Prison that if the jury found me Guilty, and he *had* to pass some sentence upon me, he should make his sentence concurrent with Judge North's, and I should have been shifted from the criminal to the civil side of the prison. The Governor, who also was a gentleman, was delighted at this prospect. And I should have been delighted too if I could have enjoyed it with honor. A verdict of Guilty would have placed me in a position of comparative comfort; but it was my duty to fight as hard as I could against such a verdict. And I did fight hard; I used all the strength I had—physical, intellectual, and moral—in my three hours' address to the jury; and I won a victory for Freethought. I gained all I could hope for—the disagreement of the jury; and Sir Hardinge Giffard, the present Lord Halsbury, feeling that the game was up—especially as Lord Coleridge meant to see the scales of justice held fairly—entered a *nolle prosequi* and abandoned the proceedings.

Now my readers will understand. By getting another jury to disagree I practically put an end to "blasphemy" prosecutions for a quarter of a century. The bigots found the game too difficult to play. And that is the only thing that will stop them, until the Blasphemy Laws are repealed.

After that victory, for such it was, I went back to my prison cell, and served the remainder of my infamous sentence. But through all the bitter days and nights I felt that my fellow Freethinkers were the safer for my sufferings.

That spirit still animates me, and I hope always will. Of course I do not want to see Mr. Boulter or any other man sent to prison, or punished in any way, for the artificial and ridiculous crime of "blasphemy"—which simply consists in saying something about Christianity that Christians dislike—for they constitute themselves the judges in the matter. But what happens to Mr. Boulter is, after all, not my chief consideration. It is the cause I am thinking of principally. We cannot allow it to be injured. We are bound to oppose every "blasphemy" prosecution. "We must resist," as I said last week, "the imprisonment of any Freethinker in the name of religion." I repeat that this is the essence of the situation. To talk about coarseness or refinement of speech is only to obscure the question at issue. It would be different if coarseness of speech were indictable on other subjects. Christians themselves may be as vulgar as they please, not only in political and social controversy, but even in controversies on religion. It is only the Freethinker who has to be careful of what he says. And every man of sense knows what that means. It is downright bigotry and persecution.

And now for the advice I gave Mr. Boulter, and the offer I made him. I told him all that defending himself personally meant; I pointed out everything it involved; and I advised him to be defended by counsel unless he felt absolutely sure of being armed at all points in such an encounter. If he elected to conduct his own case, I would assist him in preparing his defence. If he decided to be defended by counsel, I would provide the counsel.

By way of explaining how entirely my attitude is one of principle, I may state that Mr. Boulter was really a stranger to me. I had no sort of personal intercourse with him before these proceedings. I did not even know him by sight. He was only a name to me in public announcements of lectures in the newspapers. I have already said that he did not belong to the National Secular Society. I have heard that he was not even friendly to it. I do not mention this to his detriment—for he has a perfect right to be friendly or unfriendly to any Society in the world. I mention it simply to show that I am actuated by no other motive than a sense of duty.

After the final proceedings at Bow-street, where he was committed for trial, Mr. Boulter told me he had decided to be defended by counsel, and would accept my offer. The next morning his case was placed in the hands of Mr. Harper, of the firm of Harper and Battcock, who was Charles Bradlaugh's solicitor, and had acted in my own case in 1883. Instructions were given for engaging counsel, and I am happy to say that the eloquent son of the great Charles Dickens has accepted the brief.

I am acting as President of the National Secular Society—the one Freethought organisation in Great Britain which inherits a great tradition and strives to uphold it. Whether an appeal for funds will be made or not I shall know a few hours hence, after the Executive meeting. Meanwhile the Society is, fortunately, able to supply the necessary sinews of war. And it is to be understood that the N. S. S. is bearing every expense.

The National Secular Society has no sort of responsibility for Mr. Boulter's style of advocacy, neither is it called upon to express an opinion on the subject. He is prosecuted under the Blasphemy Laws—and those Laws are, as they were intended to be, an instrument of persecution. The Freethought party must fight them, and destroy them, or finally be destroyed itself. If the prison doors are once opened, they may be opened again and again, and every time more easily than before. We know what to expect from the way in which this prosecution has been conducted. And on that point I will speak freely on Sunday. It is indeed a matter which needs ventilating, and I am all the more moved to ventilate it by the disgraceful silence of the press.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Salvation Army.

ONCE every year the Salvation Army issues a little volume designed to call attention to the work of the Darkest England Social Scheme. If this took the form of a detailed account of work done, with verifiable statements concerning the same, it would be more than welcome. But it is not quite that sort of production. These annual publications—Annual Report they called it at headquarters when I first inquired for such a document—consist of a more or less lurid account of the misery and crime of our great cities, a sample or two of what the Army is doing, with the moral that if the public would only place the Army in full control all would be well. The volume for 1907 consists of a series of articles—reprints from various articles—originally written by journalists on the look-out for "smart copy," who were piloted round by Army officials, and who are very often, apparently, retailing stories told them by their conductors. It is indeed one of the peculiarities of the stories one reads of the value of the Army's work, that a very large proportion of them emanate from the Army itself. This is, of course, first-hand testimony; but, under the circumstances, testimony from independent quarters would be more satisfying.

In some instances, the worthlessness of the testimony to the Army's work, and the fact that the witness is repeating Army stories, is pretty obvious. There is, for instance, Mr. Philip Gibbs, whose article is reprinted from the *Tribune*. Mr. Gibbs writes: "I got into the inner ring of a system of social philanthropy which has for its business the making of men. I saw its machinery at work, and examined every stage of a process by which the weakest and most debased of creatures are gradually helped up a ladder which has its lowest rung in the muck and mire of humanity, and its highest rung—well, perhaps beyond the sight of human eyes."

Mr. Gibbs's experience was very thorough. He got into the "inner ring" of the Army, he examined all its machinery, saw every stage of the process, visited the Shelters, the Elevators, the Workshops, listened to a number of stories, and, having seen everything, pronounced it all very good. Excellent! Here is convincing testimony from an outsider. But stay! How long did Mr. Gibbs devote to this thorough study of the Army? He commenced his investigations at seven o'clock on a Tuesday evening, and it was in the "early hours of Wednesday morning" before he gave up his investigations—say eight hours, as a liberal computation, in all. During this eight hours, in company with some of the staff officers of the Army, he saw all, studied all, heard all, and believed all. Admirable, Mr. Gibbs! He must surely hold the world's record for quick mastery of an intricate subject. It never, apparently, occurred to him that what some would like to know is just how many the Army really does save as a result of its costly expenditure and elaborate machinery. Still, he served his purpose; and, having been primed with Army stories by Army officials, he details them in a daily paper, so that General Booth may reproduce them as independent testimony.

One thing Mr. Gibbs saw that is worth recording. It will be remembered that when the Trades' Union Congress entered a protest at the sweating operations of the Army in its Hanbury-street workshops the official reply was that these were hospitals in which wrecks of men had their manhood restored to them, and that their stay only ran to some three or four months. Twelve months ago, a representative of the *Times* was informed, on visiting the same workshops, that the average duration of a man's stay was four years. In that case the Army wished to show how satisfied the men were. After the exposure at the Trades' Union Congress, it became necessary to run on the opposite tack, and so the average stay became three or four months. The *Times* correspondent also said that "the vast majority of the men handled their tools with the

familiarity engendered by long use." So Mr. Gibbs says that he saw a hundred men hard at work—at past nine o'clock at night. "They were making window-frames, staircases, wooden benches, boxes, and panelling, and they seemed to me admirably skilful and industrious." And it is these "admirably skilful and industrious" workmen whom the Army saves by keeping in its workshops on a salary of twelve shillings per week, out of which nine shillings is stopped for about six shillingsworth of food.

Another remarkable illustration of the Army's work is furnished by Miss Hulda Friederichs (reprinted from the *Westminster Gazette*). The *Westminster* had £15 left over from its Christmas Fund, and in June the Salvation Army took fifty old people down to its farm colony for a day's outing. There was a dinner—roast beef, potatoes, bread, with tea—and afterwards a tea—jam, bread and butter, lettuces, and cake. Miss Friederichs is quite enraptured, and marvels at the Army being able to do it on so small a sum. Well, the Army was paid six shillings per head. Deducting 2s. 6d. for railway fare—although it is probable that less than this sum was paid—we have 3s. 6d. left to cover the cost of dinner and tea. Put the cost of the food at 1s. 9d. per head—again an outside estimate—and there is 1s. 9d. profit on each of the old people whom the Salvation Army so benevolently cared for. I have not reckoned the value of the advertisement of Miss Friederichs's article.

Miss Friederichs also writes an account of some of the "saved" cases of the Salvation Army. There is a notorious burglar, named Archie Sloss. He had spent forty years of his life in prison. At last, "when feeble old age was upon him, and when the hand formerly so deft in the use of the skeleton key had lost its cunning," Archie came out of prison—for the last time. He was asked to join the Army. Archie reflected. "He had grown old; there was no longer any doubt about it. His strength and agility had gone, the strength of his arm was of the past, and with his muscle, his nerve and dare-devilry had departed." And so, being unable to follow his usual occupation, Archie Sloss joined the Army, became a reformed character—at seventy years of age—and, when he came to a peaceful end, was "buried with all the honors awarded to the faithful soldier who has fought the last fight and won the last victory." One should be affected to tears by so moving a story; but, unfortunately, one's sense of humor will have its way, and a laugh instead of a tear is the consequence.

Miss Friederichs also has another story of a bold, had burglar, one who committed "burglary after burglary, each succeeding one more daring than the last..... only at the verge of old age did he turn from his ways." He was converted at the age of sixty-six—other details as in last paragraph. As an unconscious humorist Miss Friederichs is superb.

There are two articles in the volume on Emigration; one written by Mr. McKenzie for the *Daily Mail*, the other by Mr. Raymond Blaythwayt for the *Morning Leader*. Both articles are interesting, for several reasons. In the first place, the articles are merely—with the exception of "padding"—made up of statements from the Army officials. So that it is not what Mr. Blaythwayt or Mr. McKenzie says, but only what the Army itself says. So we have, again, a display of Salvation Army "slimness." The officials tell the newspaper man, the newspaper man tells the public, the public reads it as evidence of what the Army is doing, and finally it is reprinted by the Army itself as journalistic testimony to the value of its work. Really it is the same evidence all through. We never lose touch with the Army for a moment. No proof is offered as to the truth of what the officials say; it all has to be taken for granted or left alone.

Some of the statements made are deliberately untrue; others are misleading. Of the 15,000 carried to Canada from January to October, 1907, we are told, in the preface to the volume, "We study each individual case," so as to see that only the right class of emigrants shall go out. Now, as a matter of fact,

the Army exercises no more care than does any other shipping agency concerning those who pay their fares through the Army office. Of the few—the very few—who have a portion of the passage money lent them by the Army, it may be true that the Army "picks its men carefully"; it is certainly not true of the mass of the other emigrants. The Army carefully avoids saying—although repeatedly challenged to do so—how many emigrants get money lent them by the Army. Judging, however, from the published balance-sheets, it is doubtful if 200 out of the 15,000 mentioned were helped in this manner. And during 1907 the Army received some £40,000 in commissions from the Canadian Government and steamship and railway companies.

It will also be remembered that the emigration scheme was set on foot—with public funds—as a means of drafting the men and women the Army had saved to other countries. Many people, doubtless, still subscribe to Army funds under the impression that the Army is doing this, and that its emigration work is of a benevolent character. Well, Mr. McKenzie visited one of the ships chartered by the Army, and here is his description of the class of passengers:—

"I looked at the folk on the deck. There were countrymen there, and many of them. The awkward frames, the tanned faces, and the thick, coarse hands, told of life on the farm. One sturdy, red-headed dalesman came in his corduroys and cloth leggings, homemade, rough and ungainly. There were lads from Romford and Salisbury, Reading and Dorchester, thick-limbed, stocky, and sturdy. The girls and women, broad-hipped and strong-breasted, were none of your fanciful misses, but country-born and accustomed to labor."

Nothing here of the submerged tenth; nothing of those whom the Army was to save from the slums, and, after raising them at home, send them abroad for a new life in a new land. The Army is just an ordinary emigration agency, using its religious organization as a means of canvassing for passengers.

All in all, the Salvation Army represents one of the most stupendous pieces of "bluff" that this country has ever seen. While I write I have before me a number of reviews of the book I have been quoting from, each one of which treats it as an independent testimony to the Army's work. But it is nothing of the kind. There is not the slightest evidence that any one of the writers was in any position to get at the real facts, or that any of them ever thought independent inquiry necessary. The officials told them certain things, and, like good British pressmen, they repeated the story. One day, perhaps, the awakening will come. In the meantime, one can scarcely help feeling that the public deserves the Army—the Army certainly knows how to handle the public.

C. COHEN.

"Audacious Assumptions."

It is a significantly curious fact, when one seriously faces it, that there are so few people, comparatively, to whom religion is a reality of prime importance. That it is a fact is mournfully admitted by all religious leaders. On the assumption that the Christian religion is true, it is wholly inconceivable that only a small fraction of the world's population can even now be claimed as believers in it, and that, of the insignificant fraction so claimed, not many can be described as fervent believers. On the supposition that there is a God who is the father of the human race, it is impossible to understand how, and why, such vast multitudes are ignorant of their exalted sonship. There are in Christendom to-day hundreds of thousands of men and women officially set apart for the purpose of making known to us that we all have a Heavenly Father who always loves and cares for us, and whose happiness is dependent on our recognition of the relationship; and yet only a minority of us really regard themselves as God's children. And this is more curious

still in face of the assurance that we are all living in our Father's house. Ordinarily, even the worst of children know their earthly parentage. But Isaiah represents Jehovah as sorrowfully saying: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." What is the explanation of so strange a complaint, of such a curious fact?

In a recent utterance, the Rev. J. H. Jowett, of Birmingham, unconsciously supplies us with the correct answer. As a mere phrase-maker, Mr. Jowett is unequalled in the Nonconformist pulpit; and in a recent article on "What is Faith?" he is seen, in this respect, at his best. Well, what is faith? "Faith," says Mr. Jowett, "is a gloriously audacious assumption." Ignoring the pious adverb, "gloriously," we accept the definition of faith as an "audacious assumption," a bold venture, a fine act of imagination, for such it really is, and *nothing more*. Mr. Jowett adds that "faith first of all seeks an experience, and only in the second place an explanation." That faith *results* in an experience is doubtless true; but it is not true that faith, as such, ever seeks an explanation; for an explanation implies knowledge, and nothing falls on our ears oftener than the solemn assurance that knowledge occupies a much lower plane than faith. The desire for an explanation is a proof of the weakness of faith; and a weak faith cannot give any vivid experience.

Mr. Jowett, however, does not adhere to his own definition. He tells us, for example, that hope is prior to faith. Quoting from Hebrews, he says that "faith is the giving substance to things hoped for." Then faith follows hope to give it substantiality:—

"Hope contemplates a possibility. Faith converts the possibility into actuality. Love is the resultant disposition. Hope sees a possible fountain. Faith draws the water, and drinks. Love distributes the water to others. Hope visualises. Faith actualises. Love vitalises. Faith converts cloudy mountains and continents into *terra firma*, into a land of springs, a land through which flow shining rivers of beneficence and grace. Faith is an attitude of soul which extracts the inmost substance out of hoped-for possibilities, and holds that substance in firm and secure possession."

That sounds well, and looks pretty. In reality, it is nothing but smoothly-flowing rhetoric. Let us analyse it and see. "Faith," to begin with, "is a gloriously audacious assumption." Everybody knows that *assumption* means the act of taking for granted without adequate or any evidence, or of supposing something without proof; or the thing supposed, a postulate, a supposition. But when you suppose anything, the only clear reality before you is the actual existence, not of the thing supposed, but of the supposition. The existence of God is an assumption, and not necessarily anything more. A Christian takes the existence of God for granted, supposes or assumes it. That is to say, he makes a "gloriously audacious assumption." But assumption is not synonymous with actuality, except in relation to the imagination. The objects of faith are only *subjectively* actual. The moment they become *objectively* actual they cease to be objects of faith, and become objects of knowledge. Now, is it not clear that God must exist to the imagination before he can be an object of hope? You cannot hope in a being in whose existence you do not believe. You can cherish no expectations respecting a world beyond the grave unless you believe that such a world exists.

Again, observe how Mr. Jowett distinguishes where there is no difference. "Faith's hopes become substantial homes. Its castles in the air become fortified dwellings." "Substantial homes," in which men live, are, surely, no longer objects of hope, which is only another way of saying that faith's hopes are hopes no more, but blessed realisations. "Its castles in the air" are, grammatically, objects of faith, not of hope: what are they when they become "fortified dwellings"? What is the difference between "visualising" and "actualising"? Do we not "actualise" the sun alone by "visualising" it? You

may affirm that to "visualise" is to see in fancy only; but is not faith frequently called "sanctified imagination"? Mr. Jowett himself has described it as "a gloriously audacious assumption," and nothing is more certain than that you cannot go beyond or behind an assumption. And yet, a little further on, the reverend gentleman observes that faith "ventures on a hope, on some hypothesis, on an assumption, if you will on a dream," which means, if it means anything, that it ventures on itself. But let us allow Mr. Jowett to explain himself:—

"That is to say, faith must first have visions. Faith does not leap in the dark; faith sees a light, if you will an imaginary light, and leaps. We must see something before we make our ventures."

In that short passage the famous preacher virtually admits that the Christian religion may be resting on nothing more substantial than a dream, fancy, or imagination. "We must see *something* [real or imaginary] before we make our ventures." What ventures? Does he mean that we are to stake our all "on some hypothesis, on an assumption"? But if you do, he informs us, you will become strong and heroic. Like the apostle John, you shall have glorious hopes and visions blazing upon your horizon, and vast spiritual Eldorados will gleam before your astonished eyes! True perhaps; but what if the hopes and the visions are but illusions? It is never safe to follow wills-o'-the-wisp, for the journey generally ends in some fatal swamp. An assumption may be most useful to the philosopher in his study and to the poet when his eye is "in a fine frenzy rolling"; but to the practical man, confronted by the puzzling problems of daily life, it is a hindrance and a snare. Fancy venturing our all on the bare supposition that God exists and that there is a life after death! That is worse than putting all your money on a horse you know nothing about.

Mr. Jowett finds great fault with an artist who painted a powerful picture and named it "The Walk of Faith" because he represents the genius of faith as gloomy and sad. The weary pilgrim is facing utter darkness, the only light on the canvas being very far behind him. Not a single star relieves the blackness of the night, while yawning about his feet are fearful chasms, and no sweet aurora sits blushing in the east. Such, according to the artist, is the walk of faith; and is not the artist's picture much truer to life than the preacher's? Mr. Jowett regretfully confesses that the overwhelming majority of the people seem to be under the spell of the artist's view rather than the pulpit's. And no wonder when the pulpit itself defines faith, the very spring and essence of the Christian life, as "a gloriously audacious assumption." Even that immortal genius, Marie Corelli, who writes about the unspeakable *Treasure of Heaven* and so successfully rakes together the treasures of earth—even she has to bemoan the fact that in the twentieth century the world is still "more than half atheistical." In her blind prejudice, the only reason she can assign for the fact is that the monkeys are everywhere so enormously in excess of the men. The true reason, however, is that mankind are by degrees making the discovery that the Christian religion is based on a series of "gloriously audacious assumptions," and that their most "glorious" duty is to substitute for these same assumptions the precious facts which the ever-growing knowledge of the day is laying at their feet. "Has the artist never heard of Christ?" asks the preacher in astonishment. Oh, yes, he has; but he has also heard of something else far better in every way, and he has given up the former for the latter. "You have no fine hopes, you are devoid of the vision splendid, you have no spacious assumptions, and therefore you make no daring voyages of discovery," exclaims the pulpit. That has ever been the pulpit's way. Without faith in the superstitions it hugs there can be no heroic virtue in the world, and all noble deeds will die out. But the pulpit is fundamentally mistaken, and its bigotry is making it unjust and bitter. The men and women of to-day

are deriving their inspiration for self-denying service from something incalculably more substantial and real than all theological assumptions put together, namely, from their accumulating knowledge of the duties and obligations and privileges of the life that now is. Dr. Greville Macdonald may protest as much as he likes, in the *Daily News* and elsewhere; but, as Metchnikoff and other great scientists declare, the only intelligible goal of human existence is "the accomplishment of a complete and physiological cycle, in which occurs a normal old age, ending in the loss of the instinct of life and the appearance of the instinct of death." This goal has never been reached under any system of theology. If we abandon "audacious assumptions," and be guided by scientific principles, there will be a chance of our arriving at it some day.

J. T. LLOYD.

Acid Drops.

Lord Kelvin's funeral at Westminster Abbey naturally suggested an unctuously pious article in the *Daily Dispatch*, which cited him as having given the sanction of science to the great truth that "man doth not live by bread alone." But who ever denied that proposition? Some people have to live on bread alone, and often very little of that, but they don't last long. Those who hold out are well aware that they require something besides bread. Say a steak or a chop—and fried potatoes; or even some spreadings of an oleaginous substance. Pressmen on the make, writing any nonsense for money, have been known to like their bread buttered on both sides—as was the case with the hiring post in Byron's *Vision of Judgment*.

According to the *Daily Dispatch* the "wave of blank Atheism," which followed Darwin's discoveries, spent itself in vain against the wall of faith. Then came the "wave of a milder Agnosticism," and the wall hardly felt that. And now, we suppose, the clergy look out from behind it on a tranquil sea and a good prospect of fishing.

The *Christian World*, in an obituary article on the Rev. James Knaggs, who has just died at the age of eighty-one, says that "he was once challenged to public debate by Charles Bradlaugh." We don't believe it. Charles Bradlaugh was not fond of issuing "challenges." Of course, it may be that the Rev. James Knaggs referred slightly to Bradlaugh or his teaching, and that Bradlaugh invited him to make his words good in public debate. But that is another thing altogether.

Rev. Knaggs is stated to have "declined the challenge, believing that truth can only be elicited by devout study, rather than by wrangling and noisy disputation." The old story! Not that Christians waive discussion entirely. They like it well enough when it is one-sided. Nothing pleases them better than answering an absent or imaginary adversary.

"J. B." (Rev. J. Brierley) of the *Christian World* should not be still circulating that foolish libel on John Keats. That great poet, staunch Freethinker, and manly fellow, did not "feel death in his very soul" when *Endymion* "was transfixed by the poisoned shafts of the *Quarterly Review*." His soul was not "snuffed out by an article" as Byron ignorantly said in *Don Juan*, and as Shelley half-believed in the Preface to *Adonais*. Keats's letters, which can now be read by anybody who will take the trouble, entirely dispose of that pathetic legend. Pathetic, but not flattering. A man driven to his grave by adverse reviews would be a weakling. Keats was not that, nor anything like it. And when "J. B." talks about "Poor Keats" he is guilty of impertinence. Writers of the day should not presume to patronise and pity the immortals.

According to the *Welsh Baptist Diary* for 1908, as many as 2,467 members were expelled during 1907, and 5,480 names were expunged. The net decrease in membership as compared with 1906 is 5,271. "Such a decrease," Rev. D. B. Richards, editor, says, "was never before reported in the history of the denomination, just as we never witnessed such abnormal increase in membership as followed the revival. What is the reason for this loss?" The reason is obvious. Welsh Churches profited by the orgie of excitement called a

revival. Now they are losing as heavily in the inevitable reaction. The revival went up a dazzling rocket; it comes down a dull stick.

When the Colonial levies went out the other day to "capture" the Zulu chieftain, and terrorise the natives with rifles and Maxims, some of them received a send-off from Pietermaritzburg, where the Bishop preached a special sermon in St. Saviour's Cathedral. "I wish you good luck," he said, "in the name of the Lord in the work, whatever the exact nature of it may be, which you have been called to do." What they were going to do didn't much matter; the Bishop wished them luck, anyhow—like a good Christian, one of the holy believers in peace on earth and good-will toward men.

Dr. Torrey, evangelist and libeller, challenged the Chicago sceptics. Several of them, including Dr. Mangasarian, offered to debate with him in public. But the wily Torrey knows a trick worth two of that. Instead of answering them face to face, he prefers to answer them in their absence. Torrey thinks that is better for the cause of Christ. So do we.

The *Church Times* publishes a sensational communication from an American correspondent to the effect that the increase of divorce in certain American States is due to the absence of religious teaching in the public schools. How on earth the two things can be connected it is difficult to see, and the *C. T.* does not enlighten us. At any rate, we have not seen anything that would lead to the belief that married life, apart from other conditions, is any better or worse than it is in this country—and that, after all, is the main thing. The great thing is, we presume, that the English public should, if possible, be frightened off the policy of Secular Education. If we were inclined to argue on the same lines as our religious contemporary, we might reason that the number of cases of wife beating and wife desertion in Christian England, is not unconnected with the religious instruction forced upon people in their young years. It at least would not be unfair to say that married life under Christian influences has always left, and still leaves, much to be desired.

The *Academy* is often anything but academic in its political, social, and religious comments. Witness the following paragraph in its last issue:—

"We are glad that the authorities have at last awakened to the necessity of doing something to put an end to the disgraceful license of the atheists and 'freethinkers' who pollute the air with their disgusting blasphemies at Highbury Corner and elsewhere. One of these persons has been arrested on the charge of blasphemy. We are constantly pointing out that the attitude of the police and magistrates towards these people is unnecessarily tender. By doing so we have incurred the wrath of our amiable contemporary, the *Freethinker*, which was good enough, the other day, to point out to us that even an atheist is a citizen of this country, and as such entitled to the protection of the police. We cordially agree. An atheist is a citizen and so is a man in the most infectious stage of scarlet fever, and so, for the matter of that, is a convicted murderer. All these persons are equally entitled to the protection of the police. The murderer must not be lynched, but must be disposed of by the proper process of the law; the gentleman with scarlet fever must be put into an isolated ward or room to avoid the danger to others of infection; and the atheist should be constrained to do his 'freethinking' by himself and not inflict its contagion on the ignorant and the foolish. Nobody wishes him to be persecuted, but he should not be allowed to persecute other people, and those who venture to disagree with him and have the temerity to tell him so in public should not be 'run in,' and fined, as some unfortunate man was not long ago."

We rather regret the last sentence, because hypocrisy is even worse than ferocity. The bland statement that the atheist should not be persecuted, after the preceding suggestions, reminds us of Bill Sikes masquerading in the garb of Pecksniff or Stiggins.

It is easy to see what the *Academy* really means by the reference to murderers. They are not to be lynched, but to be hung by due process of law. Similarly, of course, Atheists are to be punished by due process of law. That is to say, they must be handled by Christian policemen, tried by Christian jurymen, sentenced by Christian judges, and tortured by Christian gaolers. When Atheists suffer this at the hands of Christians by due process of law, it is not persecution. But how soon it would be persecution if the tables were turned! If the Freethinkers, who are in power in France, were to imprison Christians for teaching offensive superstitions and outraging human reason, how could the *Academy* blame them? They would only be acting on its own principles.

Mr. Campbell's first sermon in the new year on "God's Opening Day" was noticeable for a recognition of the fact that Christian history is a very poor support of the claims of Christianity. He confessed that "the advent of Christianity did not seem to bring about a better condition of affairs in the world; the morning had not yet followed the evening." Not yet! After the lapse of nearly two thousand years! Mr. Campbell asked whether the fires of Smithfield and the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day were an improvement on Plato and Aristotle; and whether Leopold, King of the Belgians, was such a wonderful improvement on Nero. No improvement at all. And we beg to observe that the Romans soon got rid of Nero, while Christian Europe shows no sign of getting rid of Leopold.

According to the *Daily Chronicle* report, from which we are quoting, Mr. Campbell plainly admitted that "the first thousand years of Christian history were a sorry set-back after the achievements of the human intellect which had preceded them." We have said this scores—hundreds—of times. Mr. Campbell is late in the day—but better late than never. As for his little joke that God wants a tremendous lot of time to push the world forward, so that we must not be surprised at the slowness of its progress, we merely smile at it and pass on.

Mr. Campbell is becoming more and more original and illogical. In his Boxing Day sermon he called upon his hearers to trample the serpent. It is not easy work, he confessed, but it can be done, if we are in earnest. We must bravely fight, however; and if we do "there can be no more doubt about the issue than about the fact that there is a sun in heaven which will presently turn winter darkness into summer splendor." That is highly encouraging; but listen: "The conflict is ours; the victory is God's." Is that fair? Is it worthy of God? *We* do the work, and *he* gets the glory. But how does the City Temple oracle *know* that God is so abominably selfish?

The Bishop of Birmingham has the reputation of being an erudite and profound theologian. But in his latest work, *The New Theology and the Old Religion*, his reasoning is deplorably bad. For example, his main argument for the Virgin Birth is that, to him, so eminently careful and intelligent a man as St. Luke records it. "There is good evidence, then," he says, "for the fact that our Lord was born of a human mother only, without a human father." It is incredible that a man of learning and common sense could expect intelligent readers to be convinced and confirmed by such ineffable puerilities. And yet it is upon such shifting sand that the whole Christian structure has been erected.

The Rev. David Smith, in his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly*, naively admits that the apostles and the martyrs could not have borne such bold testimony to what they believed to be the truth, and rejoiced in their cruel sufferings, had it not been for the hope of eternal glory in heaven. After making such an admission, Mr. Smith endeavors to prove its reasonableness, but quite in vain. Tennyson made the same admission, and courageously defended it. He unblushingly avowed that he would not give a crust to a starving man were it not for his belief in a Hereafter. It is this colossal selfishness that is responsible for the cruel individualism which is so prominent a feature of life in every Christian country.

The Rev. Dr. S. D. Gordon assures us that "the great purpose of Jesus' coming was to give the earth a new flooding of its original light." Will Dr. Gordon kindly tell us further where and when that "original light" shone? And in giving the information, will he also cite his authorities?

Dr. Gordon, without intending it, of course, admits that Jesus failed in his "great purpose." "He came," he says, "to put out the darkness that would have put out his light if it could." Well, what was the result? "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not." This is Dr. Gordon's eloquent comment: "That is hard; to be intentionally ignored by one's own. Jesus did not come to strangers, as you might think if you didn't know, but to his own relatives, his own kinsfolk, and, startlingly strange to the heart-breaking point, they did not receive him into their homes, but kept him standing in the cold, dark night, shelterless." How very true *then*, how even truer *now*! And the few who *do* profess to receive him to-day, receive *him*, in a vague, sentimental fashion, but deliberately ignore his *teaching*.

The *Athenæum*, in a review of Mr. Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*, remarks that one fact which stands out

from the book is "the incapacity of Puritanism to deal with children." It also says that "Puritanism never has known, and never will know, how to deal with children except by making them prigs"—which sounds almost like a quotation from Mr. Cohen's review, in these columns, of the same work. But having said this true thing, it immediately spoils it by saying a couple of foolish ones. The reviewer writes of his admiration of "Puritan faith at its best, its magnificent vision, its splendor of strength, and its unsurpassable appeal to the lonely conscience," and also remarks that "Puritanism is a faith for adults."

Now the first of the last two sentences quoted is almost pure rhetoric, with hardly any other foundation than the statements of Puritans themselves. As a sober matter of fact, Puritanism has never yet ruled the life of a people, in any country, except to operate as a curse. Under varied forms in England, Scotland, Geneva, and America, its influence has been really hostile to the development of the better and more human part of human nature. In each place the people have had to choose, sooner or later, between the joy of life and the "joy" of Puritanism. And in each case Puritanism had to go. Humbug, hypocrisy, self-seeking, and cant are probably stronger with the people who have been affected by Puritanism than among those who have escaped its influence. Religiously, it may have made heaven attractive, but this was because it made earth such a capital place to get out of—and any port in a storm is an old adage, and a true one. The second statement is as foolish as the other is absurd. A system that is fit for an adult is fit for a child—it only needs presenting, in the case of the child, in a simpler manner. A child that has come to maturity outside Puritanism would be the last person in the world with whom it would agree. Of course, if a child that grows up under Puritanism, and does not forsake it when it arrives at years of maturity, has had its child-nature ruined, that is part of the process of creating Puritans. If the *Athenæum* reviewer thinks that Puritans can be manufactured without human nature being distorted in the making, he is laboring under a very great delusion.

Mr. C. F. Aked, Rockefeller's pet parson, the other day informed his congregation at Fifth Avenue Church, New York, that the finances of the church showed a deficit of £1,400; and, unless this was made good, he was "prepared to resign." The deficit has been raised, and Mr. Rockefeller has informed Mr. Aked that in future he need only ask to have. Generous Mr. Rockefeller! Yet there are some who doubt the divine origin of the Standard Oil Trust!

Rockefeller junior retired from conducting the Bible Class at the millionaire Baptist Church of which Mr. Aked is pastor. The Class has now dwindled from 500 to 50. Most of the members who attended were looking out for Standard Oil jobs.

Robert Wilson, the Everton bank manager who committed suicide, was an elder at the Scotch Church in Oldham-street, and for many years church treasurer. There is no moral. There would have been one if he had been treasurer of a Secular Society.

The Bishop of Liverpool was not in an optimistic mood at the Student Volunteer Missionary Union Conference. This is how he was reported in the *Sheffield Telegraph* :—

"They were confronted at present with an attack upon the Church and upon the person of Christ. A spirit of lukewarmness had crept over thousands of professed Christians. Their places of worship were not attended as they should be, fewer and inferior men were offering for the ministry, many of their younger people seemed to prefer ease to self-sacrifice, and the influence of Christianity on the masses of the people seemed to be diminishing."

Well, what is one man's meat is another man's poison—and *vice versa*. The Bishop laments and we rejoice.

The newspapers report that Gabriel d'Annunzio has dedicated his new drama to God. They do not say whether God has accepted the dedication.

Emperor Francis Joseph, having recovered from his recent illness, has sent a gift of £40,000 to the Pope as a thank-offering. The Pope takes these contributions as God's representative. They never reach headquarters.

The Rev. W. Lockett is a retired Church of England clergyman, living at Shepscombe. He was licensed as occasional preacher by the Bishop of Gloucester. The present rector of Shepscombe being highly ritualistic, Mr. Lockett, a

Low Churchman, occasionally attended the local Nonconformist chapel, and was recently induced to take part in a service, an act for which the Bishop solemnly rebuked him, and deprived him of his licence. What a perfect representative of the religion of brotherly love the Bishop is!

The *Methodist Times* notes that, owing to the failure of the crops, a great famine in India, next year, will kill probably a million of people, "and no human power will avert it." The bearing of this prospective famine on the belief in an over-ruling providence is not stated.

Meanwhile, an appeal is being issued for funds for the Methodist Missions in India, in order to relieve the needs of "our own Christian people," who are "largely drawn from the poorer classes." Readers of missionary reports must have often observed that converts are most numerous during periods of famine, so that probably the missionaries do not look upon these visitations as an unmixed evil. Besides attracting converts, it affords them the occasion of extracting money from the public in order to get hold of the "poorer classes" from which the converts are so "largely drawn." So starving the bodies of the poor Hindoo may be only the divine method of saving his soul.

A correspondent of the *British Weekly*, writes that for over fifty years he has not missed attending a Watch-night service, and asks whether there is anyone who can beat that record? We would suggest an application to a specialist in mental disorders—one with a wide experience—as being a likely quarter from which to elicit information.

"We would have no New Year to-day, but for God," says the Rev. Alexander Whyte. It is a profound reflection! Just think of it; that but for God the years would have rolled on—no, there wouldn't have been any years to roll—but time (would there have been any time, though?) would have gone on unendingly, and we should never have known one end of the year from the other. What would mankind have done under such circumstances? What, above all, would Scotland have done? Truly we need the clergy to drag us away from the trivialities of life to serious subjects like this one. And it was another clergyman—he might have been a twin brother of Mr. Whyte's—who reminded his congregation that, but for God, death might have taken us in the middle of life instead of at the end of it.

Mr. Z. B. Woffendale, the other day, told a *British Weekly* reporter that on the first Christmas day he spent in London he found all the churches closed. "There was no place open where he could be taken in" (the italics are ours). He determined that if ever he had a church of his own he would open it every Christmas night. So that Mr. Woffendale, ever since he had a church of his own, has made it a rule to take people in on Christmas day, just as though it were any other time of the year. There is no close time for the public so far as Mr. Woffendale is concerned.

On New Year's day, Dr. Clifford delivered his annual address dealing with the past year. Among other things, he gave the following description of the times:—

"We are more flighty than we were.....Sustained thought is rare. Concentrated effort is difficult to find.....A restless superficiality and reckless love of pleasure makes the average citizen a simple tool in the hands of a corrupt press. We are swept by the winds of triviality and inconsequence, and indifferent to the mighty meanings and glorious possibilities of our opulent life. Troops of 'bogies,' skilfully manufactured by reverend ecclesiastics or gramophone politicians, capture us and our votes and make us contributors to their narrow and sectional interests. We read more, but we think less. We talk incessantly, but we weigh and consider infrequently; so that a 'Press' that is prostituted for the sake of mammon and does not shrink from making money by the most infamous means, has its way with us."

Of course, the picture is overdrawn; one would scarcely go to Dr. Clifford for accuracy in such matters. Only as Dr. Clifford, we presume, believes what he says, he is paying his religion a pretty compliment in either having produced, or in not being able to prevent the development of, such a thoughtless, shallow, unscrupulous, and generally valueless people.

Dr. Clifford also laments that we can no longer read the newspapers to see "how God governs the world," because we can no longer depend upon their truthfulness. But this is pushing injustice too far. Newspapers may invent much, but they do not invent the earthquakes, famines, plagues, devastating storms, etc., with their train of human calamities. These are real enough; and it is in them that we can see

"how God governs the world," when human intelligence and goodness has not a controlling power.

Mr. Mackenzie Bell has been writing some laudatory verses on Dr. Clifford. Some of the lines run thus:—

"On every problem that confronts the State,
On all the things which make our nation great,
To you we look for counsel, for we share
Your heritage of hope, of faith, of prayer."

The picture of the nation looking to Dr. Clifford for counsel on "every problem," from main drainage to international relations, is quite touching, and were it true would justify the description of the people above quoted. All we need say is that both the poem and its subject seem well matched.

Under the head of "Religion" the *Daily News*, in its review of the year, got as far as the Rev. R. J. Campbell. There it stopped. It doesn't appear to have an idea that there is any scepticism in England which goes beyond the New Theology. Dear old ostrich!

"Bishops and Barmaids" is a subject dealt with by "Dux" in the *Sunday Chronicle* lately. It appears that the Bishops, as Licensing Reformers, want to do away with barmaids altogether, and thus increase the number of unemployed women by some hundred thousand. But the Bishops, "Dux" says, are "not infallible, and they know little of the ways of the world." He denies that barmaids "go wrong" more than girls in tea-shops or other places of public resort where they are liable to get too free with the "fellows." So far we don't pretend to be judges, and we express no opinion. But we agree with "Dux" when he calls attention to the fact that persons in the clerical trade "go wrong." "Clergymen of the Church of England," he says, "have not infrequently been convicted of offences," while "eminent Nonconformists have been sent to penal servitude." And he asks whether this proves that the Church is a wicked institution, or that Nonconformity is an immoral and vicious doctrine.

A religious contemporary, dealing with the events of the past year, expresses the opinion that the New Theology has shown how undying is the interest that attaches to theological questions. Doubtless some people are deeply interested in such subjects, and, of course, the clergy always profess that no other subject has so many attractions. But so far as the mass of the people are concerned their interest in the discussion is much that of the onlookers at a prize fight. The general public delights in a fight, and failing a physical one, a mental forms a very good substitute. Apart from this aspect of the matter, the New Theology agitation is only significant in its illustration of the fact that one section of the dissenting world is rapidly becoming a mere political movement. Were it of a more intellectual character than it is there would be a definite and final break with Christianity. Instead of that, we have a consciousness of the fact that Christianity as a set of doctrines is dying—but without the strength of character to act in accordance therewith—and an attempt to run Christianity as a purely social doctrine. Of course, the attempt will fail, because sooner or later, the logic of facts will prove stronger than the manoeuvres of hard-pressed theologians. It is merely delaying the end, not preventing it.

The Rev. M. Dix, of Stanley, Durham, writes to the papers that, as a clergyman mixing up with the working classes, he dreads the effect on religion of a secular solution of the education question. He thinks that if this comes to pass, "given a reasonable time, Christianity would be unknown to the greater portion of the community." There may be a considerable amount of truth in the statement; we believe there is; and, if so, it only means that the mass of the people have no real interest in religion, but must be kept up to the mark by artificial methods. And numerous as the clergy are, they are not inclined to do the work themselves. What they really desire is, that the teachers should be their compulsory deputies, while they reap the benefit in after years. That is one aspect of the matter. Another is, that the clergy dare not leave religion out of education until such a time as children are old enough to understand what they are being taught. Were this done they know that very few would have anything to do with it. Every other subject is taught only when children are old enough to appreciate the lesson. Science, art, literature, history, all can wait without loss. Religion is the one thing that must be forced upon people while they are young. And even then it is the non-understandable fundamentals that are given them first, leaving all the explanations and modifications for later years—that is, until even the religion-soaked mind begins to "jib" at some of its absurdities.

We see that Torrey takes a few old "wheezes" round the world—like other entertainers. For instance, he says that if he went into a drinking-bar, with a Bible under his arm, and asked for a big whiskey, the company would look astonished; but if he went in with one of Bradlaugh's or Ingersoll's books under his arm, and asked for a big whiskey, nobody would be surprised. We don't believe the bar would be upset in either case. But if Torrey means that the Bible denounces whiskey-drinking, he is a sanguinary perverter of the truth. There are passages in the Bible worthy of the Boozer's Text-Book.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., finds it "difficult to keep patient when he reads the jeremiads of sensational preachers on the decadence of the Sunday." He says that Sunday in London is "one of the brightest and best days of the week." But not from a Protestant and Puritan point of view. "Tay Pay" speaks like a supposed Catholic and a real—what?

An American audience (it was at Philadelphia) has been "thrilled" by Commander Eva Booth, of the Salvation Army. She knelt on the stage beside an imaginary coffin, and spoke of herself as the corpse inside—"Dead, dead!" But did that end all? No! Suddenly she stood upright, pointing to heaven, while "the glory seemed to be reflected in her countenance." This sensational clap-trap is worthy of a circus. Evidently the Americans are like the English—"mostly fools."

The Salvation Army has saved 1,500 people from suicide during the past year. Who says so? The Salvation Army. See?

"Can any good come out of Nazareth?" was asked a long while ago. Some people ask now "Can any good come out of Chicago?"—the place that John Burns once described as "Hell with the lid off." Well, we note one bit of good from Porkopolis. The Bible has just been officially debarred from the Chicago public schools on the ground of its "sectarian character."

We have always said that the Bible is a sectarian book. By the Bible, in English-speaking countries, is generally meant the Authorised Version. That is a purely Protestant book. The Catholics have a different Bible. And the Jews have a different one still. How on earth, then, can any Bible help being a sectarian book.

Mr. Eden Phillpotts' novel, *The Mother*, now appearing in the *Daily Chronicle*, has an entertaining character called Moleskin, whose peculiar business in life may be judged from the little speech of his to Mr. Cawker:—

"'Tis my rule in life to carry my goods to the best market; and that holds all round, whatever you've got to sell. Here be I with a saved soul; and I take it to them as deals in such things. 'Tis a great feather in parson's cap, you must remember; worth good money to him, in fact, because it shows he's earning his own money. And if he'd been in any shadow of doubt, I'd soon have gone straight off to Pastor Biles at the Wesleyan shop. Yes, I would! 'Tis all one to me what brand of Christian I become; and for that matter, I never heard no great liking for the Establishment. But times are bad, even for the saved sinner, and us reformed characters ain't fussed about near so much as the Bible says we ought to be. Therefore, I go to parson first, because he's in touch with the bettermost and more likely to get me high-paid work than t'other. And, no doubt, for his own credit sake, he will do so."

There are a good many gentleman like Moleskin knocking about in the Christian world.

Hubert Bland is following up his *Letters to a Daughter* by *Letters to a Wife*. They are appearing in the *Sunday Chronicle*. Considering the egotistical twaddle they are, we are more glad than ever that this gentleman has just declared himself a Christian.

Christianity does not keep Christians straight, when they have a taste for being otherwise. A woman was sentenced at Westminster the other day to twelve months' imprisonment for obtaining money by false pretences. She was the wife of a Church clergyman, who is himself serving a long term of imprisonment for forgery.

The Bishop of London, in a recent sermon, said that he had no interest in "discussion about a good man named Jesus Christ who died on the cross." "There have been plenty of good men," he added, "who have died for causes in which they believed." Quite so. Even the Bishop of London talks sense occasionally.

The Gentle Christ.

By L. K. WASHBURN.

EVERYONE who writes, or attempts to write, for the public should use right words. We are deceived by words. A writer who uses a large adjective, where a small one would fit better, deceives his readers, so also a writer who puts an adjective where none is needed adds paint to cover up knots or cracks; but the paint wears off.

We have read so much about Jesus that is false, that it is hard to know what is true. But one thing we are sure of, and that is, that he was not Christ, a Christ, or the Christ.

A periodical, which visits us regularly, refers to the hero of the New Testament occasionally, but never calls him by his right name. He is always spoken of as Christ, never as Jesus. But not long ago we were astounded to read of this person as the "gentle Christ." Of course, all the information we have about this individual is what is contained in the gospels, the four of which could be reduced to one without robbing the story of either biographical or historical interest.

The "gentle Christ" is a fictitious person, like the sympathetic Christ, and every other Christ. But this character spoken of is none other than the Nazarene miracle-worker of dubious notoriety.

Now, was Jesus, who was not Christ, a person of gentle disposition? Was he one who could honestly be called gentle, or kind, or sympathetic, or mild, or tender?

No one would speak of the Jewish deity as the "Gentle Jehovah," and yet the peasant-preacher of Galilee was not so far his opposite as to deserve any especial compliment for his sympathy with his fellow-beings.

When Jehovah killed a man, that ended it. He was dead. In the Old Testament the grave had but one door. But Jesus was not satisfied with such a fate for his enemies. He pursued them beyond the tomb, and taught that the souls of those not saved by, or through, him should burn in everlasting fire. This is the most fiendish doctrine ever taught by man. Beyond it cruelty and malice cannot go. The expressions "everlasting fire" and "hell fire" were constantly on the lips of Jesus. The "damnation of hell" was a favorite punishment, which he launched upon those who took no stock in his pretensions.

Jesus said: "The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death."

"I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

"I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Is that a "gentle Christ"?

It is reported in the gospel of Matthew that, while Jesus was talking to the people, his "mother and brethren" approached, wishing to speak with him. Jesus exclaimed, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" He then pointed to his disciples, and said, "Behold, my mother and my brethren."

That was the treatment which this "gentle Christ" accorded to his mother. Was it kind? Was it tender? Was it human?

Again, at the marriage in Cana, where his mother was among the guests, he burst out, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" when his mother told him that there was no wine for the feast. A "gentle Christ," truly!

The "gentle Christ" taught this gentle religion: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Jesus declared that he was "the way, the truth, and the life." And again, "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life." This means, of course, that those who do not believe in him will have everlasting death and damnation.

The more we read of this "gentle Christ" the more we are convinced of his selfishness, his egotism, his brutality, his inhumanity.

In one of his insane parables he makes the nobleman, who was the central figure of his story, use these words: "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

Inasmuch as Jesus employed these parables to illustrate his religion, we can easily see what use he would have made of his power had he succeeded in realising his ambition. Romanism in its bloodiest days merely carried out the religious policy of this would-be ruler of Israel.

Torquemada, Calvin, and Cotton Mather had the spirit of Jesus, and these gentle disciples of the "gentle Christ" applied Christianity in a way that humanity condemns.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 12, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.: 7.30, "The New Blasphemy Prosecution."

January 19, Manchester; 26, "Horns" Assembly Room.

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

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 12, Kennington; 19, Failsforth; 26, Birmingham.

NORMAN MURRAY (Montreal) writes: "Salvation Army emigrants are becoming such a nuisance here that the local press has started a fierce controversy as to the wisdom of allowing English immigration to continue. Canadians are not able to distinguish between Salvation Army loafers and industrious English working men. The situation is so exasperating that manufacturers say they prefer Italians to that class of people."

R. BLACK (Glasgow).—Pleased to have your new year's good wishes.

W. J. PORRITT.—Good wishes are at least an encouragement. Thanks.

MANCHESTER PACKER.—Glad you appreciate the gentleman as we do. Thanks for cuttings.

W. P. ADAMSON.—Always glad to receive cuttings that may serve as raw material for paragraphs.

J. LUCAS.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

L. BEATTIE.—There is no doubt whatever, we believe, in the mind of any intelligent person who ever had any real association with him, that Charles Bradlaugh was a great man. A great writer he never could have become, but he was a great speaker and a great man of action. He had the most powerful practical intellect we ever knew, eminently fitted for the highest and noblest political work.

J. E. BAVIDGE (Toronto).—Torrey is hardly worth noticing when he keeps off libelling dead or living Freethinkers. He has the brains of a book pedlar dealing in Family Bibles for servant girls. However, we write a paragraph, since you wish it, on the cutting you send us.

C. T. BUSBY, 114 Burdett-road, London, E., supplies the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications.

F. J. VOISEY says: "Re the 'blasphemy' prosecution, the last twenty words of your article put the case in a nutshell. I am good for a subscription, if necessary."

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

FREDERICK DIXON.—We have neither time nor inclination for private correspondence on such matters. We inserted a tremendously long letter of yours. Your second letter, as we said in this column on December 29, contained nothing which was not in your first. Mere advertisements of Christian Science must be paid for at the usual rate, and appear in the proper columns.

NEMO.—Viscount Amberley's *Analysis of Religious Belief* is an able book. The Russell family stopped its circulation after the author's death. It can only be met with now second-hand, and fetches a good price. Some of Judge Strange's writings were—*The Bible: is it the Word of God? Legends of the Old Testament*, and the *Sources and Development of Christianity*. Thanks for your suggestions.

E. POMEROY.—You are right; the opening sentences of Mr. Cohen's last article were a muddle. Such things will occur occasionally, even to the most careful writers. No doubt Mr. Cohen will oblige you by saying what he really meant. There is no time to communicate with him before going to press this week.

J. KNOX.—You have mistaken—at any rate, you misrepresent—what we said. We never asserted that Catholics and Churchmen were more tolerant than Nonconformists. Our point was a totally different one. On the whole, we had better agree to differ—and keep our tempers.

BESSIE BROUGH.—Thanks for the batch of cuttings. Glad you expect to enjoy yourself at our Manchester lectures, with your husband.

J. CHAMBERS.—We seldom see it now. Pleased to have your new year's good wishes.

COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—E. Richmond, 2s.; W. Dodd, 5s.; T. M. Brown, 2s. 6d. There is still a deficit of £1 15s. 6d. on this fund.

G. ROLEFFS (Liverpool) says: "General Booth was here yesterday, and the *Post* gave him two columns. Mr. Lloyd's splendid lectures are not reported at all."

HARRY ORGAN.—Thanks for your encouraging letter. We advise you to get the "Oxford" Shelley, published by Frowde & Co.

A. GERMANY.—Pleased to have your letter and good wishes. We referred to Dr. Clifford's address at Holyoake's grave at the time, and would rather not say more about such an unpleasant matter.

W. GREGORY.—Were just able to find room. Glad to hear the Kingsland Branch is going to be so strongly represented at the Dinner on Tuesday.

J. BLACKHALL.—May deal with it next week.

J. PARTRIDGE.—See what we say this week.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote will deliver what ought to be an important lecture this evening (Jan. 12) at the Queen's (Minor) Hall on "The New Blasphemy Prosecution." There is likely to be a very large attendance on this special occasion, and those who desire to secure seats should come early. Mr. Foote will have some announcements to make as to the future course of this interesting case.

Bitter cold and fog—that was the weather in London on Sunday evening; and, in the circumstances, it was gratifying to see so good an audience at the "Horns" Assembly Room, Kennington-park, when Mr. Foote began the special course of Freethought lectures organised by the Secular Society, Ltd., with the co-operation of the Camberwell N. S. S. Branch. Happily most of those present were what is called "strangers," but Mr. Foote soon got into touch with them, and his lecture on "Is Christianity True?" was followed with the closest attention and quite enthusiastically applauded. Mr. Victor Roger acted as chairman, and Councillor A. B. Moss occupied a seat on the platform.

Mr. Lloyd takes the second of the "Horns" Assembly Room course of lectures. His subject to-night (Jan. 12) will be "The Triumph of Freethought." We hope the local "saints" will do their best to let people know of Mr. Lloyd's lecture, of his powers of speech, and of the free admission to all seats. The place should be crowded with those who need conversion to the gospel of Freethought.

This is the last announcement of the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive. It takes place on Tuesday evening (Jan. 14) at the Holborn Restaurant. There will be a good repast, good music, and we hope some good brief speeches. Mr. G. W. Foote will be in the chair, and will be "supported" by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, Roger, Heaford, and other well-known Freethinkers. The price of the tickets is 4s. We believe there is going to be a big rally of the "saints" on this occasion. Those who want to secure seats at the Dinner should obtain their tickets by Monday morning at the latest. Nothing can be guaranteed after that.

The Birmingham Branch's annual tea was a great success, and Mrs. Fathers' catering was highly appreciated. Great satisfaction was expressed at Mr. Foote's intervention in the new blasphemy prosecution, and also at the way in which he had dealt with Marie Corelli's misrepresentations of the Town Hall meetings.

Various communes in Italy have, availing themselves of the interpretation of the law by Signor Rava, the present Minister of Education, limited the teaching of the Catholic creed and catechism to those cases in which it is demanded by the parents. Others, such as Ancona and Brescia, have abolished such teaching altogether by overwhelming majorities. The Supreme Council of State, however, has decided against Signor Rava's interpretation, and laid it down that confessional teaching is an integral portion of the ordinary elementary course. This will probably lead to the whole question being seriously attacked by Parliament. It is worth

noting that even the National Democratic League, consisting of Catholics, is practically in favor of abolishing religious education in the State schools.

Dr. J. G. Frazer, the author of that great book, *The Golden Bough*, of which a new edition is now appearing, had a striking letter in last week's *Athenaeum* on "Attis and Christ." The following passage is very important, though it is not exactly new to Freethinkers of the "mythological" school, and has often been referred to, substantially, in our own writings—which are, of course, so much less learned than those of Dr. Frazer:—

"In my book *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, I followed the learned Church historian Monsignore Duchesne in adducing evidence that in early days the Christian Church at Rome and elsewhere celebrated Easter at the spring equinox, which the ancients reckoned to fall on the 25th of March. Further, I pointed out, what Monsignore Duchesne omitted to notice, that, if we are right in this view, the Christians at Rome must have been celebrating the death and resurrection of Christ at the very same time when the heathen were celebrating the death and resurrection of Attis; for these solemn rites of Attis, including an effigy of the dead god tied to a tree like Christ to the cross, had been annually solemnised at Rome centuries before the establishment of Christianity. This remarkable coincidence appeared to me to furnish a sufficient ground for conjecturing that the Church had purposely timed its Easter festival to coincide with the similar pagan festival for the sake of diverting the devotion of the heathen from Attis to Christ."

Dr. Frazer adds that a strong confirmation of this theory is supplied by an anonymous Christian work of the fourth century, to which his attention has been called by Prof. Franz Cumont, of Brussels. The Latin passage which Dr. Frazer quotes shows that—

"If the testimony of this anonymous writer does not prove that the ecclesiastical authorities dated Easter at this time on purpose to eclipse a heathen rival, at least it proves that the coincidence and the similarity of the two festivals attracted the attention of both sides, and formed a theme of bitter controversy between them, the pagans contending that the resurrection of Christ was a spurious imitation of the resurrection of Attis, and the Christians asserting with equal warmth that the resurrection of Attis was a diabolical counterfeit of the resurrection of Christ."

Of course the pagans pointed out that their god was the older, and most likely to be the original. But this "feeble argument," as Dr. Frazer ironically calls it, was "easily rebutted by falling back on the subtlety of Satan, who on so important an occasion had supported himself by ingeniously inverting the usual order of nature."

Mr. Edward Clodd has published a new edition of his *Pioneers of Evolution*. Here are some of his new sentences:—

"To the arresting forces of delusion and bias are added the hopes and fears which retard the unqualified application of the doctrine of evolution to the intellectual and spiritual nature of man. Despite the fact that creeds and dogmas which, barely half a century ago, were regarded as of great pith and moment, are now admitted to be of relative unimportance, and, moreover, are discredited in the judgment of unprejudiced authorities, it will take a very long time to convince the majority that evolution gives far more than it takes away. Even they who are freed from lower ideals and motives are reluctant to admit how enormously the world will gain when energies now expended in soul-saving are transferred to the amelioration of human ills, notably in the direction of abolishing the shameful inequalities begotten of selfishness and greed. A mass of emotion, whose control is the supreme art of life, will then be directed into wholesome and useful channels."

This is the old gospel of Secularism. Salvation for man in this world instead of in a world to come.

FROM THE GREEK.

A man who was about to hang himself,
Finding a purse, then threw away his rope;
The owner coming to reclaim his pelf,
He halter found and used it. So is Hope
Changed for Despair—one laid upon the shelf,
We take the other. Under heaven's high cope
Fortune is God—all you endure or do
Depends on circumstance as much as you.

—Shelley.

FRIENDLESS, *adj.* Having no favors to bestow. Destitute of fortune. Addicted to utterance of truth and common sense.—*Ambrose Bierce* ("Dod Grile").

"Christ's Sword."—I.

BY DR. JOHN EMERSON ROBERTS,

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

THE gentlest of prophets, the kindest of men, is said to have uttered these ominous words: "I come not to send peace, but a sword on the earth." To think of Christ as sending a sword, to contemplate the Nazarene making declaration of war, does violence to the traditional conception. We are accustomed to think of him as the meek, the amiable, the unresisting one; the one forsaken—forsaken of his friends, forsaken of his God, dying there alone in the abyssal agony and shuddering horror of Golgotha. Art represents him as mild, placid, amiable, aureoled, benign. It never shows him as rugged, aggressive, strengthful, martial, or heroic. Uncrowned save by thorns, unseparated save in mockery and scorn, the Christ of art and tradition is colorless and incomplete.

There must surely have been another phase to the character of that marvellous man. He who could, and did, give his name to an era, who could, and did, defy traditions of centuries, inaugurate revolutions, overturn civilisations, embroil the world in war and strife, provoke man to a ceaseless struggle after fraternity and justice—the man who could, and did, do all that was surely something more than a picture to hang on cloister walls, something more than the appendage to a prayer-meeting, or a theme for pious hymns and songs. There was virility about that prophet—virility which art and theology have obscured.

Let me say right here that for the theologic Christ, the Christ of dogma and of the Church, the vision of monks, the unreal, impossible, absurd Christ, I have not the slightest respect. But for Christ the man, the outcast, the persecuted, the reviled, the assassinated—for Christ the prophet, the self-poised, the unresisting, the intrepid man, I have the profoundest respect.

Christ was distinctively a man of peace, yet by the irony of history he was to become the occasion of war and strife, of persecution and bloodshed, destined to fill and flood with horror the hapless world. Did he foresee what the unborn years had in store? Did the ages that were yet to be before his fancy in procession pass, and reveal to him the sword of the Church, wet with the bravest and best blood? There is reason to believe that they did, for his words are clear and explicit: "I come not to send peace, but a sword on the earth, for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, the daughter against her mother, for a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Imagine the vision that rose before him like a dream. Alone in the silent mountain, or by the solemn sea, he looked and saw vaguely or vividly what the unrecorded years would bring. He saw his own pathway darkening to the midnight of Gethsemane and the Cross. He saw his comrades—the men he had loved and won—pursued, persecuted, and slain. He saw Stephen stoned to death, John in exile, Peter crucified, Paul beheaded. The years went on. He looked again, and saw countless thousands of his followers, for no other fault but believing the things that he had taught, exiled, driven into the desert to die, imprisoned, tortured, or put to death. The years go on. He looks again; a mighty change has taken place. The little minority has become a multitude. His disciples have waxed strong and great. They have attained to empire and power. They are sitting upon the thrones of the world. He looks again, and he sees the persecuted become the persecutors. He sees the robed priest piling faggots at the feet of philosophers. He sees his disciples fashioning cruel and cunning instruments for the infliction of pain upon their fellow-men. By the altars erected to him he sees the lash, the rack, the iron-boot, the wheel. By the cathedral he sees the dungeon. Does he

know that this is the sword that he has sent? Does he know that these things are to be committed in his name? Does he know that age by age, while the weary centuries revolve, the blood of men must flow, first, because they believe on him, afterwards, because they do not? He sees in vision all of this, and, though he knows that he must die a victim of the intolerance and bigotry of his time, he knows that he cannot die often enough, or shed blood enough, to atone for all the crimes and cruelties that will be committed in his name. Christ never spoke truer nor fatefuller words than when he said: "I come not to send peace, but a sword." And that sword, more insatiate than Alexander's, more destructive than Cæsar's, more relentless than Napoleon's, ran riot for centuries in the quivering flesh of the human world, and never ceased until mankind awakened alike from its savagery and its religion; until mankind, born again to new and better progress and civilisation, forced back into its long-forgotten scabbard the hideous, blood-rusted thing.

But, in all fairness to Christ, we must absolve him from the guilt and the shame of the sword. When he said, "I come to send it," he was not expressing a will, a purpose, nor a wish. He was uttering prophetic words. Apparently he saw the future. He saw what would happen. He saw what men would do. He foresaw the inevitable results—results which, alas, he had no power to prevent or forestall. To identify Christ with Christianity would be to make a travesty of a great and good man. To identify Christ with the historic Church would be to convict him before the conscience and the moral sense of mankind. To hold Christ responsible for what has been taught concerning him would be to make of that great man a monster. To hold Christ responsible for the deeds that have been committed in his name would be to cover him for all time with infamy. Christ himself died by the sword, and he died because he had sense enough to see, and courage enough to say, that the established religion was a thing of form and ceremony, and no longer capable of doing the work of the world. His conduct was not always within the limits of propriety or good taste. He went into a place of worship on a certain day and condemned the place and the people. He said, "My Father's house should be called a house of prayer, and ye have made it a den of thieves." Then he overturned the tables and scattered the small coin around, and, waxing more and more vehement, he seized a gad or goad and drove the people in consternation out of the place. And yet they say now that if a man says anything, no matter how firmly he believes it, against established doctrines, current dogmas, and respectable hypocrisies and nonsense, that he is violating good taste, infringing unlawfully upon the sanctities of another.

Christ was an iconoclast, an image-breaker, a denouncer. No man upon any platform to-day would dare use the vehement language or violent speech that that unterrified Galilean used in the places and on the streets of Jerusalem. When he came he found a scripture that had been revered and revered for hundreds of years. Men were standing around on every hand prepared to defend any attack against it. They said, "This is the word of God; it is a divine revelation; it is a book illuminated from heaven; all of its pages contain truth without any admixture of error." They said precisely what the Church is saying about its Scriptures to-day. But Christ said, "What if your Scriptures do say thus and so, I say different." Behind that "I" there was an inspiration. Behind that "I" there was not the authority of an hierarchy or the responsibility of a church. Behind that "I," as Jesus used it, there was nothing but loneliness and desolation; and I say to you, if it had not been for the noble men like him, men that dared, men who did not count the consequences, men who counted nothing sacred for them but truth as they saw it and were brave enough to speak it—if it had not been for him, and men like him, the world to-day would be

worshiping stuffed snakes or idols carved of stone. That was why they killed him—because he was not orthodox. I have not the slightest doubt that they said about him, "Why, this iconoclastic man is destroying our religion; he is taking away our faith and putting nothing in the place of it." That has been the weak and puerile plaint of the intellectually diseased since human thought began. If a man has an error, a misconception, a false notion, or a wrong conclusion, any man does him an inestimable service who takes it away from him, whether he leaves anything in its place or not. If a man has mental life, motion, activity—if he has intellectual integrity, if he represents his own mental being, and is determined to count one in the census of the universe, he can find something to put in the place of the error that has been removed. And I suspect they said about that prophet, "He is preaching a new religion. Now, the old religion my father believed, my mother used it for a dying pillow; it is good enough for me." And I say to you that that has been said ten thousand times over and again, and it is always said by the man who does not care a farthing for religion of any kind, whose mind and heart is centred upon something else, and who does not wish to be bothered, makes that kind of a plea to waive the question gracefully and permanently aside. But the prophet went on teaching. The sword was poised ahead of him in the shadow. He approached it step by step, and the last thing they said about him, or to him, was, "We cannot answer you, but we can kill you"; and kill him they did. He paid the price with no more of murmur and complaint than would be rent from any man tortured to the death.

We may roughly classify mankind by the attitude they sustain to the sword. There are three classes. There is, first, the man with his hand on the hilt. Second, there is the man who is up against the other end of the sword—the end that destroys. Third, there is the man who stands and looks on to see what will happen. The first class—the man with his hand on the hilt, is the conservative. He wants everything to continue just as it is. He dislikes an agitator. It is so disagreeable, you know; it unsettles vested interests; innocent purchasers might suffer, and it is generally disconcerting. So he is continually putting the strength and weight of his influence in the way of any amendment and proposed change. He is usually in the majority. He has always been. He has fought every step of advance. He has resisted every change. He has decried and dissented from the man who brings the gospel of a better world or a better civilisation. It is he and his class who mobbed the man who invented the steam-locomotive. He and his class tore up the tracks of George Stephenson, mobbed him repeatedly, and at last introduced into the British parliament a resolution declaring that the proposed steam-railway would be destructive of the life of animals and birds along the right of way, and produce the disease known as "deliriumfeuriosum" in the people who rode in the cars. That is the man with his hand on the hilt. He is the man who denounced as impious the discoverer of chloroform as an anæsthetic, because, he said, "Pain is one of the divine providences whereby God, with his loving but afflicting hand, draws his earthly children nearer to him and makes them love him better." It was the man with his hand on the hilt who gayed Robert Fulton when the first crude steamship was pounding its way up the Hudson, and scaring the water out of the fishes in the river and the wits out of the people on the bank. It was the man with his hand on the hilt that ridiculed Charles Darwin, the man who, more than any who has lived in the modern world, contributed to the intellectual wealth of mankind, and the man whose conclusions, now, there is no one in the slightest degree educated and intelligent who does not accept. It was the man with his hand on the hilt that for twelve years kept in a dungeon the great astronomer because he knew too much, and was finding out more every day. It is the man with his hand on the hilt that has always been ready with a pile of fagots and

the torch. Progress has been made through sacrifice and blood. The way of advance has been in every age aflame with martyrs' fires. But neither persecution, nor torture, nor death could stay the onward march of man.

Then there is the other class—the man who stands by to see what will happen. There are several kinds of him. In the first place, he is the man who sees the conflict, who recognises the tragical, fateful nature of it, but he is not quite certain which way it is going to terminate. Maybe the man whose hand is on the hilt will fall with palsy. Maybe the man who is at the other end will be thrust through. And this on-looker is waiting to see which side of the conflict he will take. I have no condemnation for men of that class. They were born that way. If there should come a wave of Methodism across this country, you would find them kneeling at the mourner's bench. If it were a wave of Catholicism you would find them lifted and thrown by that wave at the feet of the priest. If orthodoxy is popular, they are the first to go and rent a pew and get their names on the subscription list. If Freethought is popular, you will find them preaching its doctrines on the street corner. We must allow for that type of human being. Let us not condemn. Let every hand that is brave, and every heart that is strong, grasp the banner of progress, of free thought, and of liberty, and make it so aggressive and so strong that, by very contact with it through the enthusiasm of men's faith and belief in it, the weak and the timid will be enthused and electrified.

Then another kind of him is like this. He is looking on to see which way the battle will waver. His sympathies are all with the man at the biting end of the sword, but he is cautious; he is a man of prudence and expediency; he does not quite want to take the side of the man that is liable to be thrust through, because his idea and the world's idea and society's idea is not yet quite settled. On the whole, he thinks that man is right and ought to be upheld; he ought to go and stand by his side, but then, but then, but then—and he does not go, and the world has had multitudes of that kind in every age. They mean well, too.

Then there is the third kind of him. He is the man who watches the conflict and longs to get into it. He would willingly go and take his place by the man standing at the business end of the sword, but he cannot; circumstances bind him. Perhaps he is earning fifty or a hundred and fifty dollars a month working for some man that is a deacon in an orthodox church, and he knows he would lose his position if he identified himself with the man at the biting end of the sword. And do you know that there are uncounted thousands of that kind of people, men and women? Do you know that every free and independent teacher, every free and liberal church has a message to utter for multitudes that cannot speak, has a gospel to declare for uncounted thousands that would applaud every move, and would be a part of it if they could? It is not because they do not dare. It is because they are held in the grasp of circumstances they cannot control or break through. The voice of one crying in the wilderness of the long ago was indeed but the voice of one, and yet it uttered the message that was burning for speech in the fires of thousands of honest hearts. Thirty years ago it was not safe in any community for a man to say he was a Freethinker. Thirty years ago, if a man had the *Age of Reason* in his house, as a rule he did not let his neighbors know anything about it. Thirty years ago, if a man lived in a small town and did not belong to some orthodox church, he might as well have lived in Arkansas. There was no self-assertion. Every man that spoke had his hand on the hilt of the sword. And then there came, unannounced, unsuspected, unheralded, a minister's son, a man with courage, a man equipped with imagination, armed with wit, panoplied with logic, adorned and beautified with rhetoric and humor. His name was Ingersoll. Eight years ago he died. He had been before the public about twenty-five

years. When they put his ashes in the urn, they did not need to erect any monument to him, because out of his work, as its harvest and fruit, more than one-half of the millions that make the population of the United States not only believed in liberty of thought and progress, but dared to stand up and say so.

(To be concluded.)

Who are the Blasphemers?

ATHEISTS are often charged with blasphemy, but it is a crime they cannot commit. God is to them merely a word, expressing all sorts of ideas, and not a person. It is, properly speaking, a general term, which includes all that there is in common among the various deities of the world. The idea of the supernatural embodies itself in a thousand ways. Truth is always simple and the same, but error is infinitely diverse. Jupiter, Jehovah, and Mumbo-Jumbo are alike creations of human fancy, the products of ignorance and wonder. Which is *the* God is not yet settled. When the sects have decided this point, the question may take a fresh turn; but until then *god* must be considered as a generic term, like *tree* or *horse* or *man*; with just this difference, however, that while the words *tree*, *horse*, and *man* express the general qualities of visible objects, the word *god* expresses only the imagined qualities of something that nobody has ever seen.

When the Atheist examines, denounces, or satirises the gods, he is not dealing with persons but with ideas. He is incapable of insulting God, for he does not admit the existence of any such being.

Ideas of god may be good or bad, beautiful or ugly; and according as he finds them the Atheist treats them. If we lived in Turkey, we should deal with the god of the Koran; but as we live in England, we deal with the god of the Bible. We speak of that god as a being, just for convenience sake, and not from conviction. At bottom, we admit nothing but the mass of contradictory notions between Genesis and Revelation. We attack not a person but a belief, not a being but an idea, not a fact but a fancy.

Lord Brougham long ago pointed out, in his *Life of Voltaire*, that the great French heretic was not guilty of blasphemy, as his enemies alleged; since he had no belief in the actual existence of the god he dissected, analysed, and laughed at. Mr. Ruskin very eloquently defends Byron from the same charge. In *Cain* and elsewhere, the great poet does not impeach God; he merely impeaches the orthodox creed. We may sum up the whole matter briefly. No man satirises the God he believes in, and no man believes in the god he satirises.

We shall not, therefore, be deterred by the cry of "blasphemy!" which is exactly what the Jewish priests shouted against Jesus Christ. And as it is better, in the words of Plutarch, to have no notion of the gods than to have notions which dishonor them, we are satisfied that the Lord (if he exist) will never burn us in hell for denying a few lies told in his name.

The real blasphemers are those who believe in God and blacken his character; who credit him with less knowledge than a child, and less intelligence than an idiot; who make him quibble, deceive, and lie; who represent him as indecent, cruel, and revengeful; who give him the heart of a savage and the brain of a fool. These are the blasphemers.

When the priest steps between husband and wife, with the name of God on his lips, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he resists education and science, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he opposes freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he robs, tortures, and kills those who differ from him, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he opposes the equal rights of all, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he preaches content to the poor

and oppressed, flatters the rich and powerful, and makes religious tyranny the handmaiden of political privilege, he blasphemes. And when he takes the Bible in his hand, and says it was all written by the inspiration of God, he blasphemes almost beyond forgiveness.

Who are the blasphemers? Not we who preach freedom and progress for all men; but those who try to bind the world with chains of dogma, to burden it, in God's name, with all the foul superstitions of its ignorant past.

G. W. FOOTE.

[Reprinted.]

Religion and the Peace Conference.

BY W. T. STEAD.

[An extract from Mr. Stead's article in the *Contemporary Review*.]

THE second impression left upon the mind by the Conference was what I may describe as the existence of a common ethical conception among its members—a conception which did not seem to be materially affected by the nominal religions which they professed. So far as I could discern, there was no perceptible difference in the moral standpoint of Christians or of non-Christians; Heathen, Moslem, Christian, or Agnostic, they acted very much in the same way. Very few of them made any outward profession of religious faith. Sir E. Fry and Sir E. Satow were punctual in their attendances at the English church. Each of them read the lessons on at least one occasion. Some of the Americans were not less punctual in their attendance at the American church. Some of the Russians attended the Greek church. But of the two hundred delegates I doubt whether more than twenty ever darkened the doors of any place of worship. The Conference was opened and closed without religious ceremony of any sort. In none of the debates was there even the most distant allusion to the existence of a Supreme Being. When the foundation-stone was laid of the Temple of Peace the Hague Choral Society sang some religious music, but that was the nearest approach to any recognition of religious sentiment during the four months the Conference was in session. Religion of the devotional or dogmatic sort was absolutely non-existent. Of practical religion of that rudimentary sort which recognises that one ought not to slaughter men in war until one has at least afforded adequate time and opportunity for ascertaining that there is no other way of settling the difference, there was as much or as little among the non-Christians as among the Christians. On one crucial point—whether belligerents ought to be restrained from strewing the high seas with anchored mines which, months after the war was over, might explode beneath the keel of any merchant-ship—the worst offenders against ethical principles were the Christian North Americans and the Christian Germans; while the staunchest advocates of an interdict upon such a fiendish method of waging war were the "heathen" Chinese and the non-Christian Japanese. Evidence as to the direct influence of any of the Churches—Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant—on the deliberations of the Conference I failed to discover. There was an attempt to exert such an influence on the part of the Anglican Church and the Free Church, as well as by some American Churches, by the presentation of memorials couched in general terms exhorting the Conference to do what it could in the cause of peace, but that was all. The Roman Church sulked because the Pope was not invited, and the vast European spiritual apparatus of ecclesiastical organisation, nominally created for the service of the Prince of Peace, seemed to have as little direct influence upon the Conference as the praying-wheels of Tibet.

In private conversation with delegates, the only member of the Conference who ever expressed to me with any vehemence any convictions as to the importance of morality in the conduct of international relations, was one of the Chinese delegates who was a frank Materialist. The only delegate who seemed seriously to regard with concern the decadent tendencies of modern civilisation was a philosophic Japanese, who scouted the notion of the immortality of the soul. That is not to say that the others had not their own ideas. But they were not *en evidence*. It was emphatically a secular Conference concerned with things seen which are temporal, and not sparing a thought for the things not seen, which are eternal. Enthusiasm of any kind, even the enthusiasm of humanity, was singularly absent. Occasionally there was an eloquent invocation of Progress, of Justice, of Law, and of Peace, but that was all. M. de Marten's invocation of the unknown God, whose altar of Justice and

Peace the first Conference had set up in the Ridderzaal, was the most remarkable expression of the kind in four months of speech-making, for the most part of the most practical, not to say commonplace, type.

BLASPHEMY.

I deny the possibility of blasphemy where there is no belief. A man may blaspheme that which he accounts worthy of reverence, because in speaking evil of it he violates his own convictions and holiest feelings. But if for me there is no God, how can I blaspheme him? Speaking contemptuously of him, I but contemn nothing. If the writer [he was answering] were accused of blasphemy for reviling Jupiter and Venus, Brahma and Vishnu, Baal and Moloch, the Goddess of Reason and Mumbo Jumbo, he would reply, I cannot blaspheme false gods, meaning simply gods in whom he has no faith. Just so, I say that I cannot blaspheme the trinity-in-unity of the Christian, which to me is non-existent, absurd, impossible.—James Thomson ("B.V.")

EARTH AND MAN.

Dust of my dust—last and supremest race
Of races lifting on from age to age—
This conscious creature's awful pilgrimage
Maddens the eyes of space.

Oh build upon his bones a better thing;
And yet a link to life's eternal chain;
Depose humanity, or once again
Thy primal silence fling.

Heed my long agonies, and let them cease
Lighten the horror of my endless woe;
From off this bleeding bosom bid him go
And give thy planet peace.

But if thou shalt ordain we never part,
Then, Mother, pity me by pitying him;
Despatch thy swiftest, gold-winged seraphim
With Reason to his heart.

Send them and this thy gift; let Reason reign,
So that a reconciliation come
Between the children and their ancient home,
Ere darkness fall again.

—Eden Phillpotts, "Song of a Weary World."

FAITH CREATES MIRACLES.

Miracles come when they are needed. They come not of fraud, but they come of an impassioned credulity which creates what it is determined to find. Given an enthusiastic desire that God should miraculously manifest himself, the religious imagination is never at a loss for facts to prove that he has done so; and in proportion to the magnitude of the interests at stake is the scale of the miraculous interposition.—J. A. Froude.

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past: there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which thro' the summer is not heard nor seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my outward life supply
Its calm, to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

—Shelley.

Obituary.

I HAVE to report the death of Mr. Victor T. Mitchell, a member of our (Kingsland) Branch. The cremation took place at Golder's Green on December 20, without any ceremony. Deceased was an ardent Secularist, and a great supporter of the late Charles Bradlaugh. He was proud of having taken the *Freethinker* from its very first number. Our Branch has lost one of its best friends, and so has the Freethought cause.—W. GREGORY.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The New 'Blasphemy' Prosecution."

HORNS ASSEMBLY ROOM (corner of Kennington and Kennington Park roads, opposite Park Gates): 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "The Triumph of Freethought."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 3.15, Freethought Parliament—H. J. Stenning, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Paganism, Christianity, and Atheism." Selections by the Band before Lecture.

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, N. Levey, "Ingersoll."

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Concert by Failsworth String Band.

GLASGOW (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 6.30, D. Ross, "The Bible: Scientifically, Ethically, and Historically Impugnable."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Club, 125 Albion-street): Tuesday, Jan. 14, at 8, H. S. Wishart, a Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): H. S. Wishart, 3, "Free Trade and Protection in Christ"; 7, "Christianity and Impurity Crusades."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, J. Harvey Simpson, "Cremation." Lantern views.

SOUTH SHIELDS (above Tram Hotel, Market-place): 7.30, Financial and other business meeting.

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (I. L. P. Institute): 3, Final Lecture arrangements.

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