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There is a multitude, a multitude made up out of all ranks; probably in no country is the multitude more unintelligent, more narrow-minded, and more passionate than in this. Perhaps in no country in the world is so much nonsense so firmly believed.—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

Further "Blasphemy" Notes.

THE Christian papers maintain a dead silence over the "blasphemy" prosecution. I am not aware that one of them has uttered a single word of protest. And I say that their silence gives consent. They are quite willing to see "infidels" prosecuted, and even sent to prison, for speaking injuriously (for that is what blasphemy is) of the Christian faith. On this point the best of them, as well as the worst of them, seem perfectly agreed. This may astonish some Freethinkers, but it does not astonish me. I have often said "Never trust a Christian." He may be all right as a man, a husband, a father, a friend, and a citizen; but he is always more or less of a bigot when "infidels" are concerned. His religion makes him so. It is a bitter, persecuting religion, which has shed more blood and caused more misery than all the other religions in the world put together. And every Christian, just as far as he is a Christian, delights in the sufferings of all who oppose his faith.

There is a dreary old Christian in North London who would be as sanguinary a persecutor as ever breathed if he only had the opportunity. I refer to the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale. This man has a long letter in the *Islington Daily Gazette* on "The Blasphemy Laws." He says—and it is so like him—that the Blasphemy Laws "are not a menace to real freedom (by which, of course, he means *his* freedom), but to unbounded license, immorality, vice, and crime." Then he goes on, in his foolish way, to protest against the abolition of "the Blasphemy Act of 1650." Angels and ministers of grace defend us! What an ignoramus this man is! He actually believes that Acts passed by the "Regicides" remained on the English Statute Book! The only Blasphemy Act on the Statute Book is the Act of William III. (1697), modified by the amending Act of George III. And even under that Act there has never been a single prosecution in two hundred and eleven years. All "blasphemy" prosecutions have been at Common Law. So the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale's knowledge is just on a par with his intelligence and good temper.

In my last week's "Blasphemy" Notes I urged Freethinkers all over the country to write to their local members of parliament, and to try to get resolutions condemning the revival of the Blasphemy Laws passed by political clubs or associations of which they are members. One strong resolution, which I greatly value, has reached me from the Criminal Law and Prison Reform Committee of the Humanitarian League:—

"This Committee of the Humanitarian League desires to place on record its indignant protest against the revival of the antiquated Blasphemy Laws under a democratic Government, and expresses its entire sympathy with the National Secular Society in its efforts to render all such prosecutions ineffectual."

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This is a bold and manly resolution. I recommend it as a model for general imitation.

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The Socialist papers were very much behind time, but they are wheeling into line at last. There was a vigorous article in last week's *New Age* by W. B. (Mr. W. Bell, I believe), which concluded in the following satisfactory manner:—

"For obvious reasons, no comment on the actual charge is at present possible, as the hearing has been adjourned until next month, but every Social, Political, and Religious Reformer must see to it that the fundamental rights of man to think freely and speak openly are not stolen from us even by a Liberal Government, whose agents may be tempted for not too commendable ends to crush the Spirit of Revolt by reviving moth-eaten Statutes—sheer anachronisms we have forgotten in our laziness to remove from our Law Books—which reflect so well the Spirit of the Ages which gave to our forefathers the rack, the thumbscrew, and all those other delicate instruments of mediæval toleration.

Perhaps, after all, before they draw upon themselves the ridicule of Europe, this Government, of which John Morley the Agnostic and John Burns the Atheist are bright and shining ornaments, may reconsider their position, and recommend the King (who is nominally prosecutor) to withdraw the charge, accepting as a new truth what is in fact a commonplace: that a policy of Protection, Retaliation, or even Preference in the realm of Theological Speculation has had its day."

The *Clarion* also devoted two columns to "The Government, the Constable, and the Deity." Mr. Robert Blatchford wrote the two columns himself, so I gather that he now feels the gravity of the Boulter case. The article would have been worthier if it had referred to the great effort being made by a poor Society to secure an adequate defence for the intended victim; an effort which—and which alone—gave Mr. Blatchford the opportunity of saying something about the prosecution before the trial. Still, the article was on the whole a very good one, and it ended with the right note:—

"The prosecution of Mr. Boulter is a blunder: a blunder due to the incompetence of the police. The attempt to prejudice Mr. Boulter's case by pretending that his words were too dreadful or too disgraceful for the sensitive ears of an innocent British public, is cowardly, and a gross perversion of justice. If Mr. Boulter be punished for blasphemy, the Government will stand discredited, and the Liberal Party will have cause to repent in sackcloth and ashes the monstrous blunder of reviving the obsolete and senseless laws against blasphemy under the ægis of a Cabinet which at least includes two known 'infidels' amongst its members. If the Government wish to do something for the cause of religion and decency let them repeal the blasphemy laws, and prohibit the sale of the unexpurgated edition of the Bible: otherwise their curses may come home to roost."

The reference to the Bible is, however, a needless complication, and would do Mr. Boulter more harm than good at the Old Bailey; and I, for one, do not favor the idea of putting the Bible upon a new (Freethought) Index Expurgatorius.

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The Rationalists are even slower than the Socialists. Their monthly organ for February contains some interesting notes by "Mimnermus" on former "blasphemy" prosecutions, but it seems that the

present prosecution is to be dealt with in the March number. No doubt it will be much easier to be wise after the event. But if everybody acted in this very judicious manner prosecutions for "blasphemy" would be extremely easy and successful. I say this, too, with my eye on the fact that Mr. Boulter has been a kind of agent for the Rationalist Press Association, selling its anti-Christian publications, under special terms, at his Highbury-Corner meetings.

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Extraordinary ignorance prevails with respect to the Blasphemy Laws. This is true even in newspaper circles. As something of an expert on the subject, I often find myself smiling when I read the statements and opinions of journalists who, I dare say, are much better informed on other topics. Mr. Blatchford himself appears to have relied upon a letter of Mr. Harry Snell's, and he appears to have relied upon Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, who relies in her turn upon the late Mr. Justice Stephen. But that legal luminary's statements were made, first in a book, and afterwards in a magazine article. Lord Chief Justice Coleridge's statement of the law was made from the bench in the course of my own trial in 1883, and is all the more important on that account. A good many things have happened even since then, and the whole question will have to be argued at Mr. Boulter's trial. I do not venture to prophesy the result. But I do venture to ask my readers not to trust to what they see in the newspapers. The law may not turn out to be precisely what I think it, but I am sure it is not what these journalists think it. They have not studied the question, and I have.

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It is a curious thing that "blasphemy" prosecutions are impossible in India. The British government treats all religions with absolute impartiality. Rival religionists must not interfere with each other and cause a breach of the peace, but otherwise they have complete liberty of expression. The following proclamation was made to her Hindu subjects by the late Queen Victoria when she assumed the title of Empress of India:—

"It is our royal will and pleasure that no man shall in any way suffer for his opinions, or be disquieted by reason of his religious faith or observance; and we do strictly charge and enjoin those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from interfering with the religious beliefs of our subjects, on pain of our high displeasure. It is our further will that so far as may be our subjects, of whatsoever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to any office, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, abilities, and integrity duly to discharge."

Surely the people of England should be ashamed of living under more intolerant laws than are deemed necessary in one of their own dependencies.

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It will be seen, in another column, that I have been obliged to make an appeal for subscriptions towards the costs of the defence in the Boulter case. The National Secular Society has played its part with generosity, but now that the battle is broadening and the expense is increasing it ought not to be left, or allowed, to bear the financial burden alone. Doing things by halves is no use. We must fight this battle properly or not at all. From the very first I kept in mind, and hinted to my readers, the possibility of a fund being opened, in addition to the amount placed on the table by the National Secular Society. My present action, therefore, should not take anyone by surprise.

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These are the last Notes, I suppose, that I shall write before the trial. The Boulter case comes on at the Central Criminal Court at the February sessions, beginning on the 4th inst., and I am arranging for a full (verbatim) report of the proceedings.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christianity and Liberty.

MR. HECTOR MACPHERSON is, I believe, the editor of the *Edinburgh Evening News*. In that case one may assume that the leading article in the issue of that paper for January 17 can claim him as its parent. Whether it is a child that a parent ought to be proud of may be a matter of opinion; but at least one can say, as many people do, as a matter of course, when shown a very young infant, "How like its father!" For it has all the marks of Mr. Macpherson's work in other directions—the cockiness, the calm assumption of infallibility, the air of putting the world right with a paragraph—in a word, all the characteristics of the journalist who has mastered the art of displaying a superficially-acquired or an ill-digested knowledge as though it were the final word of the discussion.

Mr. Macpherson's article was inspired by a letter from a correspondent who had ventured the opinion that Christianity was naturally a conservative force, and was inimical to the best interests of society. The editor thinks his correspondent's letter could not be matched for a specimen of "dogmatic ignorance," although he certainly does his best to produce a parallel. Far from Christianity being a conservative force, he says, "In the history of the world there has been no more radical force." This being so, perhaps Mr. Macpherson will next explain how it happens that Christianity during the whole of its history has been in alliance with the worst form of conservatism in both government and social life? The world's ruling classes must have suffered under a strange delusion; vested interest, usually so much alive to every threatening influence, must, in this instance, have been unusually obtuse. For both have labored hard to make people Christian, or to keep them so. Careless as many large employers may have been concerning how their workpeople were housed or fed, they have as often been ostentatiously solicitous in preparing for them silken robes and beautiful mansions on the other side of the grave. They have hated unbelief as the Devil is said to hate holy water. Yet, according to Mr. Macpherson, they have all along been encouraging the development of the most radical force in the world. They have been nourishing a power that has broken, or will break, their rule, and which will eventually turn earth into a veritable paradise. We wonder which is correct—those sinister social powers that have always looked upon Christianity as the best instrument for conserving their interests, or Mr. Macpherson, with his stupid generalising and inaccurate history in the *Evening News*?

Mr. Macpherson adopts the common trick of the Christian Evidence-monger. He falls back upon the "horrible" state of things in pre-Christian times—probably for two reasons. One of these is because he feels that the majority of his readers are in possession of little accurate knowledge on the subject; the other because, in that case, he will find himself in congenial surroundings. He repeats all the old Christian-sermon rubbish about the Roman Empire being in the "deepest deep of corruption" before Christianity came to purify life. He says, "if the people who are so denunciatory of modern life had one month's experience of pre-Christian times, they would look upon the life of to-day as millennial." Quite in the style of the Christian Evidence lecturer, he fails to make any allowance whatever for eighteen centuries of development between pre-Christian times and the present; and in the same vein assumes that whatever improvement has been effected must be the outcome of Christian influences. The truth is that, on any sane estimate, Western Europe did not reach the "deepest deep of corruption" under Paganism, but under Christianity. The best culture and civilisation, right up to the end, as Professor Dill has well shown, was with the Pagan, and not with the Christian; while the extinction of civic freedom—even as a tradition—the suppression of the ancient educational machinery, the dying out of

science, the blight that fell upon literature, all following the conquest of Christianity, with their revival at the period of the Renaissance consequent upon the re-discovery of antiquity, are facts that quite dispose of the leader-writer's pulpit rhetoric.

To do Mr. Macpherson justice, I must point out that he does give an authority for his statements. He quotes Professor Seeley, whom he calls "an authority of the first water," as saying the Golden Age of the Roman Empire was "one of the meanest and foulest." I do not know from which of Professor Seeley's books the quotation comes, but I am certain that such a statement was never made by that writer without some serious qualification. If, for example, anyone will turn to Professor Seeley's *Lectures and Essays*, he will find at the opening of the book three essays dealing with Roman civilisation from Julius Cæsar right on to Christian times. The opinions therein expressed certainly fail to agree with Mr. Macpherson's rendering of Professor Seeley's position. They are, indeed, quite the reverse. What they are may be seen from the following passages—I quote from the edition of 1870.

The whole tenour of Professor Seeley's three essays is, that it was the weakening of the Roman Empire that enabled Christianity to grow, that Christianity was really a triumph of the poorer virtues. Men, he says, "became chaste, tender hearted, loyal, religious," but "they ceased to be adventurous, patriotic, just, magnanimous." "Liberty withered away, and its place was taken by servility, stoicism, and Byzantine Christianity." The Christians—

"Destroyed what we may call the classical view of life, which asserts human free will and regards government merely as useful and respectable machinery for economising power, and introducing order, beauty, and virtue into human affairs. In place of it they introduced the Asiatic view which.....elevates government into a divinity, teaching the subject to endure whatever it may inflict, not only without resistance, but also without an inward murmur.....With the Oriental theory of government was introduced Oriental cruelty and wastefulness of human life. In the early (Pagan) Empire there had been cruel Emperors, but now cruelty was part of the system.....Executions, tortures, massacres, make the staple of the narrative even in the reign of good Emperors.....subjects have lost all rights, and governments all responsibility."

This, it must be remembered, was under Christian rulers. Professor Seeley then goes on to point out that the Christian spirit itself was alien to genuine liberty. "Liberty," he says:—

"Is force of character roused by the sense of wrong.....Such had been liberty in the Old Republic, the rebellion of strong spirits against laws strained too far, self-assertion, sturdiness, combativeness. Such was not the Christian spirit. In this, when it was genuine, there was no rebellion, there was no assertion of right. They had no turn for liberty, they had no quarrel with the despotism of the Cæsars'.....The truth was, that they [the Christians] were under two despotisms while others were only under one.....The Christian resistance to authority.....arose from no impatience of restraint, but from a conflict of laws.....Christianity confirmed as much as it controlled despotism.....It strengthened in them [the people] the feeling of submissive reverence for government; it encouraged the disposition of the time to political passiveness. It was intensely conservative and gave to power with one hand as much as it took away with the other."

Professor Seeley then goes on to point out that Constantine received for his support of the Church a divine charter for all his tyranny, and adds that the spirit manifest at the first has been characteristic of Christianity throughout history. "It has remained cold towards the spirit of liberty."

"The whole modern struggle for civil and national liberty has been conducted.....without help from the authoritative documents of Christianity. Liberty has had to make its appeal to those classical examples and that literature which were superseded by Christianity. In the French Revolution men turned from the New Testament to Plutarch.....Plutarch furnished them with the teaching they required for their special purpose, but the New Testament met all their new-born

political ardor with a silence only broken here and there by exhortations to submission."

And, finally, there comes a summary, a truism to students, but apparently unknown to Mr. Macpherson, to the effect that it was the helplessness of men that gave Christianity its greatest security of maintenance.

So much for the opinions of the only authority cited by Mr. Macpherson. In the light of what has been said, readers should be in a position to form an estimate of the value of the remainder of his diatribe. He says that social salvation came from the new force of Christianity. But, as a matter of plain fact, social salvation did not come from anywhere. Under Christian influence the Empire went from bad to worse, until its best institutions and traditions were lost in the night of the Dark Ages. It is sheer stupidity to talk of Christianity bringing social salvation. Let Mr. Macpherson go into the slums of Edinburgh, and he will see that Christianity has not managed to establish it there after fifteen centuries of rule. Had Christianity possessed any real regenerative power, at least the better elements of ancient civilisation would have been preserved, and even improved. But the damning fact is that those features which most command the esteem of modern students were quite lost sight of during the period of unquestioned Christian supremacy. Let anyone compare a succession of Roman rulers with any succession of Christian rulers, or let him compare literary or scientific or philosophic culture under Paganism with the same during the first eight hundred years of Christian rule, and he will at once see how great the decline was.

Mr. Macpherson closes with the advice to his correspondent to read Bruce's *Gesta Christi*, Storr's *Evidences of Christianity*, and Lecky's *European Morals*. It will not, therefore, be out of place to advise him to read Professor Samuel Dill's last two works on Roman history, to say nothing of the many monographs on the subject. He will then realise, perhaps, how absurd it is to speak of ancient civilisation as he does. To date all goodness as commencing with the birth of Christ is a trick of the uneducated or unscrupulous Christian apologist; it is a pity that the editorial sanctum of a daily paper is not secure against its influence.

C. COHEN.

The Abuse of Science.

EVERY department of human thought is now dominated by Science. The scientific method is universally employed in the study of all subjects whatsoever. Within so short a period as fifty years the theory of evolution, for example, has completely revolutionised the intellectual habits of the civilised world. A scientific spirit is at last in the air, and nothing can escape its subtle influence. It is by no means a new spirit, but an ancient spirit—the spirit that animated Greece and Rome in their prime, revived after many centuries of enforced slumber. It is a fact fully attested that Christian Theology drove Science out of the field, and kept it out for a thousand years. It is also a fact, equally well established, that for the last four hundred years, and particularly during the last five decades, Science has been driving Theology out of the field. Theology expelled Science by the combined force of Church and State, but Science is ejecting Theology by the sheer force of reason. That is to say, superstition has no choice but to retire before the ever-advancing light of modern knowledge.

The Rev. Newton Marshall, M.A., Ph.D., minister of Heath-street Baptist Church, Hampstead, in a recent sermon on "The Atonement," frankly acknowledges that "our whole way of thinking about the world, the human race, and God, has irrevocably altered during the past fifty years or so." "To speak more literally," he adds, "modern science and modern philosophy ask questions of our faith which

cannot be settled by a mere repetition of ancient formulas." Dr. Marshall is fully convinced that the advent of the theory of evolution has entirely changed our mental outlook. "No thinking man can possibly ignore it. No wise man will try to build up his theology without facing it. And a theology that goes on teaching as it taught before this gained ascendancy in the minds of men, is bound to appeal to a steadily diminishing number.

Now, what is this theory of evolution, and what does it involve? We will allow Dr. Marshall to speak for himself:—

"Evolution does not mean that man has descended from apes. It means that man and apes and tigers and pelicans are all descended from some remote and very humble original living creature or creatures. It means that man with all his wonderful body, his marvellous intellect, and his mysterious emotions, comes from, has risen from, a tiny, simple, unintelligent living cell. There are various doctrines as to how the change from the cell to the man has come about; evolution simply declares that it came about gradually and by the operation of necessary and natural causes."

Such is evolution according to Dr. Marshall's own definition. "Since Darwin," he continues, "this theory has been examined in every possible way. An immense variety of new facts have been discovered. The result is that the belief in evolution is firmer than ever, no single fact being unearthed which is incompatible with it." "And for our part," he declares, "we are not in a position to do anything else" but accept it. We have to accept our knowledge from those who are qualified to discover the truth." Let it be emphasised, then, that according to a doctrine which Dr. Marshall is compelled to endorse, "man and apes and tigers and pelicans are all descended from some remote and very humble original living creature or creatures," that "man with his wonderful body, his marvellous intellect, and his mysterious emotions, comes from, has risen from, a tiny, simple, unintelligent living cell," and that this process worked "gradually and by the operation of necessary and natural causes." This is the theory which Dr. Marshall has the courage not to reject.

We are now prepared to ask, What is the Atonement? Again we answer in Dr. Marshall's own words:—

"Leaving aside all matters of detail and debate, we see that the Atonement involves a new direction being given to the human race—a miraculous intervention for the production of a new type of manhood.....A new variety of the human race is produced by the Atonement. And this variety is the perfect variety."

Then he contrasts the two doctrines thus:—

"While the doctrine of evolution makes each new phase of development dependent upon the phase that went before, the Christian belief in the Atonement regards the final stage of human progress as produced by a break in the chain, the entry into life of a force from outside, and the production of something which mere evolution could not have produced by itself."

Let the reader here take note that Dr. Marshall accepts both doctrines, though each clearly contradicts the other. Let him bear in mind that our preacher tells us distinctly that "man with his wonderful body, his marvellous intellect, and his mysterious emotions, comes from, has risen from, a tiny, simple, unintelligent living cell," and that a little further down in the same sermon he assures us that "the final stage of human progress is produced by a break in the chain, the entry into life of a force from outside." The first explanation that suggests itself is that in Dr. Marshall's opinion Christians form a new and superior race, only one fails to see where the superiority comes in, or wherein it consists. Christ was the type and the firstborn of this new and superior race; and the doctrine of the Atonement of Christ, therefore, is "a doctrine which asserts a sudden rush into human life of a new element or force by which man is brought into touch with God, and made a new creature." But this explanation, though suggested by many passages in the discourse, is not the one Dr. Marshall formally offers. He goes

on to speak of "man at the Great Divide," thousands upon thousands of years ago, when something came into existence which separated him forever from the brute world.

"Before this change from the brute world to the human world everything that happened was in accordance with mechanical or biological law.....After this change there was in existence a new order of creatures—human beings, living a spiritual life, capable of sin and of holiness, acting not merely according to law, but according to choice and ideas."

Observe, there have been two breaks in the chain, two entries into life by a force from outside, one at the Great Divide when, by a miracle, man rose above the brutes, and another at the coming of Christ, when God himself, likewise by a miracle, came to tabernacle in human flesh. Well, granting that these two miracles actually happened, why was not the first sufficient? Was the second necessary because the first had proved a failure? And what proof is there that the second has been any more successful than the first? We may be told that we are now among the mysteries of Divine Providence, and that our only duty is to humbly believe what professional men of God see fit to communicate to us.

But our quarrel with Dr. Marshall is that, while believing in those strange miracles, he pretends to be a consistent evolutionist. In reality he is nothing of the kind. Scientists discern no breaks or leaps, such as he describes, in the evolutionary process. Long ago Dr. A. Russel Wallace deplored the fact that there were not more than three or four first-class men of science in the world who believed in anything beyond or above the forces of Nature. By the great bulk of them man as we know him to-day, "with all his wonderful body, his marvellous intellect, and his mysterious emotions," is "held to be a part of Nature, a product of the definite and orderly evolution which is universal; a being resulting from and driven by the one great nexus of mechanism which we call Nature." But Dr. Marshall, who is not a scientist, says that it is a mistake to think that the evolutionary process does not admit of leaps, and very great leaps. In explanation of that statement, he affirms that "a process may be slow and gradual, and yet very swiftly changing in some particular." That may be true; but what does it prove? A plane, when lying parallel with the base of a cone, may be a perfect circle; but when very slowly tilted from that base, it may become an oval; and after further alteration of position, it may be formed into a parabola; but such swift changes are according to natural law, and not by any means the result of the entry of any new force from outside. No chain is broken, no new element introduced. The leap, if you insist upon so calling it, from circle to oval, and from oval to parabola, may be instantaneous and complete; but John Fisk never dreamed of calling it a miracle. Dr. Marshall, however, makes the passage from brute to man a miracle, a break in Nature's chain, "the entry into life of a force from outside."

Of course, man differs from the brutes; and Dr. Marshall asks, "how did this difference come to be? In the course of evolution, how did man thus rise above the brutes"? But this is a very silly question, because it has never yet been proved that man possesses anything that is not germinally present in the brutes. Man may be standing on the highest rung of the ladder of life; but he is on the same ladder as all other living things. It is an unpardonable abuse of Science to claim it as an ally of Theology; inasmuch as in man Science sees nothing but the highest and noblest of animals, who differs from other animals only in degree. It is only his nervous system culminating in his capacious and educable brain that gives him his glorious pre-eminence. His will, which Theology treats as a supernatural gift to him alone, is declared by Science to be a product of evolution, and nothing more. For any doctrine of the Atonement, as taught by Theology, old or new, Science has absolutely no room.

J. T. LLOYD.

Denis Diderot.

RARELY has the world seen a more fecund mind than Diderot's. Voltaire called him *Pantophile*, for everything came within the sphere of his mental activity. The twenty volumes of his collected writings contain the germ-ideas of nearly all the best thought of our age, and his anticipations of Darwinism are nothing less than extraordinary. He had not Voltaire's lightning wit and supreme grace of style, nor Rousseau's passionate and subtle eloquence; but he was superior to either of them in depth and solidity, and he was surprisingly ahead of his time, not simply in his treatment of religion, but also in his view of social and political problems. His historical monument is the great *Encyclopaedia*. For twenty years he labored on this colossal enterprise, assisted by the best heads in France, but harassed and thwarted by the government and the clergy. The work is out of date now, but it inaugurated an era; in Mr. Morley's words, "it rallied all that was then best in France round the standard of light and social hope." Diderot tasted imprisonment in 1749, and many times afterwards his liberty was menaced. Nothing, however, could intimidate or divert him from his task; and he never quailed when the ferocious beast of persecution, having tasted the blood of meaner victims, turned an evil and ravenous eye on him.

Carlyle's brilliant essay on Diderot is ludicrously unjust. The Scotch puritan was quite unable to judge the French Atheist. A greater than Carlyle wrote: "Diderot is Diderot, a peculiar individuality; whoever holds him or his doings cheaply is a Philistine, and the name of them is legion." Goethe's dictum outweighs that of his disciple.

Diderot's character, no less than his genius, was misunderstood by Carlyle. His Materialism and Atheism were intolerable to a Calvinist steeped in Pantheism; and his freedom of life, which might be pardoned or excused in a Scotch poet, was disgusting in a French philosopher. Let not the reader be biased by Carlyle's splenetic utterances on Diderot, but turn to more sympathetic and impartial judges.

Born at Langres in 1713, Diderot died at Paris 1784. His life was long, active, and fruitful. His personal appearance is described by Mr. Morley:—

"His admirors declared his head to be the ideal head of an Aristotle or a Plato. His brow was wide, lofty, open, gently rounded. The arch of the eyebrow was full of delicacy; the nose of masculine beauty; the habitual expression of the eyes kindly and sympathetic; but as he grew heated in talk they sparkled like fire; the curves of the mouth bespoke an interesting mixture of finesse, grace, and geniality. His bearing was nonchalant enough, but there was naturally in the carriage of the head, especially when he talked with action, much dignity, energy, and nobleness."

His conversational powers were great, and showed the fertility of his genius. "When I recall Diderot," wrote Meister, "the immense variety of his ideas, the amazing multiplicity of his knowledge, the rapid flight, the warmth, the impetuous tumult of his imagination, all the charm and all the disorder of his conversation, I venture to liken his character to nature herself, exactly as he used to conceive her—rich, fertile, abounding in germs of every sort, gentle and fierce, simple and majestic, worthy and sublime, but without any dominating principle, without a master, and without a God."

Diderot was recklessly prodigal of his ideas, flinging them without hesitation or reticence among his friends. He was equally generous in other respects, and friendship was of the essence of his life. "He," wrote Marmontel in his Memoirs, "he who was one of the most enlightened men of the century, was also one of the most amiable; and in everything that touched moral goodness, when he spoke of it freely, I cannot express the charm of his eloquence. His whole soul was in his eyes and on his lips; never did a countenance better depict the goodness of the heart."

Chequered as Diderot's life had been, his closing years were full of peace and comfort. Superstition was mortally wounded, the Church was terrified, and it was clear that the change the philosophers had worked for was at hand. As Mr. Morley says, "the press literally teemed with pamphlets, treatises, poems, histories, all shouting from the house-tops open destruction to beliefs which, fifty years before, were actively protected against so much as a whisper in the closet." Every form of literary art was seized and turned into an instrument in the remorseless attack on *L'Infâme*. Diderot rejoiced at all this, as largely the fruit of his own labors. He was held in general esteem by the party of progress throughout Europe. Catherine the Great's generosity secured him a steady income, which he had never derived from his literary labors. His townsmen of Langres placed his bust among the worthies in the town hall. More than a hundred years later a national statue of Diderot was unveiled at his native place, and the balance of subscriptions was devoted to publishing a popular selection of his works. Truly did this great Atheist say, looking forward to the atoning future, "Posterity is for the philosopher what the other world is for the devout."

In the spring of 1784, Diderot was attacked by what he felt was his last illness. Dropsy set in, and in a few months the end came. A fortnight before his death he was removed from the upper floor in the Rue Taranne, which he had occupied for thirty years, to palatial rooms provided for him by the Czarina in the Rue de Richelieu. Growing weaker every day, he was still alert in mind.

"He did all he could to cheer the people around him, and amused himself and them by arranging his pictures and his books. In the evening, to the last, he found strength to converse on science and philosophy to the friends who were eager as ever for the last gleanings of his prolific intellect. In the last conversation that his daughter heard him carry on, his last words were the pregnant aphorism that *the first step towards philosophy is incredulity*."

On the evening of the 30th of July, 1784, he sat down to table, and at the end of the meal took an apricot. His wife, with kind solicitude, remonstrated. *Mais quel diable de mal veux-tu que cela me fasse?* [How the deuce can that hurt me?] he said, and ate apricot. Then he rested his elbow on the table, trifling with some sweetmeats. His wife asked him a question; on receiving no answer, she looked up and saw that he was dead. He had died as the Greek poets say that men died in the golden age—they passed away as if mastered by sleep."

Grimm gives a slightly different account of Diderot's death, omitting the apricot, and stating that his words to his wife were, "It is long since I have eaten with so much relish." With respect to the funeral, Grimm says that the curé of St. Roch, in whose parish he died, had scrupled at first about burying him, on account of his sceptical reputation and the doctrines expounded in his writings; but the priest's scruples were overcome, partly by a present of "fifteen or eighteen thousand livres."

According to Mr. Morley, an effort was made to convert Diderot, or at least to wring from him something like a retraction.

"The priest of St. Sulpice, the centre of the philosophic quarter, came to visit him three or four times a week, hoping to achieve at least the semblance of a conversion. Diderot did not encourage conversation on theology, but when pressed he did not refuse it. One day when they found, as two men of sense will always find, that they had ample common ground in matters of morality and good works, the priest ventured to hint that an exposition of such excellent maxims, accompanied by a slight retraction of Diderot's previous works, would have a good effect on the world. 'I dare say it would, monsieur le curé, but confess that I should be acting an impudent lie.' And no word of retraction was ever made."

If judging men by the company they keep is a safe rule, we need have no doubt as to the sentiments which Diderot entertained to the end. Grimm tells us that on the morning of the very day he died "he conversed for a long time, and with the greatest

freedom, with his friend the Baron D'Holbach," the famous author of the *System of Nature*, compared with whom, says Mr. Morley, "the most eager Nescient or Denier to be found in the ranks of the assailants of theology in our own day is timorous and moderate." These men were the two most earnest Atheists of their generation. Both were genial, benevolent, and conspicuously generous. D'Holbach was learned, eloquent, and trenchant; and Diderot, in Comte's opinion, was the greatest genius of the eighteenth century. G. W. FOOTE.

Acid Drops.

The Prime Minister and Mr. McKenna, on Thursday morning, January 23, received a deputation of "Liberal Churchmen"—whatever that may mean—in favor of Simple Bible Teaching in elementary schools. The deputation included three Bishops—Hereford, Ripon, and Carlisle—and the first was one of the spokesmen. He claimed to represent "the common sense of the Church of England," and declared that the High Church denominationalists were "really only a small section of the Church of England"—which, in the face of official figures, is downright nonsense. They are quite numerous enough to wreck the policy of the "Liberal" Bishops, who appear to be only a handful; and strong enough, if they carry out their threat of Passive Resistance, to wreck any Bible Teaching Bill that the Government may carry to please its Nonconformist supporters.

The Bishop of Hereford protested against "a secular system of schools." It would be so disastrous to the interests of the children! That is what he said. What he meant, in all probability, was that the children might grow up without enough religion to induce them in after life to support Churches—and Bishops.

The Prime Minister, in replying to the deputation, conveniently forgot what he said about Secular Education at a certain Alexandra Palace meeting—before the Liberals came into office. He embraced Simple Bible Teaching with all his heart. He was shocked to hear High Churchmen speaking of it as "corrosive poison." At this point, indeed, he almost wept. It was extremely touching. And a still more plaintive note appeared in his fluent (parish-pump fluent) eloquence when he referred to the terrible contingency of their being "driven to a secular system within the next five or ten years." At that stage there should have been an interval for tears and handkerchiefs. But the business went on without a break.

Finally, once more in complete forgetfulness of that Alexandra Palace speech, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman heartily thanked the deputation, and said that "he could only respond by saying that no effort on their part would be neglected to carry out the views they had expressed and embody in their educational system principles which they thought so necessary to the welfare of the country." From which we conclude that the Government is going to launch another Nonconformist Education Bill; one that will receive the best benediction of Father Clifford.

Mr. McKenna spoke at greater length in the same vein. He also rolled up his eyes, and threw up his hands, at the sad idea of "having nothing before them except the purely secular system they had seen in other parts of the world" if Simple Bible Teaching were not preserved. He took precious good care, however, not to go into details; for, of course, he is perfectly well aware that the countries which have adopted the secular system are better educated than England is, and are far from being behind in the matter of morality. Japan has the secular system—and Japan is our ally. France has the secular system—and France is the one country with which we are cultivating a cordial understanding. Facts like these throw the light of ridicule upon Mr. McKenna's melodramatic grief. The right honorable gentleman was no better advised in speaking of the Bible as our "greatest national inheritance." This is the clap-trap of political Protestantism. Nobody really means it. It is designed to tickle the ears of the groundlings. Every person with an ounce of knowledge and a grain of sense knows where England would be if she kept her Bible and lost her iron and coal. Mr. McKenna knows it. So do the great Nonconformist manufacturers who pile up fortunes under the sanction of the inspired text, "Blessed be ye poor."

The final hope expressed by Mr. McKenna is fortunately not likely to be realised. He hoped there would be "a spirit of conciliation between the various branches of the Christian faith in this country." What a sanguine man he is, to be sure! A man who forms such hopes at this time of day is fit for a museum. Perhaps the right honorable gentleman doesn't mean it, but is simply talking the Pickwickian (or Pecksniffian) jargon of political Nonconformity.

The dear *Daily News*, which has wobbled about for five or six years between "Simple Bible Teaching" and the "Secular Solution," naturally had a leaderette the next morning on that "Liberal Churchmen's" deputation. Of course, it went in this time for "Simple Bible Teaching," and in doing so it was guilty either of gross ignorance or of wilful fraud. "At present," our pious contemporary said, "the objection to it comes, not at all from the agnostics, but from a fraction of Anglican clergy." This is absolutely untrue. The Secular Education League has issued a powerful leaflet against "Simple Bible Teaching" under the title of "An Appeal to Nonconformists," and it has the cordial concurrence of all the non-Christians on the Council, although it was not written by one of themselves. And why does the *Daily News* overlook Jews and Catholics? Are they in favor of "Simple Bible Teaching"? Everybody knows they are not.

The sixteen children who perished in the Barnsley disaster had a Christian funeral, and hymns were sung by choir boys and school children at the graveside. One of these hymns was, "There's a Friend for little children." What an irony! It makes one smile—and then it makes one shudder.

As the result of sending the Sunday-school children throughout the town with collecting-boxes, the Stockport Methodists collected last year for Foreign Missions £461 1s. 4d. Medals were presented to the three children who collected most. One feels as though one would like to present a horse-whip—and apply it—to those who are responsible for such doings. The effect on a child's character of sending it from door to door begging, for any purpose, is wholly bad and intolerable. The curious thing is that many who would quickly recognise the evil of such a practice at other times, acquiesce in it when religion is concerned. And religious organisations stop at nothing—not even at the degradation of child nature—when their interests are to be served. "Suffer little children to come unto me," said Jesus—and I will send them out with collecting-boxes in aid of a gigantic imposture, add the Stockport Wesleyan Methodists.

We have several times commented on the "slimness" of Salvation Army methods. Here are two more recent examples. Questions having been raised as to the supposed "lack of business methods" of the Army, the editor of the *Homiletic Review* made inquiries, and announced that a strictly business-like method prevailed, and published a copy of the auditor's certificate for the accounts for 1906. So far, well; only this does not meet the criticism levelled against the Army. It simply throws dust in the eyes of the ignorant. No one has complained of "lack of business methods," or asserted that there is actual pilfering going on. The Army is quite business-like enough in both its collection of money and protecting itself against pilfering. The charge against the Army is that it collects money by misleading the public as to the nature and extent of its work, and that there exists no guarantee and no security that the money given for social purposes is not applied to religious work. In other words, the Army is charged with subsidising a religious work with money obtained under pretence of carrying on a system of social philanthropy. Genuine inquiry to clear up the matter the Army will not answer, nor will it submit to the creation of safeguards—which have been asked for now for many years—that will secure the proper disposition of the money received. The auditor's certificate is part of the game of "bluff." It merely says that the published balance-sheet agrees with the books and accounts of the Army. There is no need to question this. But under what pretence was the money obtained, and how was it allotted? This is what the public should know, but what they are not told.

Will General Booth say, for instance, how many of the 20,000 sent to Canada in 1907, and on behalf of whom were received large commissions from the various transport companies, had even part of their passage money paid for them by the Salvation Army? Will he also make public the information that out of £72,000 received during Self-Denial Week only £11,000 remained in this country, the balance being spent on religious work abroad?

The second example is connected with the insurance business. Very improperly, some Pearl Insurance Society agents circulated a leaflet giving the position of the Army insurance business some eleven years ago, in such a way as to lead people to believe that it was a picture of the business now. Very promptly the Army brought an action against the Pearl, and secured a verdict. It was not disputed that the statements were true concerning the Army at the time the article was written. But as some years had elapsed, they were not true, and could not be so in the normal course of things. Now, many damaging statements concerning the Army's insurance work have been made quite recently, and dealing with its present position. But the Army took no action, and defended its inactivity on the ground that it did not reply to critics. Yet when it has an obviously clear case it neither hesitates to reply to critics nor to bring the matter before a legal tribunal. The Army might have brought an action against the journal that first published the article eleven years ago. But that action would have failed, and so the part of the maligned innocent was played instead. And now it will be able to use this verdict, obtained solely because the insurance is not in 1908 exactly in the same position as it was in 1896, as a reply to the attacks upon the Army as it is now. The move is a cute one; but readers will not be slow to draw the true inference—which is that when the Army remains silent it is because it would be too dangerous to venture on speech.

Mr. Bernard Shaw has been writing a vivid series of articles on Socialism in the *New Age*, and in the last of them he has his now usual fling at Freethought. This is what he says:—

"I declare publicly that I am ashamed of my opponents. Since Bradlaugh and Herbert Spencer died, they have not put up a man against us that we could annihilate without turning the sympathy of the pitying spectators against us by our obvious superiority in knowledge, in character, and in brains. And they dare not now appeal to the memory of Bradlaugh and Herbert Spencer, because the mere mention of those names disposes of their attempt to associate Freethinking with Socialism instead of with the opposition to it. From Diderot and Voltaire, Bentham and Mill, to Mr. John Morley, Individualism has not one undamned champion."

Personally, we do not care a straw about all this, even if it were sound; for Freethought rests on its own basis, quite independently of Socialism or Anti-Socialism. Whether Jesus was a supernatural personage, or even an historical character; whether the Bible is in any sense inspired; whether the ideas of God and Immortality stand the test of modern scientific criticism; whether morality is natural or supernatural; whether free-will or determinism is the true philosophy; all these questions are to be decided by their own evidence, and have nothing whatever to do with the question whether Socialism is a sound economical philosophy. What on earth have Old Age Pensions to do with the Virgin Birth, an Eight Hours' Day with the miracles of Christ's career, or a Minimum Wage with the Resurrection? We ask these questions of plain sensible men and women. Mr. Bernard Shaw, of course, being what he is, is able to connect almost anything with almost anything else; so we leave him out of the interrogatory.

What we want to point out is the arbitrary, we might say the fantastic, way in which Mr. Shaw goes to work in this instance. What could be more absurd than bringing in Voltaire and Diderot among the opponents of Socialism? It reminds us of Swift's remark that even Homer had his failings; being, for instance, grossly ignorant of the Thirty-Nine Articles and the principles of the English Constitution. And how blandly Mr. Shaw produces his selected list of names, as if it were a complete chronological catalogue. Not a word about Shelley, Robert Owen, and all the Socialist missionaries who were also Atheists, many of whom were prosecuted and imprisoned, including George Jacob Holyoake, who was sent to gaol for "blasphemy" uttered in discussion after a Socialist lecture. Not a word, either about the fact on the other side—namely, that Karl Marx (who lived and wrote in England), Morris, Hyndman, Belfort Bax, Aveling, and others who fought for present-day Socialism in its dangerous period, were Freethinkers. Bradlaugh is mentioned, but not Mrs. Besant. Yet both of them were Atheists, in the closest association as propagandists of Atheism, although he opposed Socialism and she advocated it. Mr. Shaw himself was an Atheist when he fought like an Ishmael for Socialism some twenty years ago. At least he said so, and we pay him the compliment of believing him.

Bentham and Mill are rather unfortunate names for Mr. Shaw. Bentham was, behind the scenes, a great supporter of Robert Owen; and when Owen came up to London to find the money necessary to stop the game of his partners

who wanted to put an end to his social work at New Lanark, he went back with a good slice of Bentham's fortune in his pocket. Mill was a very tolerant critic of Socialism in his *Political Economy*, and it appears that he was more than half a Socialist for a good many years before his death. On the whole, it is pretty clear that Mr. Shaw is writing very loosely in this passage; and we are bound to say that we have found him doing the same thing on several other occasions, when we happened to have special knowledge of the particular subjects. Mr. Shaw's verve and brilliance are unquestionable; one may admit this with the greatest cheerfulness, and yet smile now and then at his affectation of infallibility.

Sir Henry Fowler, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, declares that he will be "no party to the exclusion of the Bible from the elementary schools of this country." Whoever thought he would? It is worth noticing, though, that he is obliged to admit that the Secular Solution "finds favor with many competent and experienced men." We thank him for that admission. The rest doesn't matter.

"The Churches" column of the *Daily News*, the other morning, contained this first headline—"A Creed for Atheists," with something under it about Mr. Eustace Miles's attempt to "form a creed and frame a prayer that will be acceptable to all men, including Atheists." This is very interesting—in its way. But before Christians go any further in that line they must be reminded of something preliminary which they have overlooked. The very first thing that Christians have to do for Atheists is to treat them with justice. Let us have justice first of all, as Carlyle used to say; that is indispensable—nothing else can be a substitute for it. It would be better, therefore, if Christians of the *Daily News* type, instead of writing amiably about "a Creed for Atheists," would agitate strongly for the immediate repeal of the Blasphemy Laws—under which Freethinkers (and nobody else) are prosecuted and imprisoned by Christians (and nobody else). While these vicious laws exist every Christian is a persecutor and every Freethinker is persecuted. The persecution is not, indeed, always acute, but it is always liable to become so. You never can tell.

The following appears to be what Mr. Eustace Miles thinks may be acceptable to Atheists:—

"Our best Helper, within us and within everything, Your ways are right. You are our sole Commander. Thoroughly as the sun and moon are obeying You, we are obeying You here and now. To-day you are giving us just we really need. You are cancelling our faults whenever we are helping others. You never let us be tried unless You can keep us altogether safe."

Would the last sentence, we wonder, have any application to Mr. Boulter next week at the Old Bailey? The other sentences show that Mr. Eustace Miles does not understand Atheists. It sounds very pretty to say that the sun and moon are obeying "You." But they are not everything. There are others. Instead of sun and moon, we might have "volcanoes" and "earthquakes" or "tigers" and "sharks." And the Atheist really doesn't understand why one brace of objects should be preferable to another. They are all in the great "Helper's" show.

In the *British Weekly*, Dr. Robertson Nicol writes an article in praise of George Eliot's teaching as contained in *Adam Bede*. But—there is, of course, a "but"—she "Alas! was not finally a Christian." The "Alas!" is quite comical. It does not occur to Dr. Nicol that had George Eliot been a Christian her view of life would not have been nearly as sane as it was, and she would not, therefore, have commanded his praise, although she might have escaped his silly "Alas!" He admits that she took a good, wholesome view of the nature of wrong-doing, and that her teaching has done immeasurable good, but "her books leave a melancholy and unsatisfying impression because she has in them no doctrine of that love which signified its strength on Calvary." The comment is almost as amusing as the "Alas!" George Eliot leaves a "melancholy and unsatisfying impression" because she is not a Presbyterian, or a Baptist, or a Methodist, or one of the other miserable sectarian bodies who chop up the universe in accordance with their stupid doctrines, and declare everything bad that is not in accordance therewith. Anyway, we expect that George Eliot's reputation will survive Dr. Robertson Nicol's regret.

At the Labor Party Conference, Mr. James Sexton expressed his indignation at finding a paper, "full of profanity" offered for sale on a Socialist bookstall. It is a pity that this gentleman—who we fancy is a Catholic, should be so shocked. But does he desire that any paper in which what

he regards as "profanity" should not be sold by Socialists? If so, he has a fine notion of the meaning of liberty. But even in that case he would not be alone, for Mr. Bruce Glasier once refused to open a Socialist club until it had removed from its window copies of *God and My Neighbor*. "Oh, liberty!" etc., etc.

It appears that godly Scotsmen are being agitated by the burning question, Should clergymen skate on Sunday? Some of them skate every Sunday—over thin ice. And some of them skate other days in the week over thinner ice still.

Bridgend U. F. Church, Dumbarton, boasts of flourishing finances. The average income per member (673) is 19s. 10d. for congregational purposes, 9s. 4d. for missionary, and 1s. 1d. for benevolent. Thirteen pence for the poor at their gates, and a hundred and twelve pence for the heathen in the ends of the earth. That is so like Christianity—especially Scotch Christianity.

Liverpool stinks with drink, prostitution, and piety. We do not call these a trinity. We do not say they have any connection. We only note that they are commonly found together. It is notorious that cathedral cities have more vice to the square yard than other cities. And now they are providing Liverpool with a big, new, costly cathedral, its position becomes almost hopeless.

If it is impossible to convert Liverpool to Secularism, we suggest that it should be converted to Judaism. In 1906, the Liverpool Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children found 10,495 little children ill-treated or cruelly neglected. This would not have happened if the parents of these unfortunate little ones had been Jews. As the *Liverpool Daily Post* says, in reviewing Mr. G. R. Sims's *Black Stain*, "What a difference in the Jewish quarter, where the religious views of motherhood and strong instincts of family life ensure the affectionate regard of both parents."

The Labor Party's Conference passed the following resolution at its last sitting:—

"That this Conference of the Labor Party repudiates the attack made on it on the ground that Socialism is antagonistic to the family organisation, and declares that the disintegration of the family which has been in progress for some generations is due to the creation of slums, the employment of children in factories, the dragging of mothers into workshops and factories through economic pressure created by low wages of men, sweating, and other operations of Capitalism. The Conference further declares that the attempt that has been made to make the Labor Movement appear to be antagonistic to religion is a deliberate perversion of the truth and made for mean partisan purposes; it welcomes men and women of all religious beliefs, as it is a political movement dealing with State affairs, not religious beliefs."

This resolution was moved by Mr. J. R. Macdonald, M.P., and was carried with only one dissident. It seems a direct slap in the face to Mr. Robert Blatchford, and we shall be curious to see what he has to say about it. We are merely referring, of course, to the latter part of the resolution.

Rev. James Marchant, of Lochinvar, is getting up a Social Purity Crusade. We have heard of this sort of thing before in Christian history. And the result is what we see in every Christian city. The reverend gentleman had better attend to some other business.

Rev. Canon Richard John Livingstone, of Prestfelde, Shrewsbury, left £8,289. Not a big fortune, as fortunes go nowadays, but still a terrible hump on the back of anybody trying to thread the needle's eye.

The Bishop of London, having gone in for the simple life, and sold his horse carriages and bought motor cars, has been visiting that grimy, working-class town called Bournemouth, where he met some opposition true believers called Kensitites. His lordship went to a pious meeting to plead for his East London Church Fund. Outside were Kensitites displaying a big poster with the words: "Bishop of London's appeal means Popery for the poor parishes." And as his lordship entered Mr. H. H. Martin, organiser of the Wycliffe preachers, shouted, "My lord, no Popery in East London." Whereupon the bishop replied: "You look like an honest Christian man, but in opposing this fund you are doing the devil's work." How they love one another! And what a sweet thing is Christian charity! Every little Christite thinks he is on the Lord's side, and that every little Christite who differs from him is on Old Nick's side. "Me and God—you and the Devil." As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be—until Christites are extinguished.

The Bishop of London was the subject of a recent "Character Study" in the *Daily News*. The writer began satirically, and might have gone on so to the end if he had not been checked by the Christian traditions of the paper he was writing for. He has evidently a very poor opinion of Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram's intelligence, but by way of compensation he praises the Bishop's whole-hearted Christianity. In this connection he states that Dr. Ingram "has gone into Victoria Park to meet the atheists face to face; answer their pet posers with ready wit, and win their hearts by his genial comradeship." Now all this is mere romance. Dr. Ingram, in his East-end days, never came amongst the atheists in Victoria Park; he always spoke from a Christian platform, while the atheists held their own meeting at a distance; neither did he win their hearts in any way whatever. They never thought much of him, and they smile at what he himself, apparently, has circulated as a true report of his wonderful achievements.

William Cole, railway brakesman and Methodist local preacher, residing at Peterborough, has been divorced by his wife, Millicent Cole, residing at Whaplode. William Cole took too Abrahamic a view of his domestic affairs. He "carried on" with a female friend of his wife's, brought her into the house, and tried to introduce her undressed into his wife's bedroom. His better half, objecting to this arrangement, was struck and kicked. Finally this Old Testament sort of husband went off with the "other lady" to Peterborough.

Five boys between fifteen and sixteen years of age were brought before the magistrates at Newcastle-under-Lyme, charged with committing a series of robberies. The Mayor asked how it was they became associated. One of them replied, "Through the Sunday-school, sir." Had they said it was through a Freethought institution, what a howl would have gone up from religious circles! Their conduct would have been called the natural fruit of Secular teaching.

The "Young Evangelist," twenty-one years of age, was working in the Lord's vineyard at Lee, the Kentish suburb of London. He attracted the attention of Mr. Charles W. Sears, a well-to-do provision merchant, who took him by the hand and paid all the expenses of the mission. Then the "Young Evangelist" received a "call" to the chapel that Mr. Sears attended, and bloomed forth as the Rev. Alfred J. Burrage. Having completed the conquest of Mr. Sears, the "Young Evangelist" proceeded with the conquest of Mrs. Sears. The result is a *decreo nisi* in the Divorce Court. It is an old story retold.

Bulgarian bands attacked the village of Dragosh, which is inhabited by Greeks, and killed and burned eleven women and twelve children. This sort of thing has been going on for years, and the Christian Powers do nothing to stop it—perhaps because Greeks and Bulgarians are both Christians. The "unspeakable Turk" takes a back seat now. Massacres go on better without him.

"Whoso giveth unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord." The Boston unemployed turned this text round—"Whoso giveth to the Lord lendeth unto the poor." Accordingly they dropped into Trinity Church and demanded the collection. Opposition was offered by the church officials, who stuck to the original text. Finally, the dispute was settled by the police, who cleared out the poor and left the Lord's friends in possession.

The National Free Church Council holds its annual meeting in March at Southport, and there are many interesting subjects down for discussion. One of them is "The Use of Money"—a topic on which ministers may speak with authority.

While the Christian nations are talking (hypocritically enough) about "reduction of armaments," Heathen Japan goes and reduces her prospective naval and military expenditure by twelve millions. We see now, though far from the first time, the deep meaning of the old query, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?"

Rev. R. J. Campbell says that Socialism and true Christianity are one and the same thing. Canon Henson says that the modern tendency to bind Christianity to Socialism is "profoundly irrational," and "threatens to bring grave discredit on religion." How they agree! And how beautifully clear and precise Christianity must be!

The Congregationalists at Latchingdon, Essex, have purchased the "Engineers' Arms" public-house for use as a chapel. In the spirit trade still!

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

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

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 2, Woolwich Town Hall; 16, Aberdare; 17, Mountain Ash; 23, Edinburgh. March 8, Glasgow.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 2, Leicester; 9, Edinburgh; 16, Woolwich; 23, Glasgow. March 8, West Ham.

W. TAYLOR.—Sorry to hear it is so difficult to get the *Freethinker* regularly at Southsea. Of course, we don't mean our advice "order of your newsagent" to apply in such circumstances, and you do well to forward your subscription to our publishing office, so as to "feel safe from disappointment for a year."

J. H. MELVIN.—Sorry we cannot attend to such matters. The local Freethinkers should be able to see to the one in question.

W. J. ATKINSON.—We agree with a good deal in your letter. During the last hundred years, at any rate, the defence of intellectual liberty in England has mainly rested upon the Freethinkers. They are the only people who really understand freedom and love it; and they may yet have to defend its existence.

J. CHAMBERS.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

R. J. PRITCHARD.—Shall be sent. Glad you have found the *Freethinker* so educative.

STEEL.—We cannot tell you the Rev. R. J. Campbell's salary. There is no real information about Jesus Christ outside the Christian documents—whatever they are worth. Thanks for cuttings.

E. D. FORD.—We do not see that we can make it any plainer. Glad you look forward with increasing interest to your weekly *Freethinker*.

H. R. CLIFTON.—Will bear it in mind. Thanks.

W. P. BALL.—Always glad to receive your cuttings.

G. ROLETS.—Thanks.

J. A. SMITH.—Pleased to know of highly appreciative readers as far north as Aberdeen.

T. NOON.—There was nothing in your letter that could lead to proceedings against the *Star* for contempt of court. The editor's letter is nonsense. The "glorious free press" is more timid now than it was twenty-five years ago.

W. HEAFORD.—Glad you "greatly relished" our lecture on Sunday evening, and were so pleased to find our voice "in such good form"—but sorry to miss shaking hands with you "in the press of people." Thanks for copy of *Concord*. It gives us pleasure to see your forceful pen active in the cause of Peace—a holy cause, let the blood-shedders and fire-breathers say what they will.

BESSIE BROUGH.—Thanks for cuttings.

G. BEDBOROUGH.—No doubt some of the batch will be useful. Thanks. We will take your suggestion and go (some day) for the Bible-worshipping Vegetarians as we went for the Bible-worshipping Teetotalers in *Bible and Beer*.

JOSEPH COLLINSON.—Delighted to hear that the Humanitarian League resolution is being sent to the London and provincial papers. Will you inform us of those in which it appears?

FREETHOUGHT SAINT.—We are obliged, and will notice it next week.

H. EVETTS.—No room this week; in our next.

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

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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.

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To Arms!

WHEN the defence of the new "blasphemy" prosecution was undertaken by the National Secular Society I said that we were going to pay the whole cost if possible. Something over a hundred pounds was hypothecated for the purpose, according to our solicitor's original estimate. But circumstances have changed since then. We are making a much bigger thing of the defence than was at first contemplated. More than this it would be impolitic to say. I can only ask the Freethought party to trust to my generalship. I am giving my best attention to the matter, and nothing will be left undone to baffle the prosecution, and even to secure a still greater victory. Of course, I am charging nothing for my services. What I am doing is done quite gratuitously. But the legal gentlemen in the case must be paid at the customary rates; and, as the campaign is now planned, a good deal more money will be necessary. The N. S. S. Executive meets again after this week's *Freethinker* is off my hands. In the meanwhile I must act, for time is pressing. I have come to the conclusion that the N. S. S. should not tax its resources too greatly. It may have to meet other difficulties in the immediate future. Accordingly, I have to call upon the Society's members and friends, and the readers of the *Freethinker* generally, to do their part in the battle by supplying additional sinews of war. We shall want a hundred pounds more at least, and we had better be well on the safe side. I am making no outside appeal; I just ask the Freethought party to subscribe the money, feeling sure that they will do it. And I ask them to subscribe without a moment's delay. Pounds will be welcome, and so will shillings. The rank and file ought to do their share. Let each and all bear a hand in this task. Subscriptions should be sent direct to me, and will be acknowledged in these columns. All I have to add is that I have ordered the battle to go forward as planned, and that I have made myself (on the Society's behalf) responsible for the bill of costs.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote wound up the special course of Freethought lectures at the "Horns" Assembly Room on Sunday evening—with Mr. Victor Roger in the chair. In spite of the rain there was a fine audience. It was also an enthusiastic audience, the lecturer's points being thoroughly caught and applauded. We may add that there was a much improved and satisfactory collection. This course of lectures has undoubtedly done much good. Outsiders have been attracted, and apparently pleased. No doubt the next course of lectures will be still more successful.

Mr. Foote was booked to lecture at Coventry to-day (Feb. 2) for the local N. S. S. Branch, but in view of the advisability of his being available at any moment in connection with the "blasphemy" prosecution he felt obliged to cancel the engagement. The Branch has been able to get Mr. Joseph McCabe to fill the vacancy thus created. Mr. McCabe lectures in the Public Baths Assembly Hall, and we trust the local "saints" will do their utmost to secure him fine meetings.

Woolwich Town Hall has been engaged for a series of Sunday evening Freethought lectures, and we hope the local "saints" will do their utmost to get it crowded. Admission is free to all seats, and questions and discussion will be allowed after each lecture. The opening lecture devolves this time upon Mr. Cohen, who occupies the platform this evening (Feb. 2), and speaks upon "The Salvation Army," which he has been making a special study of late. Mr. Foote takes the following Sunday, and

Mr. Lloyd the third. The course is being organised by the Secular Society, Limited, with the co-operation of the Woolwich N. S. S. Branch.

Mr. Cohen lectured in the Victoria Theatre, West Stanley, on Sunday to excellent audiences. Many questions were asked after the lectures, but no formal opposition was offered. The West Stanley "saints" intend to carry on a more active propaganda of Freethought in the immediate future.

Mr. Lloyd had very good meetings in the Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday. A Christadelphian minister took part in the questioning on the afternoon lecture. Mr. Lloyd survived all right for the evening meeting.

The following extract, which we meant to publish before, is from the letter of a lady reader who sent us good wishes on our birthday (Jan. 11): "It is, I think, ten years since first I heard you lecture. It was at the Secular Hall, Camberwell, on 'The Way to Heaven.' While my memory lasts I shall not forget it. Occasionally you refer to the clear type used in printing the *Freethinker*. This I found of great benefit during an illness. I do not presume to speak of the clearness with which the articles are always written, but merely say I find no difficulty in following them. I choose this from many things I should like to say in the hope it is the one you will like best to hear. Sincerely thanking you for the benefit and pleasure I have derived from your oratory and your writings, and with best wishes for your health and happiness," etc. Is not this very encouraging? We value it all the more as coming from a woman—for we ardently desire to make women Freethinkers.

We have received the Leicester Secular Society's balance-sheet for the year ending December 31, 1907. It seems to us a highly creditable and honorable document. The various items show, to a critical reader, what a lot of work must have stood behind these modest finances. It is pleasant to note prospectively that the Society's assets are £319 3s. 6d., and its liabilities only £97. We are also glad to note that £50 arrears of rent for 1906 has been paid off. One very heavy item of expenditure on a total of £556 17s. 4d. is "Rates, £45 8s. 2s." That amount would have been saved if the Secular Hall were exempted from rates like the places of religious worship. Our readers may form some idea from this of how religion—even Free Church religion—is subvented by the State, and how "infidelity" is handicapped.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Lloyd had very good meetings at Failsworth on the same day that Mr. Foote had such grand meetings at Manchester. And as Failsworth is only four or five miles from the centre of Manchester, which practically extends right out to it, it will be seen how much Secularism is a "dying" cause in that district.

Here are two fine verses from *Drake: an English Epic*, by Mr. Alfred Noyes, now appearing in *Blackwood's Magazine* :—

"When the pulse of hope falters,
When the fire flickers low
On your faith's crumbling altars,
And the faithless gods go;
When the fond hope ye cherished
Cometh, kissing, to betray;
When the last star hath perished,
'Love will find out the way.'

When the last dream bereaveth you,
And the heart turns to stone,
When the last comrade leaveth you
In the desert, alone;
With the whole world before you
Clad in battle-array,
And the starless night o'er you,
'Love will find out the way.'

The race of poets is *not* dead in England.

Mr. Cohen has published his views on Socialism, Atheism, and Christianity, in the form of a cheap pamphlet bearing that title. Like all that Mr. Cohen writes, it is carefully thought out, and philosophical in expression as well as in conception. It certainly should, as the advertisement says in another column, be in the hands of both Freethinkers and Socialists. The criticism of Mr. J. Ramsey Macdonald, M.P., is particularly well done. But we don't suppose Mr. Macdonald will reply, although it might do him good to make the attempt. We hope Mr. Cohen's pamphlet will have a wide circulation. Not that we must be supposed to agree with everything in it. Which, after all, is only another

way of saying that it is Mr. Cohen's pamphlet, and not ours. Absolute agreement must not be expected amongst persons who do their own thinking. It is only the thoughtless who never differ from each other.

Owing to the necessity of the appeal in this week's *Freethinker* for additional funds for the defence in the "blasphemy" case, the President's Honorarium Fund has to take a back seat, but it will be brought forward again in due course. Those who can only give to the one fund will please give to the more urgent one. They may be able to give to the other one hereafter. If not, the President must suffer the loss, which is an experience he has grown accustomed to. For the present, we simply acknowledge the subscriptions received since the acknowledgments in our issue of January 19:—W. Bailey, £5; H. Jessop, £5; W. Clarkson, £2; S. Holmes, £2; D. J. D., £1; A. Rowley, 5s.; J. Dunlop, £1; G. B., 4s.; W. Cromack, 5s.; M. Brown, 2s.; G. White, 10s.; R. Daniel, 5s.; H. Walsh, £1; C. J., £1; P. Rowland, £1; Richard Johnson, £5; John Grange, £1 1s.; W. P. Ball, £1; J. Clayton, 10s.; W. E. Pugh, 10s. 6d.; G. Lunn, 5s.; Manchester, 2s. 6d.; Rank-and-Filer, 5s.; A. J. Young, 10s. 6d.; F. Parsons, £1; Elizabeth Lechmere, 10s.; F. Jagger, £1; J. W. Fitch, £1 1s.; E. Ehrmann, £1 1s.; G. Brady, £1 1s.; L. Gjemre, £2; Richard Green, £1.

We promised to print some extracts from subscribers' letters, and we shall do so later on, when the President's Honorarium Fund is introduced again to our readers' attention.

What Is In It?

WHENEVER you hear a man or woman ask how much there is in it to do a thing or not to do a thing, you may put it down that a supreme selfishness dominates that mind.

Suppose Galileo had asked that question, or that Giordano Bruno had reflected over it when asked to recant! Where would their blessed memories have been to-day? Suppose Charles Bradlaugh had stopped to find out how much there was in it before waging his great war for freedom of the British press. Suppose G. W. Foote had entertained similar thoughts before publishing that issue of his *Freethinker* which brought on the prosecution he might have been saved from Holloway Gaol but posterity would have felt differently towards him. Ingersoll might have been governor of Illinois but for opinion's sake. Take Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, and other great leaders in the world of scientific thought, if they had paused upon the threshold of investigation to ask what was in it their great works would have been altogether lost to the world. Even had Thomas Paine asked himself the question before entering upon that great march for liberty Old Glory might not yet be unfurled to the breeze.

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

WHENCE AND WHITHER.

No man, and no body of men, can answer the questions of the Whence and Whither. The mystery of existence cannot be explained by the intellect of man.

Back of life, of existence, we cannot go—beyond death we cannot see. All duties, all obligations, all knowledge, all experience, are for this life, this world.

We know that men and women and children exist. We know that happiness, for the most part, depends on conduct.

We are satisfied that all the gods are phantoms and that the supernatural does not exist.

We know the difference between hope and knowledge, we hope for happiness here and we dream of joy hereafter, but we do not know. We cannot assert, we can only hope. We can have our dream. In the wide night our star can shine and shed its radiance on the graves of those we love. We can bond above our pallid dead and say that beyond this life there are no sighs—no tears—no breaking hearts.

—*Ingersoll*.

It is not theology which purifies humanity, but humanity which purifies theology. Man civilises himself first, and his gods afterwards—and the priest walks at the tail of the procession.—*G. W. Foote*.

IMPIETY, *n.* Your irreverence towards my deity.—*Ambrose Bierce*.

Shelley on Blasphemy.—II.

(Concluded from p. 61.)

It is asserted that Mr. Eaton's opinions are calculated to subvert morality. How? What moral truth is spoken of with irreverence or ridicule in the book which he published? Morality, or the duty of a man and a citizen, is founded on the relations which arise from the association of human beings, and which vary with the circumstances produced by the different states of this association. This duty in similar situations must be precisely the same in all ages and nations. The opinion contrary to this has arisen from a supposition that the will of God is the source or criterion of morality; it is plain that the utmost exertion of Omnipotence could not cause that to be virtuous which actually is vicious. An all-powerful Demon might, indubitably, annex punishments to virtue and rewards to vice, but could not by these means effect the slightest change in their abstract and immutable natures. Omnipotence could vary, by a providential interposition, the relations of human society; in this latter case, what before was virtuous would become vicious, according to the necessary and natural result of the alteration; but the abstract natures of the opposite principles would have sustained not the slightest change; for instance, the punishment with which society restrains the robber, the assassin, and the ravisher is just, laudable, and requisite. We admire and respect the institutions which curb those who would defeat the ends for which society was established; but, should a precisely similar coercion be exercised against one who merely expressed his disbelief of a system admitted by those entrusted with the executive power, using at the same time no methods of promulgation but those afforded by reason, certainly this coercion would be eminently inhuman and immoral; and the supposition that any revelation from an unknown power avails to palliate a persecution so senseless, unprovoked, and indefensible, is at once to destroy the barrier which reason places between vice and virtue, and leave to unprincipled fanaticism a plea whereby it may excuse every act of frenzy, which its own wild passions, not the inspirations of the Deity, have engendered.

Moral qualities are such as only a human being can possess. To attribute them to the Spirit of the Universe, or to suppose that it is capable of altering them, is to degrade God into man, and to annex to this incomprehensible being qualities incompatible with any possible definition of his nature. It may here be objected: Ought not the Creator to possess the perfections of the creature? No. To attribute to God the moral qualities of man is to suppose him susceptible of passions which, arising out of corporeal organisation, it is plain that a pure spirit cannot possess. A bear is not perfect except he is rough; a tiger is not perfect if he be not voracious; an elephant is not perfect if otherwise than docile. How deep an argument must that not be which proves that the Deity is as rough as a bear, as voracious as a tiger, and as docile as an elephant! But even suppose with the vulgar that God is a venerable old man, seated on a throne of clouds, his breast the theatre of various passions, analogous to those of humanity, his will changeable and uncertain as that of an earthly king: still goodness and justice are qualities seldom nominally denied him, and it will be admitted that he disapproves of any action incompatible with these qualities. Persecution for opinion is unjust. With what consistency, then, can the worshipers of a Deity whose benevolence they boast, embitter the existence of their fellow-being, because his ideas of that Deity are different from those which they entertain? Alas! there is no consistency in those persecutors who worship a benevolent Deity; those who worship a Demon would alone act consonantly to these principles, by imprisoning and torturing in his name.

Persecution is the only name applicable to punishment inflicted on an individual in consequence of his opinions. What end is persecution designed to answer? Can it convince him whom it injures? Can it prove to the people the falsehood of his opinions? It may make him a hypocrite, and them cowards; but bad means can promote no good end. The unprejudiced mind looks with suspicion on a doctrine that needs the sustaining hand of power.

Socrates was poisoned because he dared to combat the degrading superstitions in which his countrymen were educated. Not long after his death, Athens recognised the injustice of his sentence; his accuser, Melitus, was condemned, and Socrates became a demigod.

Jesus Christ was crucified because he attempted to supersede the ritual of Moses with regulations more moral and humane; his very judge made public acknowledgment of his innocence, but a bigoted and ignorant mob demanded the deed of horror. Barabbas, the murderer and traitor, was released. The meek reformer, Jesus, was immolated to the sanguinary Deity of the Jews. Time rolled on, time changed the situations, and with them the opinions of men.

The vulgar, ever in extremes, became persuaded that the crucifixion of Jesus was a supernatural event, and testimonies of miracles, so frequent in unenlightened ages, were not wanting to prove that he was something divine. This belief, rolling through the lapse of ages, acquired force and extent, until the divinity of Jesus became a dogma, which to dispute was death, which to doubt was infamy.

Christianity is now the established religion; he who attempts to disprove it must behold murderers and traitors take precedence of him in public opinion, though, if his genius be equal to his courage, and assisted by a peculiar coalition of circumstances, future ages may exalt him to a divinity, and persecute others in his name, as he was persecuted in the name of his predecessor, in the homage of the world.

The same means that have supported every other popular belief have supported Christianity. War, imprisonment, murder, and falsehood; deeds of unexampled and incomparable atrocity, have made it what it is. We derive from our ancestors a belief thus fostered and supported. We quarrel, persecute, and hate for its maintenance. Does not analogy favor the opinion that, as like other systems it has arisen and augmented, so like them it will decay and perish; that, as violence and falsehood, not reasoning and persuasion, have procured its admission among mankind; so, when enthusiasm has subsided, and time, that infallible controverter of false opinions, has involved its pretended evidences in the darkness of antiquity, it will become obsolete, and that men will then laugh as heartily at grace, faith, redemption, and original sin as they now do at the metamorphoses of Jupiter, the miracles of Romish saints, the efficacy of witchcraft, and the appearance of departed spirits.

Had the Christian religion commenced and continued by the mere force of reasoning and persuasion, by its self-evident excellence and fitness, the preceding analogy would be inadmissible. We should never speculate upon the future obsolescence of a system perfectly conformable to nature and reason. It would endure so long as they endured; it would be a truth as indisputable as the light of the sun, the criminality of murder, and other facts, physical and moral, which, depending on our organisation and relative situations, must remain acknowledged so long as man is man. It is an incontrovertible fact, the consideration of which ought to repress the hasty conclusions of credulity, or moderate its obstinacy in maintaining them, that, had the Jews not been a barbarous and fanatical race of men, had even the resolution of Pontius Pilate been equal to his candor, the Christian religion never could have prevailed; it could not even have existed. Man! the very existence of whose most cherished opinions depends from a thread so feeble, arises out of a source so equivocal, learn at least humility; own, at least, that it is possible for thyself also to have been seduced by education and circumstance into the admission of tenets destitute of rational proof, and the truth of which has not yet been satisfactorily demonstrated. Acknowledge, at least, that the falsehood of thy brother's opinions is no sufficient reason for his meriting thy hatred. What! because a fellow being disputes the reasonableness of thy faith, wilt thou punish him with torture and imprisonment? If persecution for religious opinions were admitted by the moralist, how wide a door would not be opened by which convulsionists of every kind might make inroads on the peace of society! How many deeds of barbarism and blood would not receive a sanction! But I will demand, if that man is not rather entitled to the respect than the discountenance of society, who, by disputing a received doctrine, either proves its falsehood and inutilty, thereby aiming at the abolition of what is false and useless, or giving to its adherents an opportunity of establishing its excellence and truth. Surely this can be no crime. Surely the individual who devotes his time to fearless and unrestricted inquiry into the grand questions arising out of our moral nature ought rather to receive the patronage, than encounter the vengeance, of an enlightened legislature. I would have you to know, my Lord, that fetters of iron cannot bind or subdue the soul of virtue. From the damps and solitude of its dungeon it ascends, free and undaunted, whither thine, from the pompous seat of judgment, dare not soar. I do not warn you to beware lest your profession as a Christian should make you forget that you are a man, but I warn you against festinating that period, which, under the present coercive system, is too rapidly maturing, when the seats of justice shall be the seats of venality and slavishness, and the cells of Newgate become the abode of all that is honorable and true.

I mean not to compare Mr. Eaton with Socrates or Jesus; he is a man of blameless and respectable character; he is a citizen unimpeached with crime; if, therefore, his rights as a citizen and a man have been infringed, they have been infringed by illegal and immoral violence. But I will assert that, should a second Jesus arise among men, should such a one as Socrates again enlighten the earth, lengthened imprisonment and infamous punishment (according to the

regimen of persecution revived by your Lordship) would effect what hemlock and the cross have heretofore effected, and the stain on the national character, like that on Athens and Judea, would remain indelible, but by the destruction of the history in which it is recorded. When the Christian religion shall have faded from the earth, when its memory, like that of Polytheism now shall remain, but remain only as the subject of ridicule and wonder, indignant posterity would attach immortal infamy to such an outrage; like the murder of Socrates, it would secure the execration of every age.

The horrible and wide-wasting enormities which gleam like comets through the darkness of gothic and superstitious ages are regarded by the moralist as no more than the necessary effects of known causes; but, when an enlightened age and nation signalises itself by a deed, becoming none but barbarians and fanatics, philosophy itself is even induced to doubt whether human nature will ever emerge from the pettishness and imbecility of its childhood. The system of persecution, at whose new birth you, my Lord, are one of the presiding midwives, is not more impotent and wicked than inconsistent. The press is loaded with what are called (ironically, I should conceive) *proofs* of the Christian religion: these books are replete with invective and calumny against Infidels; they presuppose that he who rejects Christianity must be utterly divested of reason and feeling. They advance the most unsupported assertions, and take as first principles the most revolting dogmas. The inferences drawn from these assumed premises are impressively logical and correct; but, if a foundation is weak, no architect is needed to foretell the instability of the superstructure. If the truth of Christianity is not disputable, for what purpose are these books written? If they are sufficient to prove it, what further need of controversy? *If God has spoken, why is not the universe convinced?* If the Christian religion needs deeper learning, more painful investigation, to establish its genuineness, wherefore attempt to accomplish that by force which the human mind can alone effect with satisfaction to itself? If, lastly, its truth cannot be demonstrated, wherefore impotently attempt to snatch from God the government of his creation, and impiously assert that the Spirit of Benevolence has left that knowledge most essential to the well-being of man, the only one which, since its promulgation, has been the subject of unceasing cavil, the cause of irreconcilable hatred? Either the Christian religion is true, or it is not. If true, it comes from God, and its authenticity can admit of doubt and dispute no further than its Omnipotent Author is willing to allow; if true, it admits of rational proof, and is capable of being placed equally beyond controversy as the principles which have been established concerning matter and mind, by Locke and Newton; and in proportion to the usefulness of the fact in dispute, so must it be supposed that a benevolent being is anxious to procure the diffusion of its knowledge on the earth. If false, surely no enlightened legislature would punish the reasoner, who opposes a system so much the more fatal and pernicious, as it is extensively admitted; so much the more productive of absurd and ruinous consequences, as it is entwined by education, with the prejudices and affections of the human heart, in the shape of a popular belief.

Let us suppose that some half-witted philosopher should assert that the earth was the centre of the universe, or that ideas could enter the human mind independently of sensation or reflection. This man would assert what is demonstrably incorrect; he would promulgate a false opinion. Yet would he therefore deserve pillory and imprisonment? By no means; probably few would discharge more correctly the duties of a citizen and a man. I admit that the case above stated is not precisely in point. The thinking part of the community has not received as indisputable the truth of Christianity, as they have that of the Newtonian system. A very large portion of society, and that powerfully and extensively connected, derives its sole emolument from the belief of Christianity, as a popular faith.

To torture and imprison the asserter of a dogma, however ridiculous and false, is highly barbarous and impolitic. How, then, does not the cruelty of persecution become aggravated when it is directed against the opposer of an opinion *yet under dispute*, and which men of unrivalled acquirements, penetrating genius, and stainless virtue have spent, and at last sacrificed, their lives in combating.

The time is rapidly approaching—I hope that you, my Lord, may live to behold its arrival—when the Mahometan, the Jew, the Christian, the Deist, and the Atheist will live together in one community, equally sharing the benefits which arise from its association, and united in the bonds of charity and brotherly love. My Lord, you have condemned an innocent man; no crime was imputed to him, and you sentenced him to torture and imprisonment. I have not addressed this letter to you with the hopes of convincing you that you have acted wrong. The most unprincipled and

barbarous of men are not unprepared with sophisms to prove that they would have acted in no other manner, and to show that vice is virtue. But I raise my solitary voice to express my disapprobation, so far as it goes, of the cruel and unjust sentence you passed upon Mr. Eaton; to assert, so far as I am capable of influencing, those rights of humanity which you have wantonly and unlawfully infringed.

My Lord,

Yours, &c.

Fragments that Remain.

Even parsons stumble on the truth occasionally. Rev. R. C. Fillingham, vicar of Hexham, says that "the average English parent is purely indifferent as to how his children are educated in religious matters."

Mr. McKenna, replying to the Archbishop of Canterbury, tells him plainly that after September next no Training Colleges will "receive grants from public funds voted by Parliament" unless they "are open to all properly qualified candidates without religious tests." This would be excellent if it were really true. But is it? Will the right honorable gentleman say, clearly and deliberately, that in the Training Colleges which will receive grants of public money after September the non-Christian will be on a perfect level of equality with the Christian? If he cannot say this, what is the use of talking about no religious tests? Abolishing religious tests as between Christians, and retaining them as between Christians and non-Christians, is simply another form of "sectarianism."

Over 100 clergymen have signed a manifesto declaring that the Socialism they believe in is "essentially the same as that which is held by Socialists throughout the world." After this it will be impossible for anyone to say that Christianity is not on the side of Socialism. It is true that there are nearly 50,000 Christian clergymen who have *not* signed the manifesto; but that matters little. One hundred have done so; and so long as a Christian apologist can point to one Christian on the side he desires, he will always be able to claim Christian sanction for his views. This was the way in which Christianity abolished slavery, and secured every other reform. One Christian was on the right side, and about five hundred on the wrong one. *Therefore*, if it had not been for Christianity, the reform could never have been secured. The argument is so clear and convincing—to Christians!

Professor Paterson, of Edinburgh University, says that if Socialism could realise its promise it would make it easier for men to believe in the goodness and justice of God. What the Professor means is, that if man, by himself, can make society as a whole, happy and prosperous, it will be easier for him to thank God for doing—nothing. We have no doubt it would be—for the stupid ones. The more intelligent would wonder what on earth they had to thank God for.

Christianity has one advantage over many other systems—one may have it any way one chooses. Mr. Campbell believes true Christianity—that is, his Christianity—to be identical with Socialism. Mr. R. W. Perks, on the other hand, believes true Christianity—that is, *his* Christianity—to be the great barrier "against the inroads of secularism, infidelity, and socialism." Walk up! walk up! there is a choice assortment of goods in the Christian store, warranted to suit all tastes—and all made from the same stuff.

According to Mr. Mandeville Phillips, secretary of the Poor Clergy Relief Corporation, young curates are getting scarcer than ever. The explanation appears to be that the financial bait grows less and less tempting. Men go into the Church for a living. Saving souls is a very secondary consideration.

Councillor Crowther thinks there is something wrong with the 237 places of worship in Sheffield, costing £80,000 a year. The same number of people worship in them now as worshiped fifteen or twenty years ago. As far as reaching the masses is concerned, the money is wasted. Councillor Crowther says so—and we are glad to hear it.

The heat spell in Victoria and Tasmania did great damage. Vast bush-fires raged, destroying townships and homesteads. There were many deaths, and hundreds of thousands were seriously ill. The poor horses suffered intensely. But it all proves the wisdom and benevolence of "the one above."

Another pious fable! The *Christian World*, in its last issue, contained the following item:—

“TESTING FOR JEWS.

Rev. Wm. Jones, the superintendent of the new Digbeth Institute at Birmingham, was at one time in charge of a mission among the Jews in Manchester. He was doubtful to what extent he was really getting genuine Jews to attend the meetings at the hall, but one night a woman came to the door and called out, ‘Abraham, you’re wanted.’ At once a third of the men present got up and went out. Mr. Jones knew then that he had an audience of Jews. He is satisfied that if the woman had called out, ‘Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you’re wanted,’ the entire congregation would have gone out.”

There could, surely, be very little, if any, possibility of mistaking the nationality of a Jewish audience from the facial appearance of the constituent parts. Perhaps, however, Mr. Jones would be surprised to hear that a very small proportion of Jews bear the first name of “Abraham,” and even when it is borne not one per cent. of the holders thereof are named in full in common usage. But any absurd falsehood will do for a Christian audience; yet the parsons are asking, “Why don’t the working men come to church?”

It is amazing how childishly credulous even great preachers show themselves to be. The Rev. Canon Scott-Holland, preaching at St. Paul’s recently, speaking of Jesus, said: “It was simply impossible to be in the company of Jesus without giving him this unique and supreme position. You knew him to be incapable of sin. You knew him to be free from the universal taint. It was impossible to have a doubt about it.” As a matter of fact, practically the whole Jewish nation not only had a doubt about it, but openly disbelieved it. Of all the crowds who are said to have followed him during his public ministry, at the crucifixion they all forsook him and fled. Not even the twelve believed in him. What the Canon declares impossible actually happened. Jesus “was despised and rejected of men.”

Dr. Wayland Hoyt, a popular American divine, says that “nothing—no rapture, no shining ecstasy—can take the place of obedience to Christ.” A strange utterance in face of the inescapable fact that nobody ever has obeyed Christ. Christ is praised in prayer, sermon, and song, but obeyed—never.

It is reported in the newspapers that the Salvation Army is taking a new departure in “Rats!” Cat farms are being started in India, with a view to helping the natives to keep down the plague of rodents. But why on earth should a religious body like the Salvation Army interfere between cats and rats, and help one lot to kill the other? Did not cats make both? Why not leave the matter piously to his Almightyness? William Booth is mistaking his place. But for a long time his head has been too big for any shop hat.

Correspondence.

THE BLASPHEMY PROSECUTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE FREETHINKER.”

Sir,—Will you permit me, outside your ranks, to express disgust with the present prosecution? I dare say the views I hold would find as little support from the majority of your readers as from orthodox Christians, but I firmly believe I should receive from your readers what I should not receive from the other side—a patient hearing and fair criticism. Those who condemn the Inquisition and rack are the first to apply those principles and methods when they best suit their purposes. The methods adopted in this instance by the prosecution cause one to wonder whether, after all, the clock has not been put back three or four hundred years.

DUDLEY WRIGHT.

The paradise the theologians dream of will be realised on earth. We shall not abolish death, but we shall make it strong, rich, and glorious, and when death comes it will bring no terror, but rest and peace in the shadow of its wings.—G. W. Foote.

Is there a God?
I do not know.
Is man immortal?
I do not know.
One thing I do know, and that is that neither hope, nor fear, belief, nor denial, can change the fact. It is as it is, and it will be as it must be.—Ingersoll

Bible and Blasphemy.

IN spite of the Higher Critics, and the New Theologians, the Bible is still a “holy” book; is still sold without emendation, or apology; because the Church is not brave enough, nor honest enough to speak the truth about it, and to acknowledge that it was a terrible mistake to force upon the Christian religion the savage and immoral Old Testament.

And to-day, because educated churchmen lack courage and candor, and because the mass of so-called Christians are ignorant and intolerant, it is still blasphemy to speak the truth about the Holy Bible.

One of the evil consequences of this cowardly conspiracy of silence manifested itself in the early stages of the Boulter case. Mr. Boulter had quoted, in one of his speeches, the severe condemnation of Jehovah, from my book, *God and My Neighbor*; and I am informed that one of the magistrates declared that to be a highly improper manner in which to “speak about the Deity.”

So that judicial gentleman is still so ignorant as not to know the difference between “the Deity” and Jehovah. And I venture to say that fifty per cent. of church-going Christians are as ignorant as he.

But Jehovah never was “the Deity.” Jehovah was an idol god—probably a stone phallic emblem—and was carried about in a box and worshiped by a tribe of savage, cruel, and fanatical Arab brigands. There is not an educated and intelligent Christian to-day who accepts Jehovah as “the Deity.”

And the new God—the God which the New Theology has invented because it is ashamed of Jehovah—is not *the* Deity. In all the history of the world there has never been a god entitled to be called *the* Deity. There have been many gods who might each have been spoken of as *a* Deity, or *our* Deity; but there have always been more Deities than one in the world. Our English Deity is not the Deity of the Jews, nor of the Buddhists, nor of the Chinese. Father Vaughan’s Deity is not Mr. Campbell’s Deity. Mr. Campbell’s Deity is not Sir Oliver Lodge’s Deity. And I mean to say that a man so ignorant as not to be aware of these elementary truths is unfit to take part in a trial for blasphemy.

—Robert Blatchford.

THE NEW ERA.

A new era is dawning on the world. We are beginning to believe in the religion of usefulness.

The men who felled the forests, cultivated the earth, spanned the rivers with bridges of steel, built the railways and canals, the great ships, invented the locomotives and engines, supplying the countless wants of man; the men who invented the telegraphs and cables, and freighted the electric spark with thought and love; the men who invented the looms and spindles that clothe the world, the inventors of printing and the great presses that fill the earth with poetry, fiction and fact, that save and keep all knowledge for the children yet to be; the inventors of all the wonderful machines that deftly mould from wood and steel the things we use; the men who have explored the heavens and traced the orbits of the stars—who have read the story of the world in mountain range and billowed sea; the men who have lengthened life and conquered pain; the great philosophers and naturalists who have filled the world with light; the great poets whose thoughts have charmed the souls, the great painters and sculptors who have made the canvas speak, the marble live; the great orators who have swayed the world, the composers who have given their souls to sound, the captains of industry, the producers, the soldiers who have battled for the right, the vast host of useful men—these are our Christs, our apostles and our saints. The triumphs of science are our miracles. The books filled with the facts of Nature are our sacred scriptures, and the force that is in every atom and in every star—in everything that lives and grows and thinks, that hopes and suffers, is the only possible god.—Ingersoll.

INDIGESTION, *n.* A disease which the patient and his friends frequently mistake for deep religious conviction and concern for the salvation of mankind. As the simple Red Man of the western wild put it, with, it must be confessed, a certain force: “Plenty well, no pray; big bellyache, heap God.”—Ambrose Bierce.

Burns had his faults, his frailties. He was intensely human. Still, I would rather appear at the “Judgment Seat” drunk, and be able to say that I was the author of “A man’s a man for a’ that,” than to be perfectly sober and admit that I had lived and died a Scotch Presbyterian.—Ingersoll.

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.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "Religion and Reform." Selections by the Band before Lecture.

WOOLWICH (Town Hall): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Salvation Army: A Study of Religious Failure and Social Imposture."

COUNTRY.

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (Baths Assembly Hall, Priory-street): Joseph McCabe, 3, "The Church and Social Questions"; 7, "Our Earliest Human Ancestors."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, A Lecture.

GLASGOW (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class—Open Discussion; 6.30, Miss A. Muirhead, "The Problem of the Poor: British v. Elberfeld Solution."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Miners' Institute, York-road and Accommodation-road): Friday, Jan. 31, at 8, S. H. Wishart, "Atheism and Social Progress: II.—The Roman Catholic Curse."—Clarion Club, 125 Albion-street: Tuesday, Feb. 4, at 7.45, B. Killip, a Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): H. S. Wishart, 3, "Immortality and Immorality"; 7, "The Christian Degradation of Marriage."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, Orchestral Concert by the Newton Heath Philharmonic Band; vocalist, Carlton Tong (baritone).

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