

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*Persecution is not refutation, nor even triumph: the "wretched infidel," as he is called, is probably happier in his prison than the proudest of his assailants.*

—BYRON.

## "Blasphemy" Notes.

WHAT a change came over the Boulter case as soon as I got hold of it in the name of the National Secular Society! A competent solicitor, in constant communication with me; knowledge and experience on both our parts thus brought to bear upon the matter; money forthcoming for every necessary move in the game; and the certainty of securing able counsel to conduct all the legal business in court; these things made an immense difference, and in a few days, brought about a striking transformation. The prosecution, which had been having its own way in everything, was, to its own astonishment, suddenly checked; and instead of having its victim safely lodged in gaol for a considerable term, under a judge's sentence, had to face a postponement of the trial to the February sessions, besides feeling that this might be only the first step in a protracted business. Moreover, the press, seeing that the poor man charged with "blasphemy" was not, after all, going to be dealt with like a rat in a trap, and also that his new-found friends had cash at command and knew what they were about, suddenly began to recognise that it might be politic to adopt a less reticent attitude towards the case. One or two newspapers broke through the miserable conspiracy of silence with which they had seconded the vicious tactics of the prosecution, and the connivance of the magistrate. And now, instead of being shuffled along from court to court, and finally into prison, in silence, the "wretched blasphemer" will have a fair and open trial, with every advantage in the way of legal and advisory assistance, and also with the incalculable advantage of the full light of publicity.

This change, I say, is entirely due to my intervention as President of the National Secular Society, and to the unhesitating loyalty of my colleagues on the Executive. Some of them remember the Sunday morning in February, 1890, when Charles Bradlaugh handed me the President's hammer; and they knew that I inherited the tradition of freedom from that great representative of the heroic age of English Freethought. To be false to it was impossible even in thought. We had been dedicated to it, so to speak, as Hannibal was dedicated to the revenge of Carthage. And the other members of the Executive, belonging to the younger generation, had caught the sacred flame from the torch that we had never allowed to be extinguished. Everyone saw that a mighty principle was at stake. It was not a mere question of what was to become of Mr. Boulter; it was a question of whether men were to be prosecuted, imprisoned, and tortured in the name of religion. Seen in its true light, the problem had only one solution. The National Secular Society's Executive, therefore, unanimously resolved to endorse my action in the emergency, and to pledge the

Society's influence and resources in vindication of the principle that religion should be publicly discussed, like every other subject—surrounded with no special safeguards, and hampered by no special restrictions

Let there be no misunderstanding on this point. I repeat that the whole change in the Boulter case is due to the National Secular Society. At the first interview I had with Mr. Boulter—while his case was before the magistrate, it will be recollected—he informed me he had written to all sorts of "advanced" gentlemen for assistance. I smiled as he mentioned them one after another. I knew he would get no help from any of them. My peculiar experience in life had taught me the rarity of courage and decision in emergencies. Few men are brave alone. They want to know who else is going along before they start. So I smiled at Mr. Boulter's simplicity. I told him I feared he had wasted his time. And indeed he had. For he got no help whatever from any one of them; and only two took the slightest notice of his appeal. Perhaps my readers would like to have names—but it would be too cruel to mention them.

Not one paper, as far as I know, protested against the disgusting trick that was played against Mr. Boulter at Bow-street Police Court. Had I been consulted at the very beginning, I am confident that this trick would have been abortive. It did come to grief, as a matter of fact, when I was able to advise. Mr. Muskett pretended that the "information" was too shocking to be read out in open court; he even hinted at "obscenity"; and I am sorry to say that the Magistrate contributed to the success of this nefarious stratagem. At the next (and final) hearing, the trick was carried to its culmination. The case was heard in private. The public were excluded on the pretence that they had only come out of morbid curiosity. Nevertheless, the press was admitted; as though newspapers had any other object than catering to public curiosity. Of course, I was excluded as a member of the public, but they had to let me in, however grudgingly, as editor of the *Freethinker*. It was on my advice that Mr. Boulter and his solicitor refused to take part in a private investigation, after protesting against the case not being heard then, as it had been before, in open court. That protest, and that refusal, as I expected, were noted by the press, got into the newspapers, and took the worst sting out of Mr. Muskett's filthy insinuations by demonstrating that the defence courted, instead of shunning, the fullest publicity. That was the first successful move on Mr. Boulter's side, and it immediately produced a favorable effect. Undoubtedly he might be *blasphemous*, and even *shockingly blasphemous*—as Christians understand the word; but I say now, as I said a fortnight ago, that to call his expressions "obscene" was a monstrous abuse of language. And having carefully read his indictment at the Central Criminal Court, I am pleased to say that there is not a word about "obscenity" in it from beginning to end. The trick played to abuse the public mind in connection with a private investigation cannot be played in connection with an open trial.

The morning after the Boulter case was postponed, and it became evident that new forces were behind the defence, the *Daily News* crawled out of its shell and delivered itself of the following leaderette:—

"THE CHARGE OF BLASPHEMY.

The police in London have many disagreeable responsibilities, and it is probably a fact that their duties are becoming every day more perplexing and varied. We have had no means of knowing what is the basis of the unusual charge of blasphemy which has been referred to the Old Bailey; it is now a matter for the jury. But it is obvious that this prosecution, promoted not in open court, raises the gravest questions of liberty of speech, and that for many reasons the method of procedure is to be regretted. Is the man's offence alleged to be against morals, or is it alleged to be against theology? We do not know; yet clearly the only justification for criminal proceedings is an offence, not against theology, but against morals—which offence against morals can be dealt with, and is dealt with, any day of the week under the usual law against indecency. Such an offence in a public resort ought to be stopped, but the process should not be complicated by the appeal to theological animus—whether it tell against, or on behalf of, the accused. Moreover, by forsaking the beaten path of a prosecution for indecency, and by reviving the ancient law of blasphemy, the authorities have at once turned the business into a cause célèbre, where otherwise it would have passed practically without comment. This may not have been the intention, but the fact of the apparent blunder is readily obvious."

"We do not know" whether "the man's offence" is "against morals" or "against theology." So the *Daily News* says. But why doesn't it know? It could find out with very little trouble. The sources of information are public. What is the use, then, of this affectation of invincible ignorance? The truth is, we take it, that the *Daily News* recognises that it ought to have spoken out before; and these little shufflings are the awkward steps by which it has to cross over to the right side in full view of the public eye.

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The same number of the *Daily News* contained a letter, nearly a column in length, "On Blasphemy," by "H. N. B." This writer is evidently one of the "reverent Agnostics." He goes back to the case of Richard Carlile who "spent nine years in prison for Atheism"—a ridiculous assertion; to the case of G. J. Holyoake, and to Mrs. Besant's being "deprived of the custody of her children"—an exaggerated assertion—in 1879; but he never reaches the *Freethinker* case in 1883—possibly because "reverent Agnostics" regard it with painful feelings. Charles Bradlaugh is referred to respectfully. Atheism, however, is severely contrasted with Agnosticism:—

"There is between the philosophic agnostic and the militant atheist merely that difference which exists between the cultured apologist of Christianity and the average street preacher."

But both Charles Bradlaugh, when he fought and beat the House of Commons, and Mrs. Besant, when she fought for her mother's right to her daughter, were militant Atheists; and Holyoake was a militant Atheist when he suffered under the Blasphemy Laws. The difference between these and "H. N. B.," whoever he is, is the difference between cultured Christianity and street-corner preaching. I am a militant Atheist, and so are my colleagues on the *Freethinker*, Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd; and what we are to think of ourselves, in comparison with the reverent Agnostics, we learn from "H. N. B." Our lack of culture is distressing. We have not sucked out the learned juice of sixpenny reprints. We did most of our reading before they came into vogue. It is shameful, we know, but we hope to be forgiven. Meanwhile, I may venture (I hope it is not too presumptuous) to praise the general tone of "H. N. B.'s" article. He says very justly, that "blasphemy" should not be confused with "obscenity," and he calls on "educated agnostics" (so we suppose there are some uneducated ones) not to enjoy rights themselves and "see them denied to poor and obscure propagandists." This is sound and manly.

The *Morning Leader*, of the same date, printed an article on "Blasphemy Laws," by Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, whom it always regards as an eminent authority on this particular subject. On the whole, it was an excellent article, though occasionally misleading. Mrs. Bonner appears to think—at any rate, she suggests—that Buckle was the first distinguished writer who denounced the Blasphemy Laws; whereas Shelley wrote a fine protest against them in his Letter to Lord Ellenborough on the imprisonment of Daniel Isaac Eaton, and John Stuart Mill wrote a powerful anonymous article in the *Westminster Review* against the prosecutions of Richard Carlile. Mrs. Bonner states the facts of the *Freethinker* prosecution and my imprisonment (with Messrs. Ramsey and Kemp) in 1883, and then she says:—

"There was no longer any Buckle to denounce in fiery language this shameful sentence and travesty of justice, but the spirit he did so much to arouse was still alive, and the sentence was widely condemned by broad-minded Christians. Immediately after this proceedings were taken against Mr. Bradlaugh himself, which resulted in an acquittal, and further proceedings against Messrs. Foote and Ramsey, when the jury disagreed."

Now there are two suggestions in this passage, which may not be intentional, but which call for correction. The first is, that the resentment of broad-minded Christians led to Bradlaugh's acquittal, and to the disagreement of the jury at my own trial before Lord Coleridge; the second is, that Bradlaugh was tried for "blasphemy" in the same way that I was, and acquitted. But the facts were otherwise.

Bradlaugh was roped into the *Freethinker* prosecution in 1882. The indictment, being removed by *certiorari* to the Court of Queen's Bench, was not tried until April, 1883. In the interval I was prosecuted again, and that indictment was tried at the Old Bailey. It was tried twice. On the first occasion I induced the jury to disagree; on the second occasion the jury was well selected and I was found Guilty. The jury disagreed, therefore, the very first time. Consequently the disagreement of the jury at my third trial, on what was really my first indictment, does not require to be explained by anything that happened after my first trial. Broad-minded Christians *did* condemn my imprisonment, but they were not numerous, and they could not induce Mr. Gladstone and Sir William Harcourt to shorten my sentence by a single day. Nor had they anything whatever to do with Bradlaugh's acquittal. His defence was entirely technical. He pleaded what was perfectly true, that he never had any connection with the *Freethinker*; and, as he had obtained leave to be tried separately, I was able to go into the witness-box and support his contention. He did not argue the question of "blasphemy" at all. He had no occasion to. His defence was on points of fact, and on them he was acquitted. The improved temper of the public mind had no connection with the happy result. Bradlaugh's malicious enemies roped him into my case on speculation, and they found at the finish that they had miscalculated. That is all.

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I was pleased to see a generous reference in the *Daily Chronicle* to my action and that of the National Secular Society in securing at least a fair trial for Mr. Boulter. There was also a welcome reference to the same subject in the *Star*. All I could find in the *Clarion* was a bald statement by Mr. A. M. Thompson, the humorist, that "Prosecution for blasphemy has lately been revived."

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While I am on the subject of "blasphemy" I may observe that the Rev. R. J. Campbell has just been "going it strong." On Thursday, January 9, he preached at the City Temple what the *Daily Chronicle* calls a "Startling Sermon." His text was the famous one in Genesis about God creating man in his own image—a compliment which the French wit said that man had thoroughly reciprocated. Mr. Campbell, indeed, had a good deal to

say about that aspect of the matter; remarking, for instance, that "Man had credited God with his own cruelties, whimsicalities, pride and vanity, petty jealousies, and general unreasonableness." Then the preacher proceeded in this vein:—

"The ordinary pre-suppositions of evangelical Christianity are utterly absurd, and every one of us must have felt their unreality from time to time. The fact is, we seem to have two Gods, whom we call one, but who, by no possible stretch of the imagination, could be combined in one personality.

The first is a sort of old woman, who made the world and man as though He expected everything to go right and no evil or mischief to mar the work of His hands. But He laid His plans so badly that the whole scheme went awry and heaven has been mourning ever since.

Poor God! He is not to blame, the theologians tell us; it is wicked man, more especially woman, who has put everything wrong. God has done His best, and the result has been untold ages of chaos and unimaginable suffering. All God can do is to provide a redeemer to save a few out of the wreck, and to keep on pleading with humanity—'O, prodigal child, come home.' You will, I am sure, forgive me for the seeming irreverence of saying that that kind of God is a fool. And the other God, or God with the other face, is not much better.

This other God has prepared a hell for the poor, helpless victims of what is called His righteous wrath. He has made it big enough to contain the whole race, and into it the whole race will have to go unless they repent in time and avail themselves of the sufferings which He has graciously inflicted upon somebody else for their benefit. He has been sitting up there in heaven ever since creation first went wrong, brooding darkly over what He means to do to perverse and rebellious man when his time comes."

This was good "blasphemy," but better followed. Mr. Campbell imagined the orthodox Christian God to be in the audience, or at least listening, and apostrophised him (or Him) in this manner:—

"Look down upon the world as it now is, and tell me what you are going to do. Will the 'prodigal-child-come-home' business satisfy you? Can you hear the sobs of little children who are hungry and cold or ill-treated, or dying of painful disease? Can you watch with equanimity yonder strong man battling against heavy odds and yet feeling the ground give way beneath him as he struggles?

Could you have saved him—you, God, you!—or did you think it was not worth while? Are you going to tell me that you are very sorry for humanity, but that, of course, it has brought all this upon itself? Are you going to maintain that we have sinned against you? Are you not sinning against us?

What do you mean by your marvellous love? You have plenty, and we are starving! You can see and we are blind! You have omnipotence and we are crushed by pitiless fate! And what about that hell of yours? Ought you not to be in it for awhile yourself? Bah! you are contemptible, you King of Kings and Lord of Lords, if you have nothing more to say than that you will accept our penitence and remit our tortures when we are dead if only we believe! I would rather trust my own humanity than such a divinity as you."

If this is not "blasphemy" what is? I do not object to it myself, but what about the police? Are they going to suppress "blasphemy" at Highbury Corner and let it run riot at the City Temple?

On Friday, January 10, the London *Star* devoted its daily leading article to "The Blasphemy Case." It took the whole of its law from Mrs. Bonner's article in the *Morning Leader*, with which I do not quite agree; and it carefully omitted all reference to myself and the *Freethinker*. For the rest, however, the article was satisfactory. It declared that the Boulter case ought to have been heard "from beginning to end in the full light of publicity." It described the case as appearing to mark "the arbitrary revival of an antiquated law." And it observed that "It is humiliating to think that the day of religious persecution is not past, and that a Liberal Home Secretary should permit the revival of a cruel law which ought to be obsolete." Of course it is humiliating, but not surprising. My own imprisonment took place under a Liberal government;

it was a Liberal Home Secretary who libelled me from his privileged place in the House of Commons; and it was a Liberal Prime Minister, the father of the present Home Secretary, who did more (behind the scenes) than any other man in England to prevent the shortening of my infamous sentence.

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The Ethicists and Rationalists, as far as I can learn, did not utter even a squeak against the "blasphemy" prosecution until the general conspiracy of silence was broken down. The Boulter case had been running its course for more than three weeks before a brief letter appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* (Jan. 1) from Mr. Harry Snell as Secretary of the Union of Ethical Societies. Mr. Snell ended by asking whether "any of your readers would join a committee for the purpose of seeing what can be done." Too late, Mr. Snell, too late! Somebody else had long seen what could be done, and had done it. I like you, Mr. Snell, as a man; I respect you as a Freethinker; but as an Ethicist you are a disappointment. I mean in cases of this kind. Yet, after all, it is only natural. The Ethicists are such superfine people. When a rough fight is on, with blood and wounds for certain, whether victory or not, they are so apt to pose and talk like the trim and perfumed gentleman who provoked Harry Hotspur. Still, it may be better late than never; and if the defence of the man now prosecuted for "blasphemy" is in perfectly safe hands, and no outside assistance is necessary, I hope the Ethicists may, as Mr. Snell suggests, use "their influence in favor of the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws."

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The sedate *Tribune* had nothing to say about the Boulter case. Probably it could not touch anything "vulgar"—though it often sings the praises of the Salvation Army. But religious vulgarity is a different thing from "infidel" vulgarity. Besides, General Booth has been to Buckingham Palace.

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I found nothing in the Christian weekly papers. There was a news paragraph on the case in the *Christian World*, but no editorial reference. Neither was there the slightest allusion to the case in the *Christian Commonwealth*—a paper with great pretensions to liberality, and the organ of the Rev. R. J. Campbell and the New Theology. The "broad-minded Christians" whom Mrs. Bonner refers to are not much in evidence at present. I do not hesitate to say that Christians—even the best of them—are not to be trusted in such a matter. Christian journals would let a massacre of "infidels" pass unnoticed as long as it caused no great public scandal.

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Mr. G. K. Chesterton broke forth in the *Daily News* against the "blasphemy" prosecution. His article on "Anybody" was fantastic and paradoxical, as might be expected; nevertheless, it had its good, strong points. One sentence had the right ring in it. "I, for one," Mr. Chesterton said, "think it abominable that any man in modern England should be prosecuted for blasphemy." No doubt Mr. Chesterton's reasons were not all as good as his conclusions; but I, at least, will not scrutinise them too closely while he calls this prosecution "abominable." I hope that word will stick. I should like to hear people talking generally about "this abominable prosecution."

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Considering that Mr. Boulter is a Socialist, and lectured not so long ago from a "Clarion" Van, it is, to say the least of it, curious that the Socialist organs have maintained such a "dignified silence" over his prosecution. Must we conclude, after all, that the Socialists are not desperately in love with any liberty but their own? One Socialist paper, *Justice*, did devote a paragraph last week to the

Boulter case—and a very unsatisfactory paragraph it was. What necessity was there to state that the Social-Democrat organ had no "sympathy" with Mr. Boulter's views, or that "he is certainly no friend of ours"? Is it only one's "friends" whose freedom is worth defending? And who supposed that *Justice* wished anyone to "abuse the right of free speech by indulging in foul language"? On this point our contemporary is strangely solicitous. Certainly "foul language" is deplorable, but it is comical to see a paper like *Justice* talking in this way on the mere suggestion of the police. And the comicality gives place to something else when one notices, right against all this in the very next column, a laudation of Russian girls for "justly killing" two objectionable members of the working autocracy.

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I have to repeat that the National Secular Society is bearing the whole cost of the defence in this prosecution, and is not asking for any outside assistance—at least at present. Should it be necessary to make an appeal for subscriptions, in view of any fresh development of the case, involving an outlay not contemplated now, I shall ask the Society's members and friends, and readers of the *Freethinker*, to provide what may be requisite; and I have no doubt whatever that they will do so. In the meanwhile no one is authorised to collect subscriptions. This is a point which I desire to emphasise.

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Let it finally be understood that Mr. Boulter is prosecuted simply for "blasphemy"—that is, for an offence against the Christian religion. There is not an allusion to "obscenity" or "indecent" in his indictment. It will thus be seen that the National Secular Society is bound in principle and honor to come to his assistance, to provide him, in every possible way, with the means of defence, and thus to secure him a fair trial before a jury of his fellow citizens.

G. W. FOOTE.

### The Moral of Christian Science.

It is astonishing how rational one religious person can be when dealing with the religious belief of another person with whom he does not agree. A Protestant of the type of Dr. R. F. Horton, so long as he is dealing with specifically Roman Catholic beliefs, will argue very much as would a Freethinker. A Catholic, in criticising Protestantism, will point out its weaknesses and illogicalities in a way that leaves little to be desired. Christians, in dealing with non-Christian beliefs, are as unsparing and as critical as any thoroughgoing sceptic. They laugh at them, and do not hesitate to trace them back to what they really are—inherited survivals that owe their origin to the fear and ignorance of our earliest ancestors. It is when we take each one upon the ground of his own religion that irrationalism holds sway. Canons of judgment affirmed in the one case are denied in the other, until one feels inclined to vary the old adage by saying that everyone is sane upon some subject, if we can only find out just what it is.

An illustration of the truth of what has been said was furnished the other day by a case in the Richmond Coroner's Court. A lady, fifty-six years of age, died from bronchitis; and, as she was being attended by a Christian Scientist instead of a qualified medical man, an inquest followed. The coroner, from the tone of his remarks, is a religious man; but, not being a believer in Christian Science, was quick at pointing to the mote in the eye of Mrs. Eddy's follower, while quite oblivious of the beam in his own. This particular follower of the Christian Science cult was a Mrs. Davidson, who, at the request of the deceased, had been called in to attend her during her illness. Mrs. Davidson said that her patient had

previously contracted a slight cold, which improved under the prayer treatment. On this ensued the following:—

"Coroner. Then Christian Science is effectual if not much is the matter, but not in a serious illness?.....

Witness. I know God is all-powerful, and ever-present.

Coroner. But if God is all-powerful, as you say, and we all know, why did you have no response?

Witness. I suppose it was my lack of trust in that all-power.

Coroner. It comes to this—that, although he is all-powerful, unless the person praying for another has perfect faith the patient will not recover?

Witness. Nothing is impossible to God."

Now, if the coroner had been a Freethinker arguing against a Christian, with the exception of the "and we all know," his position would be unassailable. But as one Christian arguing against another, his position is an absurd one. All the logic is on the side of his opponent. For it is part of Christian teaching that all believers should pray for the recovery of the sick—indeed, this is the method laid down in the New Testament, the final authority for Christians. And many Christians do pray for the recovery of the sick in certain cases, while dispensing with it in others. They would not, for instance, pray that a man's leg that had been cut off by a machine should be restored; and if a Freethinker suggested that they should, they would say such a notion was absurd or blasphemous.

Again, the coroner himself agreed that God is all-powerful—"we all know" he is, was his expression. And having said this, he immediately blames the Christian Scientist for acting upon their mutual belief, and asks why did not God cure the deceased person! But, obviously, this is a question that the witness might as well have put to the coroner, and have censured *him* for not trusting to his all-powerful Deity. The Christian Scientist believed God was all-powerful, and left the matter of the recovery or the death of the sick person in his hands. The coroner also believed God was all-powerful, but only in conjunction with a medical man. And this man believed the witness to be occupying a ridiculous position!

The witness went on to explain that she did not call in medical aid because she believed prayer was the most effectual agent. On this our religious coroner observed that it was a broken reed in this instance. Certainly it was; and so it always is in all cases where a decisive test can be applied, or where it is not a case in which mere mental stimulation is of use. In cases where all that is required is a mental stimulant, the belief in the efficacy of prayer may be useful; but so would a belief in the curative properties of bread pills, standing on one leg for stated periods of time, or any other method that was really believed in. But has anyone ever heard of any decisive case in which prayer was of avail where the illness was of a more organic character? Could a patient be cured of smallpox, cancer, or consumption by prayer? Could a famine be averted or a plague destroyed by prayer? Is not prayer, as prayer, always a broken reed? Was not the coroner really censuring Christianity itself by his comments on the evidence? I even believe that he was laying himself open to an indictment for blasphemy.

As he proceeds, the coroner gets worse—as a Christian. "You people," he said, "put yourselves on the level of our Savior." To which came the apt reply, "No, we try to follow"—a clean, straight hit. "Why don't you give wine?" was another question. And again came the ready reply that Jesus did not give wine in illness, but at a marriage-feast. Again a hit. As a Christian to a Christian, the witness was taking up an impregnable position. To Jesus, all disease was of a supernatural character, and was to be cured by supernatural means. "Thy faith hath made thee whole," is the formula. Insanity or epilepsy is cured by prayer and fasting. To cure disease by prayer was one of the powers conferred upon the disciples. The early Church stamped out medical science, and practised the "divine method" of healing. The Prayer Book countenances the

curing of disease by the laying-on of hands. There has never been a break in purely Christian teaching on the subject. Christians have, in large numbers of cases, outgrown the belief, but that is because common sense and the forces of civilisation have broken down their faith. They are not following "In his steps." Christian Scientists are, and a Christian coroner tells them they are acting in a semi-criminal manner for so doing.

The coroner, in his summing up, said that "the parallel between the Christian Scientists and the Deity failed in this—that our Savior did not amass wealth. There was no doubt in this case that the deceased was grossly neglected."

The conclusion was peculiarly unctuous and offensive. In the first place, all Christian Scientists do not amass wealth. It is true that Mrs. Eddy has, apparently, a keen eye and an eager hand for raking in the dollars, but there is no ground for assuming that Christian Scientists are any more eager to acquire wealth than any other body of Christians. Nay, as a body of people one might safely say that they are more earnest in their beliefs than are the mass of orthodox Christians. They do, at least, give an earnest of the reality of their faith by taking the risk of not calling in a medical man. The ordinary Christian takes no risk whatever. He believes in the power of God to cure disease, but runs to a doctor when he is troubled with a stomach-ache. He believes that prayer is of avail, but insists upon sanitation and scientific attention; and if he was compelled to dispense with either the belief in prayer or the help of medical science there is little room for doubt as to what his decision would be.

Mrs. Davidson believed in the power of prayer and the providence of God. She believed God was all powerful. The coroner agreed with her in this belief. The jury, all of whom had piously sworn on a book commanding them to cure the sick by means of prayer, anointing, and the laying-on of hands, would agree with both of them in this belief. Who, then, was it who was guilty of neglect? Why, in the light of their own belief, it was God Almighty himself who was neglectful. Believing as they did, their verdict should have run: "Death from acute bronchitis, with a censure upon the Deity for his neglect of those who in all sincerity and helplessness depended upon his assistance."

It is a strange world! On the one side people are charged with the legal offence of blasphemy who say they do not believe that there is a God who interferes for the benefit of human beings, and, on the other side, people are censured—even imprisoned—who not only profess to believe in the providence of God, but honestly act up to their profession. From one point of view, the spectacle is an unpleasant one. It emphasises the divorce between belief and conduct, between theory and practice, and shows how much of our modern life is mere cant and humbug. But the picture has a more agreeable aspect. For the fact that people, in the name of law and religion, brand real dependence upon God as an absurdity and a danger to civilised life, is proof that, against the gradual development of human life and intelligence, religion is ultimately ineffective. It is gross negligence, says a Christian coroner and a Christian jury, to leave the sick in the hands of God. Quite so; but it is equally negligent and useless to leave *anything* to God, or to place any dependence upon his activity. For in this world God does nothing. All that is helpful in life is the outcome of human love, human intelligence, human effort. And on the learning of this lesson hangs the doom of all the gods and the happiness of humankind.

C. COHEN.

### Pyrrhic Victories.

PYRRHUS, King of Epirus, lives in history for two reasons. In the first place, it was under him, in the first quarter of the third century B.C. that Greece

and Rome for the first time came into definite collision. But, in the second place, his invasion of Italy gained distinction from the fact that even his victories were ruinous. They were victories that undermined his strength and contributed to his final defeat. After a battle near the river Siris, which he had won, he said to those sent to congratulate him, "One more such victory and Pyrrhus is undone." Pyrrhus was no doubt a brilliant and dashing soldier, and in consequence of a chivalrous vein in his character he was a general favorite; but he was only a nominal conqueror. The Rev. P. D. Thomson, M.A., in a sermon in memory of the late Dr. Ross-Taylor, of Glasgow, has a good deal to say about Pyrrhic victories in the realm of morals; and on this one point his teaching is thoroughly sound and wholesome. Then he observes, with absolute truth: "If there is such a thing as a Pyrrhic victory in which we lose infinitely more than we gain, there is such a thing also as a victory which looks like defeat, which leaves us more than conquerors." Well, it is the latter kind of victory, the preacher assures us, that Christ has achieved "over sin and death and over the hearts and lives of men." In Mr. Thomson's discourse, there is the implied admission that, *apparently*, the cause of Christ has suffered an ignominious defeat in its attempt to capture the world; but there is in it also the bold assertion that, *in reality*, the defeat of the Cross is the most glorious victory in all history.

Now, we hold that such an assertion is utterly unjustifiable. We go further and affirm that no man of education can honestly indulge in such an assertion. We do not charge Mr. Thomson with wilfully misleading his hearers; but on no ground whatever can the following sentence be regarded as true:—

"There came a day when a Roman Emperor, gazing on the cross of Christ, saw in it the victory of love, and bowing his proud head before a love so great, said for himself and for humanity, 'Galilean, thou hast conquered.'"

Surely, it is too late in the day to try to bamboozle the minds of men by such tomfoolery. Nothing is more absolutely certain than that Julian never bowed his "proud head" before the cross of Christ, beholding in it the supreme revelation of Divine love. Everybody knows that Julian's one ambition was to overthrow Christianity and to restore Hellenic Polytheism. He was a conscientious, unconquerable Pagan, who availed himself of all means at his disposal to win back the whole empire to the ancient faith. His dying speech, "pronounced in a firm and gentle tone of voice," proves conclusively that he died, as he had lived, in perfect loyalty to his religious convictions. Listen to his eloquent words:—

"I accept, as a favor of the gods, the mortal stroke that secures me from the danger of disgracing a character which has hitherto been supported by virtue and fortitude. I die without remorse, as I have lived without guilt. I am pleased to reflect on the innocence of my private life; and I can affirm, with confidence, that the supreme authority, that emanation of the Divine Power, has been preserved in my hands pure and immaculate."

There is not a word in the whole discourse which indicates that he had undergone any change whatever of religious attitude. Ammianus Marcellinus, the most authentic historian of his reign, was an "intelligent spectator" of the death-scene, but makes no reference to any confession of faith in Christ, or to any weakening of confidence in the old Paganism. Hence, it is safe to state that the exclamation, "Galilean, thou hast conquered," is an invention of a later age of Christians. As Gibbon well says, "the calumnies of Gregory, and the legends of more recent saints, may now be *silently* despised," only when a popular preacher, like Mr. Thompson, in a widely-circulated religious journal, cites one of those legends as an undoubted historical fact, we are compelled once more to call attention to its complete unhistoricity. If Mr. Thompson thinks that he has scored a victory, we hasten to inform him that it is a Pyrrhic victory, a victory that must prove totally

ruinous to his own cause. Let him consult any great historian, and he will see how culpably he has trifled with an important subject.

It is true that the premature death of Julian meant the final triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire. It may be also true that, even had he lived to a ripe old age, and toiled with all his might to the end, he might not have succeeded in re-establishing Paganism, though one cannot tell what lessons he might have learned had he entered Persia as a conqueror. But the point to be emphasised at present is, that Christianity's victory over Paganism was a Pyrrhic victory—a victory won at the cost of self-annihilation. "Christianity won Europe," shouts the apologist. Yes, we reply, and in so doing lost itself. By being all things to all men Christianity sacrificed its own identity. To gain supremacy it sold itself. The Christianity of the tenth century was a very different thing from that of the first. It destroyed Paganism by absorbing it—and killing Pagans. Its victory was an essentially ruinous one. Simply as a religion, depending on its own resources alone, Christianity would never have won Europe. It was only when it assumed the form of Catholicism that it became a conquering religion; and even as Catholicism it might not have become permanently triumphant had it not been for its alliance with the State. It was only when the sword was placed at its service that it proved more than a match for Paganism. In short, its victory was altogether too costly. It worked its way into the supreme place by demeaning itself, and discrediting the name of its reputed founder, which is equivalent to saying that it reached the throne by digging its own grave.

As an illustration of the working of the principle we are expounding, we may take the recent Welsh revival. That remarkable movement, which attracted the attention of the whole of Christendom, was looked upon by many as the triumph of the Christian religion in Wales. Converts were made by the thousand, the public-houses were deserted, the ordinary avocations of life suffered serious neglect, constables and police courts had nothing to do, and what God was then doing for Wales he would speedily do for the entire globe. Evan Roberts shot into bewildering popularity, and was half worshiped as a chosen vessel of the Lord. Religion was the one topic of conversation everywhere, day and night. The few who timidly ventured to criticise the revival were vehemently denounced as graceless, godless, incorrigible perverts. The right hand of the Lord was doing valiantly, and the people were all drunken with the wine of heaven. All this happened only a couple of years ago. Well, did the Holy Ghost really conquer Wales? Did he drive the Devil clean out of it? Did he take possession of the hearts of the people, and make them his own temples? If he did conquer the land, all we can say is that the victory was a Pyrrhic one. To-day, Wales is much less religious than it was prior to the revival, and the sins which the revival was said to have utterly destroyed are again in full evidence, and more flourishing than before. The converts have lapsed, and the churches are in mourning.

The inference that forces itself upon us is, that Christianity, like every other religion, owes both its successes and its failures to the fact that its supernatural claims are pure moonshine. If the Christian God really existed, would not the history of Christianity be an infinite disgrace to him? Had there been a Holy Ghost, would Sergius III., who was at the beck and call of the vile Marozia and her mother Theodora, ever have occupied the papal chair? The history of Christianity, in fact, furnishes an all-convincing argument for Atheism. A God of Love would not be guilty of cruelly trifling with the children of his heart. He would not reclaim a wretched drunkard one day and allow him to lapse the next. It would be much easier to believe in an Almighty Satan than in an Almighty and All-loving Savior. But we believe in neither, because we are convinced that the evolution of the world is a standing protest

against such a belief. "God works so very slowly," says the theologian. But it is not the *pace* of the work that puzzles us, but its *quality*. It is not slow work, but bad work, of which we complain, and we only complain on the supposition that an all-good Deity is in charge of it. Christianity is not inexplicable, except on the assumption that it is a divinely-revealed religion, claiming to have supernatural beings and influences at its command. As a man-made system, both its successes and its failures are easily accounted for.

We hear and read a great deal about the crime of blasphemy just now. But it seems to us that to accept Christianity as true in face of its history is a much greater blasphemy than to pronounce it a purely human product. If there be a Deity, no greater indignity can be offered to him than to speak of him as the maker and ruler of the world, and, in particular, its Savior. We hold that the only blasphemers are the ministers of religion who attribute to God work utterly unworthy of him. What we say is that, if there be a Deity, he is, to us, both unknown and unknowable. Not knowing even that he exists, we leave him entirely out of account in our endeavor to unravel the tangled problems of existence. We *assume* his non-existence, and, on this assumption, we are justified in dealing with Christianity as an entirely false religion which has hindered, rather than helped, the moral and social progress of the race. It follows, therefore, that the alleged victories of its apologists, as well as the victories claimed for itself as a Divine religion, are all alike Pyrrhic victories.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Acid Drops.

Christians throughout the world opened 1908 with a week of united prayer. In a hundred languages the ears of Omnipotence were assailed with specially prepared petitions. Prayer on the Wednesday was for sovereigns, rulers, statesmen, legislators, and the press. Saturday was devoted to praying for several important things, including the conversion of the Jews. We have not observed any striking reply to any of these supplications. The only unusual phenomenon has been the arctic weather and the large number of shipwrecks. Perhaps the other things will follow on.

"Old Parson" writes to the *Hereford Times* against the New Theology. He must be a *very* old parson—a Rip Van Winkle. He says that life has only existed on this planet for 6,000 years, and that the various strata of the earth were placed on top of each other by the Almighty, the fossils being collected from other planets. "Old Parson" ought to be stuffed in due course, and exhibited in the British Museum.

Rev. Hugh Prichard, of Dinam, Anglesey, who died at the great age of 100, left £17,155. No wonder he kept out of the place he was booked for so long!

A correspondent of the *Bristol Weekly* sings the praises of the Z. B. Woffendale, and says he is "well-known as the 'Bishop of Somers Town'"—which is a very odd nickname for a Protestant minister. The writer would appear to think that Mr. Woffendale still addresses audiences at the Midland Arches, and adds that "his great debate with Mr. G. W. Foote at South-place Chapel is still considered a masterpiece." The writer does not mention that the debate took place nearly thirty years ago; that Woffendale's edition of it is not verbatim and is unauthorised; that the joint committee resolved not to have a report, on the ground of expense; that Woffendale, unknown to both sides, smuggled in a reporter of his own; that the said reporter frankly confessed that he could not take a verbatim report; that, even in summary, Woffendale's speeches were printed twice as long as Mr. Foote's; and that the reverend gentleman eked out his oral arguments with liberal footnotes. If this debate is a masterpiece, it must be a masterpiece of impudence and chicanery.

Leeds religionists are up in arms. The Corporation tramcars bore the following advertisement the other day: "Good skating at Roundhay Park to-morrow (Sunday) if frost continues. Good service of cars." All sorts of re-

ligious bodies in the city have passed resolutions against this encouragement of Sunday recreation. What the citizens legitimately require in that line on Sunday is always obtainable at church or chapel, and the caterers attached to these establishments protest against illicit competition.

Rev. J. Warschauer scouts the idea of Jesus saying "He, therefore, that will be saved must *thus think*." Certainly the notion is an absurd one. If thinking were the condition of salvation, heaven would be as thickly populated as the Sahara.

When the Bishop of London was in America he informed a New York audience that, in his opinion, the rich were only the stewards of the poor. The good man is not afraid of putting his theory into practice. He has now, we read, sold his horses and carriages—and bought motor-cars in their place. Self-sacrifice is of the very essence of Christianity.

The Methodist papers are chronicling what they call "a very remarkable instance" of good-fellowship among Christians. At a sale of work at Walkden, near Manchester, ministers of other denominations actually came to the opening service and took part in the ceremony. What a thing to crow about! Christian love is such a powerful influence that after nineteen centuries Christians belonging to different sects can meet under the same roof without a guard of policemen to keep the peace. Prodigious!

"What is wrong with the Church?" asks a religious contemporary. Well, the men are wrong, the methods are wrong, the doctrines are wrong, the teachings are wrong, and it lives in the wrong age. That is, if these trifling defects are remedied, there will be nothing whatever the matter with the Church.

We mentioned last week that missionaries probably regard the now certain famine in India as one of God's ways of bringing people to Christ. The *Methodist Recorder* of January 9 records a case in point. A Hindoo procured a copy of the New Testament some time ago, but took no notice of it. Now, with the present scare of scarcity, "his fear has driven him to seek refuge in the faith of the true God. He uses many ways to bring his wandering children to Himself." Our last week's paragraph might be taken as a prophecy; but it was really based upon a knowledge of missionary ways and methods. And the number of "wandering children" brought home will depend upon the amount of money the missionaries are allowed to handle. Of course, when the famine is over, or the funds are exhausted, the children will wander away again; but by that time they will have figured in the list of converts—many times over in all probability.

At a recent missionary conference in Liverpool one of the speakers asserted that, if China was to be won, it would chiefly be by means of medical missionaries. Which is just one way of saying that poor Chinamen will not come to the missionaries for religion, but only for such things as are of a purely secular and beneficial character.

There is an old maxim that people who do not stick to the truth should have good memories. Missionaries and their stories form a good illustration of this. At one time we are assured that Japan is being rapidly Christianised, and that Christian influences in Japan are all-powerful. Now the Rev. Dr. Barber informs a Manchester audience that in China there is a strong reaction on account of the irreligious spirit which Chinese youths bring back with them from Japanese universities. Of course, both stories are false. The Chinese are not religious—in the Western and Christian sense; nor are Christian influences gaining in Japan. All missionary stories have to be taken with rather more than the proverbial grain of salt.

Russia was punished in the recent war because of its irreligion. So says the Rev. R. F. Horton, who remarks that, owing to want of true religion, the Russian ships went to the "bottom of the sea like *tinder*." The sentiment may be good—from a Christian point of view; the illustration is decidedly shaky.

"The all-important thing," continues Dr. Horton, "is not how big is our fleet, but how true is our religion." Well, but from Dr. Horton's point of view, neither the Jap nor the Russian had the true religion. How then? Presumably in such a case God would just remain neutral; so that it could not have been the religion, but the men, who after all were the decisive factor. For clotted nonsense Dr. Horton runs the Bishop of London pretty hard.

The articles that have recently appeared in the press concerning the state of employment in Canada, have forced the Salvation Army to depart from its cowardly policy of silence and offer some sort of a reply. A special article in the *War Cry*, January 4, deals with the subject, and, as a matter of course, denies that the Army is in any way responsible for the number of emigrants in Canada who are fruitlessly seeking employment, and for those who will not work when they have the opportunity. It denies, and that is all; for with the Army, denial is equal to a disproof. Indeed, surprise is expressed that notwithstanding these denials the statements concerning Canadian emigration continue to appear. It is unfortunate that our criminal code provides nothing in the shape of punishment for such as doubt statements made by the Army; but until this fault is repaired, we commend to all interested, an article in the *Times* of January 4, by Dr. Arthur Shadwell, who, after saying that he is "aware that the agencies which send them [the emigrants] out, publish reports stating that work has been found for all their clients, and that they are all doing well, or that only some infinitesimal fraction have proved unsatisfactory," says plainly enough, that such reports are false. We invite the Army to deal with Dr. Shadwell.

The "reply" of the Army is, like a great many more of its statements and doings, peculiar. It does not deny that there is a glut of emigrants, nor does it deny that many who are sent out are of the wrong class, and that even the right kind have a difficulty in finding work. What it does is to cable to *its own officials* in Canada asking are the statements true concerning the Army's emigrants, and publishes their denial as an effective disproof. As those officials are the ones charged with misleading the public, the evidence is, obviously, not above suspicion. If the cablegram had been sent to some outside person or agency, we should have been more impressed by the reply. The "reply" also asserts that the glut of emigrants has been brought about by other agencies, not by the Army. These agencies, it also asserts, have exaggerated the advantages of Canada for emigrants—a retort that is peculiarly impudent, seeing how the Army has been constantly advertising Canada as "A Land of Promise" for working men, sending men about the country to lecture upon the advantages of emigration, and appealing for funds to send more people away. In the same issue of the *War Cry* in which this article appears there is actually an advertisement for six hundred men and women for Canada, to make up a shipload sailing on February 20. And this in the face of Canadian Government officials' publicly expressed opinion that all emigration should now cease till the spring. But the eagerness to pocket commissions overrules every other consideration with the Army. The Army's confidence in the gullibility of the public is best illustrated by its implied statement that, as it is the men who are sent out by other agencies who cannot find employment, Canadian employers in want of men refuse to take on all except Salvationist emigrants; while those who are not in want of men hasten to make room for them so long as they arrive in a ship chartered by the Salvation Army. Impudence of assertion could hardly go further than this.

The Salvation Army repudiates the charge that the unemployed in Canada are recruited from the emigrants sent out under their auspices. The Central Emigration Board have issued a notice that all *their* emigrants are doing well. Other agencies are following suit. Each of them suggests that it is the people sent out by other agencies who are now out of employment in Canada. Perhaps the meetings of unemployed in Canada, and the complaints of the Canadians concerning the emigrants, is all a dream. For we have the assurance of the Emigration Board and religious organisations that all is well.

The Baptist Church is not alone among the Churches in showing a decrease of membership during the past year. The Wesleyan Methodists also report a decrease of 2,000 members. But there has been an increase in the number of churches and chapels built, so that they will be able to point to this circumstance as an indication of progress. If only the supply of churches and chapels were limited by the demand, the number of these places would also show a decrease. The religion is to create the supply, and they argue that there must be a demand for places of worship or they would not exist. It is the aim of every "quack" to persuade the public that it is in dire need of the specific he offers for sale.

God Almighty is particularly interested in parts of the Methodist Hymn Book. At least, so we gather from a paragraph in the *Methodist Recorder*, which closes with—

"O God, how often hath thine ear  
No. 246 in the Methodist Hymn Book."

Gipsy Smith is convinced—being a Methodist—that the Methodist Church is the one that holds the key for the capture of the masses of the people. One reason for his belief is because the Methodist Church is “believed in” and “looked up to” by “these great masses.” This, we presume, is also the reason why “these great masses” do not attend church or chapel.

Gipsy Smith also says that “many people are more religious when they are drunk than at any other time.” We agree with him. We have often noted how aggressively religious some people become when drink has robbed them of the restraining influence of their more civilised feelings.

The truth will out. Mr. E. Rattenbury, the Socialist Methodist preacher, says “our relation to schemes of social reform is indicated by the past history of the Church.” This is what we are continuously pointing out. And those who know the history of the Church are not likely to mistake the nature of the relation. This is, to oppose reform while it is possible to do so, to capture the movement when opposition is no longer profitable, and then claim all the credit of pioneers while trusting to the ignorance of the people for protection against discovery.

Mr. Rattenbury supplies a good instance of this process in a reference he makes to the Temperance movement. Those who know the history of the Teetotal movement are aware that it was first bitterly opposed by Christians and bracketed with Atheism. “The Temperance reformer,” says Mr. Rattenbury, “was a well-meaning fanatic, who was advocating a man-made reform.....But the thought of Methodism becoming a teetotal organisation was too painful for contemplation.....some people looked upon teetotalism as a positive evil. The spirituality of the Church was carefully preserved from temperance fanatics.” Another well-known Methodist preacher, the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse, once said that when as a youth he wished to attend a temperance lecture, he had to steal away to a Freethought meeting place as about the only place where he could hear one.

Mr. Rattenbury cautions Socialists that it is the Christian Church alone that can put things right. “It is she who can solve the problem, settle the difficulties, inspire the upward movements of humanity and purify them.” The duty of all Socialists is, therefore, clear. They must join the Church—the Methodist Church, of course—and everything will then be over, except the shouting.

According to last Sunday's *Reynolds'*, in answer to a correspondent, “The late Mr. Holyoake was a Christian in the true sense of the word, but he did not believe that Jesus Christ was divine.” Our changing contemporary—now, we believe, in the hands of the Philistines—might print a few more puzzles of the same character. For instance, “The late Mr. Gladstone was a Liberal Unionist in the true sense of the word, but he was in favor of Home Rule and did not believe in Mr. Chamberlain.”—“The late Pope Leo XIII. was a Freethinker in the true sense of the word, but he did not believe in any religious freedom outside Catholic dogmas.”

Atheists, as Torrey says, are always committing suicide. There is the late Rev. James C. Brown, for instance, minister of the parish of Portmoak, and clerk to the Kinross Presbytery, who shot himself at his own residence about 8 o'clock in the morning—so as to enter heaven at breakfast-time.

Torrey should also notice the case of the young Englishman, H. Grey Duberley, a distant relative of Earl Grey, who committed suicide recently in a New York hotel. “May God forgive you,” he said in a letter to his father; and “Ask my uncle Hugh to pray for me.” A most decided Atheist this!

The Annual Report of the Moravian Church just issued states: “The members of the Church in this country are practically all British by birth and decent.” We are glad to hear that they are decent. But is it not a slur on the members of other Churches?

The *Glasgow Evening News* probably wouldn't give six lines to any Freethought meeting. It finds room, however, for a lot of drivel about Spiritualism, and gravely reports the statement of a “mceejum” that he recently saw the spirit-form of the late W. Stewart Ross, of the *Agnostic Journal*. “Saladin” seems to have degenerated since his funeral; the “mceejum” says he is now a Spiritualist; and he could

hardly be otherwise in the circumstances, unless he is like the Irish spirit who “manifested” at a *séance* and informed those present that he had come back to tell them there was no future life.

An interesting question came up before a meeting of the Book Sub-Committee of the Public Library Committee held on Thursday—Mr. Thomas Kyd presiding. A good many years ago the *Freethinker* was one of the newspapers which was provided for the Reading Room, but for some time past this particular journal has not been seen in the Public Library. A considerable number of the frequenters of the Reading Room are desirous that the *Freethinker* should be restored, and accordingly presented a petition to that effect, signed by fifty persons, which was laid before the committee on Thursday. The committee, after deliberation, thought the matter required consideration, and with this end in view it was decided that each member of the committee should be supplied with a copy of the *Freethinker* in order that the committee should be in a better position to finally decide the question when it comes up for settlement at next meeting of the committee.—*Evening Gazette* (Aberdeen).

We take the following from last week's *John Bull*:—

“We don't believe in Blasphemy—and we don't believe in Blasphemy prosecutions. The proceedings against Mr. Harry Boulter, of Highbury, are a mistake. After all, Blasphemy is a question of taste. To our way of thinking, there is more of it done in the name of Religion than in that of Infidelity. We give an example, on another page, from a Salvation Army officer at Seacombe, and we have given examples before. Blasphemy is also a question of temperament. What impresses some people as very sacred and solemn simply appeals to the risible instincts of others. But it is a dangerous thing to make the ethics of taste the subject of a penal code. When the present Government came into power, did not Mr. Burns declare that he is opposed to “every form of hereditary authority”? But nobody thought of prosecuting the Minister of the Crown for High Treason. And so we suggest that the prosecution of Mr. Boulter should be dropped. If, however, this is to be proceeded with, then what about Mr. Gumbleton of Seacombe?”

This is the first protest of any kind that we noticed in the ordinary press against the new “blasphemy” prosecution. Consequently, it is very much to *John Bull's* credit; although we wish it could have been a little more serious—for there is surely something more than a “mistake” in prosecutions (with imprisonment at the end of them) for expressions of opinion.

#### IMMORTALITY.

A toy which people cry for,  
And on their knees apply for,  
Dispute, contend, and lie for,  
And if allowed  
Would be right proud  
Eternally to die for. —*Ambrose Bierce.*

To call the destroyer of superstition a negationist is as senseless as to call a doctor a negationist. Both strive to expel disease, the one bodily the other mental; both, therefore, are working for health; and no more positive work is conceivable.—*G. W. Kootie.*

It is constantly said that human nature is heartless. Do not believe it. Human nature is kind and generous; but it is narrow and blind; and can only with difficulty conceive anything but what it immediately sees and feels. People would instantly care for others as well as themselves if only they could *imagine* others as well as themselves. Let a child fall into the river before the roughest man's eyes;—he will usually do what he can to get it out, even at some risk to himself; and all the town will triumph in the saving of one little life. Let the same man be shown that hundreds of children are dying of fever for want of some sanitary measure which it will cost him trouble to urge, and he will make no effort; and probably all the town would resist him if he did. So, also, the lives of many deserving women are passed in a succession of petty anxieties about themselves, and gleaning of minute interests and mean pleasures in their immediate circle, because they are never taught to make any effort to look beyond it; or to know anything about the mighty world in which their lives are fading, like blades of bitter grass in fruitless fields.—*Ruskin.*



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, January 19, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester: at 3, "The New 'Blasphemy' Prosecution"; at 6.30, "Socialism, Christianity, and Atheism. Campbell v. Blatchford."

January 26, "Horns" Assembly Room.

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

**To Correspondents.**

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 19, "Horn's" Assembly Room, Kennington; 26, West Stanley. February 2, Woolwich Town Hall; 16, Aberdare; 17, Mountain Ash; 23, Edinburgh. March 8, Glasgow.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 19, Failsworth; 26, Birmingham.

J. PHILLIPS.—See our "Notes" this week. We do not forget, but we could only speak for ourselves on that special point.

COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—A. Frayn, 2s. 6d.; L. Devereux, 2s. 6d. There is still a deficit of £1 5s. 6d. on this fund.

A. FRAYN.—You may rely on our persistence. The National Secular Society is finding all the money for the defence in the Boulter case, and is not asking for subscriptions—at least for the present.

J. H. BULL.—We are overloaded with copy at present.

A. BUTTERWORTH.—Why should we all say the same thing? Neither do we see any essential contradiction between the two passages you mark. In any case, we honestly printed both of them; which is a good deal more than your Salvation Army does.

T. HOPKINS.—Both are dealt with this week. They appeared after last week's *Freethinker* left our hands for the press.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Nice private letters don't count for much. Thanks for cuttings. See paragraphs.

A. WORLEY.—Shall be sent as desired. Glad you enjoy the *Freethinker* as "the brightest and most outspoken of journals." Thanks for good wishes.

E. LECHMERE.—Thanks for cuttings and wishes for our success in the new year.

C. W. JONES.—Glad to have your interesting letter, and to note that it was the Welsh Revival, and Evan Roberts's foolish utterances, that first set you thinking. We quote the following from your letter as likely to interest other readers: "I bought a copy of the *Freethinker* by chance twelve months ago, and liked it very much. I thought perhaps that number was above the average, but I find, after a year's trial, that it has kept up the high standard of the first copy I saw, and I think that lately it is improving even upon that. I look forward to Thursday, the day that I got it, for a regular weekly treat." We cannot say anything at the moment about an N. S. S. Branch in Swansea.

H. BLACK.—We have not had our Sunday's lecture reported for print. Probably we shall have something for broadcast distribution at a later stage. Thanks for cuttings.

G. ROLEFFS.—Glad the Liverpool friends are "admiring" our attitude towards the "blasphemy" prosecution, and that our articles are read with "great interest."

ISABELLA ROBERTS.—We shall print an extract from your welcome letter next week. We deeply value such letters from women. Our view is that if women could only be made thoughtful—as they must be in becoming Freethinkers—the worst evils of human society would soon die a natural death, and will never die so otherwise. One of these days we will write an article to explain what we mean.

J. TIDMORE.—Glad the "blasphemy" prosecution has stimulated your Freethought zeal in that way.

A. E. SKINNER.—We have mentioned the matter.

W. GOODBOURN.—A pack of lies. Lie number one—that a Christian woman established the first hospital—is refuted by the article on "Hospitals" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Hospitals existed in India before the Christian era, and in Egypt, Rome, etc., charitable and medical institutions existed for the poor. Christianity did not invent human nature.

HUGH THOMSON.—Pleased to receive such glowing compliments from a reader since 1884, and to hear that if you had only two-pence to spend on literature you would spend it on the *Freethinker*.

P. K.—Remember Carlyle's "Mostly fools."

H. W. THURLOW.—Cannot find room this week.

SYDNEY A. GIMSON.—It is a matter of principle, as you say: all "blasphemy" prosecutions must be fought. We are not in love with "coarse expressions." What we cannot tolerate is their being punished in religious controversy, while allowed in every other controversy.

G. JACOB.—That sort of misrepresentation will go on as long as religion endures.

R. ROSETTI.—Had to shorten greatly.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

L. DEVEREUX.—Good wishes are always welcome.

W. H. MORRISH.—Perhaps they think with Milton—"They also serve who only stand and wait."

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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.**

A crowded audience assembled at Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The New 'Blasphemy' Prosecution." Mr. F. A. Davies, who occupied the chair, pleased the audience with a few bright remarks on "blasphemy" as a poor man's complaint—rich people always enjoying it with impunity. Mr. Foote had a great reception, and his lecture was enthusiastically applauded from beginning to end. "Contempt of court" had to be avoided, of course; and we believe it was done successfully, although it did not prevent the lecturer from saying all that he wanted to. Questions were allowed afterwards, but, in the circumstances, no discussion.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (Jan. 19) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester. His afternoon subject is "The New 'Blasphemy' Prosecution"—and his evening subject "Socialism, Christianity, and Atheism: with a reference to R. J. Campbell and R. Blatchford." There are pretty sure to be crowded audiences.

Mr. Foote has been obliged to cancel his engagement at Coventry on February 2. He very much regrets this, and it will be a financial loss to him; but he is bound to keep himself free from public engagements during the week-end immediately preceding the February sessions at the Central Criminal Court. His presence may be needed at any moment for reference or consultation in the "blasphemy" case.

Mr. Foote is necessarily giving a great deal of time to this case. Many long legal interviews and much correspondence make a heavy tax on his time just now. On this ground he claims indulgence (as editor) for any shortcomings in the *Freethinker*. He is indebted to Mr. Cohen for assistance in the paragraph department.

Mr. Lloyd delivered the second of the course of Sunday evening Freethought lectures at the "Horns" Assembly Room, with Councillor A. B. Moss in the chair. There was a good audience, and the lecture was warmly applauded. This evening (Jan. 19) Mr. Cohen delivers the third lecture of the course, and we hope the local "saints" will give all the publicity they can to it, so as to secure a large meeting.

The West Ham Branch's social gathering was very successful, in spite of the weather. Various members contributed to the evening's entertainment, and the dancing was much enjoyed by the younger ones. Friends were present from other Branches; also Mr. and Mrs. Cohen.

There is to be a Parliament of Religions at Oxford in September. Many distinguished English scholars will take part in it, including Professors Cheyne, Driver, Margoliouth, Sayce, Estlin Carpenter, Percy Gardner, and Gilbert Murray. The Congress is to be quite unsectarian, and all the principal religions of the world will be discussed, not from a dogmatic but from an historical point of view. No doubt some interesting papers will be read, and the discussions will tend to bring religion under the influence of the scientific spirit.

## To Freethinkers.

January 1, 1908.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

A circular letter has been issued for several years by Mr. J. W. de Caux on behalf of Mr. G. W. Foote as leader-in-general of the Freethought party in Great Britain. Subscriptions were raised by this means supplementing his inadequate income. But of late the income itself has almost disappeared. It has for some time been an open secret that he has not been receiving his salary as editor of the *Freethinker*, upon which he has continued to work with unabated vigor. This state of things has put a great strain upon him, which he finds it increasingly difficult to bear.

In these circumstances, it has been suggested that a definite honorarium should be raised for him of (say) £300 per annum. Towards this President's Honorarium Fund a preliminary promise has been made by Major John C. Harris, R.E., who offers to give a donation of £100 and to contribute a yearly subscription of £10.

Many members and friends of the National Secular Society, and readers of the *Freethinker*, will doubtless be glad of the opportunity of following this gentleman's example. It is not expected, of course, that they will all contribute to the same extent; but merely that they will contribute in their various degrees, so as to mark their sense of Mr. Foote's importance to the Freethought movement, and of the claim he has, through his long past and untiring present service, upon their consideration at a time of life when family and personal expenses tend to increase rather than diminish.

Should the recent improvement in the circulation of the *Freethinker* continue at the same rate for some years, it would modify the present financial position; meanwhile, to cut down the expenses by making no further payment to regular contributors would be a revolutionary, impolitic, and dangerous proceeding. Neither would it be prudent to starve the advertising side of the paper, by which its circulation should be extended; nor to prevent other expenditure that may be necessary to enhance its interest and value to the Freethought movement. No other way is open, therefore, but the one now suggested.

The success of the present scheme—and this is a very important matter—would tend to free the President from some of the mere drudgery which he has had to go through, week by week, since the death of his sub-editor (Mr. J. M. Wheeler) nearly ten years ago. Such liberation of his time and energy would enable him to give still greater attention to the higher work of organisation and propaganda.

The President's Honorarium Fund will be banked in the name of the undersigned as Trustees.

Some friends may make a donation to the Fund independently of a future annual subscription. Annual subscriptions can be paid any time during the year, but in such matters it is always a case of the sooner the better. Promises of support will be duly noted, and reminders will be forwarded if necessary.

A considerable number who replied to Mr. de Caux's circular letters preferred writing and remitting direct to Mr. Foote. They can still do so if they wish. Their donations and subscriptions will be paid over to the Fund. Communications

to him should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

Trusting to hear from many donors and subscribers at an early date, in order that the Fund may be available during 1908,

Yours faithfully,

J. W. DE CAUX, J.P.,  
92 St. Peter's-road, Gt. Yarmouth.

R. T. NICHOLS,  
28 Park-road, Ilford.

(Vice-President of N.S.S. and Director of Secular Society, Ltd.)

A. J. FINCKEN,  
66 Mount Grove-road, Highbury, London, N.

### Donations Received.

	£	s.	d.
Major John C. Harris, R.E. ...	100	0	0
G. L. Alward ...	5	0	0
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George Payne ...	20	0	0
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## "Christ's Sword."—II.

BY DR. JOHN EMERSON ROBERTS,

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

(Concluded from p. 28.)

THERE is a law of progress that might be called the law of the sword; for, there is the third class, the men at the point. I do not know why the Almighty made it in the way he did. To tell the truth, the Almighty did a good many things that never have been plain to me. But I cannot quite understand why human life and human history should have been so constituted that the best, the bravest, and the noblest of the world should have had to suffer and to die. I do not know why the Nazarene, the most conspicuous of the men at the point—I do not know why he could not have been permitted to live. Three years was not long, and was not long enough for so well-meaning and so powerful a man. I do not know why Socrates must have died. All he did was to teach a new and better philosophy, a new and better religion, but the men with their hands on the hilt said: "He will corrupt the youth of the nation, people will turn away from the altars of the national gods, and after awhile they will have no more garlands and votive offerings for Zeus and his coterie." So they took the great man out, the greatest and noblest of all the Pagan martyrs, and made him drink the hemlock. I do not know why the kindly Bruno, whose only offence was that he enlarged the horizon of human intelligence—I do not know why he must have died. I cannot understand why Thomas Paine, the great lover of man, the man who more than any other made his human sympathies world-wide, and wherever there was a struggle for freedom, joined the ranks, whose patriotism was not covered by any flag, and whose sympathies took the human world in his arms—I do not know why he should have been pursued and maligned, his memory

execrated, his character blackened—I cannot understand that. I do not know why a preacher like Theodore Parker, up to his time the biggest genius ever produced within “the pulpit’s narrow curve”—I do not know why he should have been disfranchised, disfellowshipped, and driven out. I don’t understand it. Do you? Yet that seems to be the law of human progress. And from it two conclusions may be deduced. Here is one. The man with the comfortable position, within the respectable, luxurious, surroundings, enjoying influence and power, cannot help the work of human progress much, and the man who hopes from his part in the work of human progress to derive benefit, fame, personal advantage, or gain of any sort, cannot help any. That seems to be the law. So it follows that we are never to look to the established institutions for leaders in human progress. So it follows that in the last stand conservatism will make will be behind the barricade of the pulpit and the church. So it happens by this inexorable law that a man so situated is always with the men that have their hand on the hilt. The law of progress, unhappily so, is the law of suffering. It leads along the shadowed way. Destiny prepares Gethsemanes, if she does not the cross, for every benefactor of this race, and men that lead their fellows know that whatever the outward appearances may be, however successfully they may mask the hidden life with a smile, that there is a hidden life, secret and unknown, whose untold story never comes to the ears of the world, an inner life where sorrow waits and grief her vigil keeps. By that law then it happens that anybody who expects to win for himself gain, or prominence, or emolument, or wealth, or fame, by being a reformer, is counting against a well-fixed principle, an inexorable and inescapable law.

Now, then, there is sometimes an apparent exception to that. There was a public officer in a certain State that won prominence as a reformer. He prosecuted law-breakers, the breakers of laws that had been in vogue for years, and he was rewarded for it. He was elected to a very prominent office. Then a wave of reform seem to sweep over that State. Public officials and officers of the court vied with each other in enforcing laws. The idea of reform was in the atmosphere. There was a hue and cry of reform, and some people even thought that if they could resurrect some old, forgotten, unused law and start a drastic and conspicuous reform, they might even be made governor by it.

The law of progress is all the other way. The man that has anything to gain personally by declaring his convictions, when they differ from those of the majority, who has anything of personal gain in view, is not the reformer. Words of truth were spoken about the great Nazarene when they said of him, “He saved others, himself he could not save,” and he could not, neither can any genuine, sincere reformer, save himself. He must not count himself. He must waive the consequences, ignore the chances, keep a single eye upon his convictions, though to follow them lead him to Gethsemane and the cross.

The sword is the instrument of the past. The idea is the instrument of the future. Progress never has been made by blood. Progress does not require a fagot, nor a thumbscrew, nor an iron boot, nor a wheel. It does not break the bones of any man nor put any man in a dungeon. It seeks only to bring light. It illuminates, it widens the horizon. It enlarges the viewpoint, it deepens and extends the perspective. The conservative man, the man with the sword, is the man-afraid-of-to-morrow. The only day in the world of which he is absolutely certain and with which he is perfectly satisfied is the yesterday, while the day of the idea, the day of hope and promise of fulfilment and fruition, the day of progress, is always the to-morrow. The man with his hand on the hilt assumes that things just as they are are as good as they can be, and if they are not good enough—well, they cannot be made any better. We will keep them just as they are. The man who believes in the idea says, “The world is not good enough; it is not as good as it might be; it is not as

good as it will be.” The man with his hand on the hilt says, “Our Churches and our philanthropies and eleemosynary institutions are doing all that can be done for the amelioration of mankind; don’t hurry; support the institutions just as they exist, establish social settlements, clean out the slums, light the streets, rescue the perishing, hold the fort, and everything will be well.” I want to say that no amount of cleaning out of the slums will ever cure the slums. You might empty them, disinfect them, but as long as conditions exist that eventuate in the slums, as long as seeds are sown whose fruitage is the slums, as long as ideas and methods prevail whose outcome is the slums, so long will the slums exist. But the man of the idea says, “All the evils of the world that exist are the fruit of wrong thinking, wrong ideas, wrong principles, wrong methods, wrong systems, and there is no final good to be attained so long as men skin and flim the ulcerous place, while rank corruption mining all within remains unseen.” We boast about our civilisation, and there are some fine things about it. We point to our great institutions of business and commerce. We are making our buildings high and higher still, carving them richly, covering them with polished marble. We are building temples to the triune God, building them on the boulevards; they are costing hundreds of thousands of dollars each. Our civilisation is proud and boastful, sometimes progressive, in parts good, but, gentlemen, we cannot build our buildings high enough nor make them rich enough, we cannot multiply our churches fast enough or make them gorgeous enough to conceal the fact that they rest ultimately upon the hearts and hopes, the lives and liberties, the efforts and opportunities of the disinherited class. A poorhouse never cured poverty. A slum worker never eliminated a slum. It might take a human being out of it, and that is something. There is no fault to be found with that. Those dear people are doing the best they can under the circumstances. But the man of the idea says, “These things are not necessary; they are no part of a rational, sane civilisation; we ought not to make paupers and criminals and thieves and outcasts. A poorhouse, a Helping Hand institute, a slum worker, an Institutional Church, are but certificates of our wrong methods, our wrong principles.” Does anybody believe the world is good enough? If he does, he is altogether too easily satisfied. This world will never be good enough until there is no more poverty or crime. It will not be good enough as long as there is a prison, a gaol, or an almshouse necessary. I do not think the Almighty blundered when he made the world. I do think men blundered when they made their religion and their God. And the men of ideas, the men of progress, the men of courage and faith are the men who say it can be made better by making men free. You will observe that I do not say by making men good, or moral, or religious, or pious, or even happy, but by making them free. That is the most important of all, the only thing that man can do for his fellow-men. All the rest a man must do for himself. Nothing is so sacred as liberty. “It is the one word without which all other words are vain.” A man ought to have the free right and the free use to a place, at least, to stand upon the globe, and then he ought to have the free right and free use of his labor, the product of his toil, and so much of the wealth of the world as that labor creates. There are a great many people who think the world is to be advanced by the restraint of liberty. Men cannot be made better by prohibitive laws, sumptuary laws, laws that forbid, that restrain. Just now there seems to be an idea chasing around in the brains of a few that if the theatres could be closed on Sunday, the moral status of the community would be elevated and improved. The reason for closing the theatres is not anything connected with the character, or the kind, or the quality, or the nature of their entertainment, but is based solely upon the law that no man shall perform any labor or compel his apprentice or servant to do any work or perform any labor on the first day of the week, com-

monly called Sunday, except the household offices of daily necessity. If the law is enforced, no attendants can turn on the lights in the theatres, nor keep the furnace going for the purpose of heat or electricity; no man can usher; the musicians cannot play, because all of that is labor and they are paid for it. And by the same token, nobody can turn the lights on in a church, or tend the furnace. The organist cannot play, the singers cannot sing—all of that is labor and they are paid for it. The only reason that a preacher could preach is because of the general impression that the average orthodox sermon does not involve labor. I say to you with the utmost deliberation, weighing well my words, that it would be less of an affront to the principle of liberty, less of a moral injury to the community, to shut up the churches on Sunday than it would be to shut up the theatres. I think I can make that plain. The churches minister, for the most part, to the rich, the comfortable and the well-to-do. Where are the churches? They are out on the boulevards, and those that are not there wish they were. There is a church in process of erection in this city now that will cost two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Then within a few blocks and still on the boulevard is another. The estimated cost of that is a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. A little farther away still another, so large, so expensive, that the only satisfaction is that it never will be, never can be completed. Who goes to those churches? The rich, I have said, the comfortable, the well-to-do. Suppose the churches were to be closed against them on Sunday. It would be an offence against liberty, because they have a right to go, but suppose they could be closed. Those people can, after their dinners, get into their automobiles or their carriages, speed along the boulevards, the country roads, or, if not wishing to do that, they can stay at home where there are comfortable, if not luxurious surroundings. They have instruments of music, works of art and books. They can amuse and improve themselves. They are not deprived of anything, but one thing, in the place of which they have much besides. It would work no particular hardship upon the majority of them in their personal lives and satisfaction. Close the theatres, and what is the result? Do you not know that there are thousands of men and women who work six days in the week? Sunday is the only time, the theatre is the only place they have for anything like recreation and amusement that will break into the weary, wearing, daily, sickening, killing monotony of their lives. If they are prevented from going to the theatres on Sunday, they must stay at home, homes in too many instances without the features of comfort, pleasure and attractiveness.

Are laws made to be executed against the helpless, the weak, the defenceless and the poor? Is civilisation come to such a pass that laws may be executed and the dignity of the courts upheld while the feeble suffer and the strong go free? I say liberty demands equal justice between man and man. Does anyone think the world is good enough just as it is, that no changes are to come, that we are to live always surrounded by evil and crying wrongs?

Adam and Eve are said to have established a garden in common. Suppose Adam, after they had been there a few days, by virtue of his superior intellect and powers of comprehension and executive ability, felt himself the rightful owner of more of that garden than belonged to Eve, and then set about to mark off the good parts of it and put up on all those parts the sign "Keep off the grass." If Eve was anything like her modern sisters or daughters, there would have been something started right then. But when the human family increased and the children grew to be very numerous, do you know that is exactly what they began to do, and the man that got there first put up the sign "No trespassing allowed." A very old scripture says, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," but the man that wrote that was ignorant of modern methods. Suppose the Lord, who inspired the man of long ago to say that, he who, not having been on the earth lately, still

believes it himself—suppose the Lord should come to this world and want a little of this fulness that is his. If he went out into Montana to get a little copper, a deputy sheriff would touch him on the shoulder and say, "Good Lord, this copper belongs to Mr. Guggenheim and Mr. Clark." If he wanted a little gold or silver for pocket money, and went to Leadville to get some out of the mine, the mine where he had made it and stored it out of the fulness of the earth which is his, he could not go down because the man at the cage would tell him, "You haven't a union card." If he wanted a little structural iron and went up to the great mines in the North, he would be told, "No trespassing; this is the property of the steel trust, they own it all." Suppose he wanted a little oil that belonged to the fullness of the earth that is his, and should call at Twenty-six Broadway, a lackey would take in his card and ask him to wait in an outside room, and the oil king would look at the card and send back word, "I can't see you. Lord, I am too busy building churches and theological seminaries." The Lord would find out that whatever might have been the truth in the times of old, it is not so now; that the earth is not the Lord's nor the fullness thereof. Under the present system the earth belongs to the man that can get the most of it and keep the other fellow off. And it does not seem quite right. For the life of me I cannot understand how anybody can be happy or satisfied with countless wealth so long as there is a human being shivering in his nakedness, or a child crying with hunger and cold. It seems to me that sometime there must be an age, an era, a religion, a civilisation when man will look upon mankind as his brethren, when we shall see that true religion lies in being kind and just.

The man of the idea, of progress, does not despair. The world is yet young. Mankind is in its infancy. Civilisation is yet in the cradle, but destiny rocks the cradle, while the Infinite hums a lullaby—hums and waits, waits for development and growth, waits for the young child to become a man, waits for the widening of intelligence, waits for the deeper perception of moral principles and moral law, waits for the incoming reign of equity and justice, waits for fraternity and industrial peace, waits for a land domed with liberty like a sky, a land without a millionaire or a pauper, without a palace or a hut.

—Here and Now (Kansas).

## The Gospel Writ in Steel.

*A List of Victims of the "Religion of Love" during the Past Century.*

THE gross ignorance everywhere displayed as to the persecution of Freethinkers, should not be left without direct challenge. Many of our leading papers speak as if tolerance had always been the characteristic of Christianity. The following list of sentences on Freethinkers, which, being mainly compiled from memory, is very incomplete, will be an eye-opener to any fair-minded reader. The newspaper men are not so much to blame, as their chief works of reference on which they rely for information are hopelessly biased and invariably inaccurate. We ask our readers to help us in dispelling this illusion about Christian toleration which has been fostered by the clergy:—

Daniel Isaac Eaton, two years imprisonment and the pillory (1812).

— Houston, two years with fine £200 (1813).

Richard Carlile, nine and a half years, with fines amounting to thousands of pounds.

Jane Carlile, two years.

Mary Ann Carlile, two years.

Joseph Rhodes, two years (1821).

H. Boyle, eighteen months (1822).

James Watson, twelve months (1823).

William Campion, three years; John Clarke, three years; William Haley, three years; T. R. Perry,

three years; R. Hassell, two years; W. Tunbridge, two years; T. Jefferies, eighteen months; William Cochrane, eighteen months; John Christopher, six months; James Affleck, three months (1824). And some thirty other persons, mostly shopmen of Carlisle.

- Robert Taylor, three years.
- John Cleve, four months, with fine £50 (1840).
- Henry Hetherington, four months (1841).
- Charles Southwell, one year with fine £100 (1842).
- George Jacob Holyoake, six months (1842).
- George Adams, one month.
- Mrs. Harriet Adams, one month.
- Miss Matilda Roalfe, two months (1844).
- Thomas Paterson, eighteen months (1846).
- Henry Robinson, twelve months.
- James Finlay, two months.
- Mrs. Emma Martin, six months (1857).
- Thomas Pooley, twenty-one months [five months only served, owing to the exertions of such men as John Stuart Mill and Henry Thomas Buckle].
- George William Foote, twelve months; W. J. Ramsey, nine months; H. A. Kemp, three months (1883).

It must be borne in mind that the Blasphemy Laws, which are still unrepealed, may be at any time invoked by the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, who was himself crucified after being arraigned as a blasphemer.

MIMNERMUS.

### A Substitute Unnecessary.

ONE of the principal stock arguments of orthodoxy when confronted by Rationalism or Freethought, is to ask what to give in lieu of Christianity should its abolition, decay, or death be brought about.

What should the answer be?

What must the answer be?

In the destruction of error, nothing is required in its place. A lie is hurtful at all times and in all places. The injury may not be felt immediately, but the result is bound to be experienced sooner or later. The physician is not urged by the sick to give them another ailment in lieu of the one they have been able to conquer. It was the physician's task to destroy the original disease. The destruction of falsehood, like the destruction of disease, is desirable under any and all circumstances, and the free mind is left to accept such truth that may come before it without the slightest regard or thought for the old error destroyed.

Accepting this proposition as being the correct view of the method of reaching a stage of intellectual liberty, it follows that if Christianity is false it should be destroyed without seeking a substitute. The human mind does not stand in need of a substitute for falsehood. Freethought does not pretend to offer any substitute. It sets up no code, no system, no creed. To compel a Freethinker to subscribe to a creed, if that were possible, would be to fetter the mind once more, and the very principle of Freethought would be violated. The "I think" is the underlying basis of Freethought. The "I believe" is the fundamental requisite of all orthodox religions.

The suggestion that Freethought declines to offer a substitute for Christianity, even on the ground of necessity, does not mean that the Freethinker is to have no object or aim in life. The Freethinker can, and does, accomplish more of more real, human need than the average Church member, or the average believer in Christianity. This work may not be found in ostentatious charity, but in the doing of simple justice. With justice triumphant, charity becomes unnecessary. The Freethinker is willing to do the very best he knows how to do, and if mischievous fates seem to conspire against him, he does not waste his time in foolish prayer, he does not fret or cry out against destiny, but buckles to with a will and strives to work for his own redemption. The Freethinker knows that not one thing he may do in that direction shall be in vain. He knows that no really great effort can fail. He makes the deed count instead of indulging in delusive dreams of some future state of happiness.

Once the bulk of humanity can grasp the full meaning of the impressive truths, the world will be made brighter and happier for us all. Under them, no being would wish to do wrong toward a living thing. No being would thus wish to violate the laws of right living. Man may long for many pleasures that never come to him, but if he weaves well the

warp and shrinks from no demand the task may make, he cannot work in vain, for in the end truth must prevail, and in truth alone can real and permanent happiness be found.

Man's salvation does not depend upon crucified saviors nor upon the shedding of blood. It depends on work. The very liberty we enjoy to-day was not given freely, but it had to be wrested in a fierce death struggle from the reluctant hands of tyrants.

Tears of blood and toil secured the charter of our political freedom, and as religious freedom is just as essential to human happiness, we must work for that with the same energy, but along less violent paths. Is there a Freethinker in the land who, rejoicing in his own freedom, denies a similar freedom to his neighbor, or is perfectly happy to witness the yoke of mental slavery still about his neighbor's neck? We think not. Then it is our duty to save others and to place the means of our own happiness within their reach. We must not shirk the task. It is a duty we owe to mankind. Let us perform that duty without fear. With that duty done there will be none to ask what we have to offer in lieu of Christianity, for the old hag of superstition will be dead and gone and none to mourn her loss.

—Blue Grass Blade (Lexington, U.S.A.).

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF SPECIAL EXECUTIVE MEETING, CALLED ON JAN. 7.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. J. Barry, R. Brooks, C. Cohen, E. Charlton, H. Cowell, F. A. Davies, T. Gorniot, W. Leat, J. W. Marshall, Dr. Nichols, J. Neate, C. Quinton, V. Roger, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, H. Silverstein, T. J. Thurlow, F. Wood, W. Davey, E. Woodward, and the Secretary.

The President announced that the Special Meeting had been called to consider the Society's position in regard to the recent "Blasphemy" Prosecution, and gave a detailed report of his interview with Mr. Boulter, and his attendance at Bow-street, and further action in the matter; and the Executive, having unanimously endorsed the President's action, resolved to bear the entire cost of the defence, to leave the matter in the hands of the President, and not at present to ask for outside assistance.

This was followed by the ordinary Monthly Executive Meeting. Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed; cash statement presented and adopted. Ordinary routine business was transacted. Five members were admitted to the Leeds Branch; a grant towards Lecture expenses were made to Edinburgh Branch; and the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, General Secretary.

### THE FABLE OF JESUS CHRIST.

I see no reason for not believing that such a woman as Mary, and such a man as Joseph, and Jesus, existed; their mere existence is a matter of indifference, about which there is no ground either to believe or disbelieve, and which comes under the common head of "It may be so; and what then?" The probability, however, is that there were such persons, or at least such as resembled them in part of the circumstances, because almost all romantic stories have been suggested by some actual circumstance; as the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, not a word of which is true, were suggested by the case of Alexander Selkirk. It is not, then, the existence or non-existence of the persons that I trouble myself about; it is the fable of Jesus Christ, as is told in the New Testament, and the wild and visionary doctrine raised thereon, against which I contend.—Thomas Paine.

There are too many drones in England living on the common produce of labor. The number of them should be diminished, and a beginning should be made with the mystery man. Were the great Black army disbanded, and turned into the ranks of productive industry, the evils of society would begin to disappear; for those evils are chiefly the result of too much energy and attention being devoted to the problematical next life, and too little to the real interests of earthly existence.—G. W. Foote.

In the painting of the Nativity, by Szodgkin, a pious artist of Pesth, not only do the Virgin and Child wear the nimbus, but an ass nibbling hay from the sacred manger is similarly decorated, and, to his lasting honor be it said, appears to bear his unaccustomed dignity with a truly saintly grace.—Ambrose Bierce.

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.**

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

**LONDON.**

**HORNS ASSEMBLY ROOM** (corner of Kennington and Kennington Park roads, opposite Park Gates): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Socialism, Atheism, and Christianity."

**CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.** (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 3.15, Freethought Parliament—W. H. Owen, "The Economic Aspect of Malthusianism."

**WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.** (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, A. Allison, "The Light of the World." Selections by the Band before Lecture.

**COUNTRY.**

**EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.** (Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, W. D. Macgregor, "Old Age Pensions."

**GLASGOW** (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class; 6.30, Social Meeting in Commemoration of Burns and Paine.

**LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S.** (Clarion Club, 125 Albion-street): Tuesday, Jan. 21, at 8, E. Webster, "Life's Subjective Values."

**LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S.** (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): H. S. Wishart, 3, "Ballard, Blatchford, and the 'Bottom Dog': a Freethought Missionary's Reply to a Free Church Missionary"; 7, "Was St. Paul as Bad as Christ?"

**MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S.** (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): G. W. Foote, 3, "The New 'Blasphemy' Prosecution"; 6.30, "Socialism, Christianity, and Atheism: Campbell versus Blatchford." Tea at 5.

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