

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

If men's notions of right and wrong have any other basis than this of expediency; if they originated, or could have originated, in any other way; if actions have in themselves a moral character apart from, and nowise dependent on, their consequences—then all philosophy is a lie and reason a disorder of the mind.

—AMBROSE BIERCE.

Heaven's Informing Silence.

WE read of "silvery voices" and "golden silences" but the curious thing is that we know nothing of the latter except by means of the former. Carlyle wrote thirty-five volumes in glowing praise of silence. To show how truly beautiful silence is he became the most inveterate talker of his generation. "The English," he said, "are a dumb people. They can do great acts, but not describe them." When did the English people ever give an exhibition of their dumbness? Certainly not during the lifetime of the sage of Chelsea, and most assuredly not since his day. At the present time, the British people are remarkably garrulous. There may be a doubt as to the greatness of their deeds, but the greatness of their loquacity is in full evidence. This is frankly admitted by "J. B." of the *Christian World*, in one of his able articles: "What is certain is that we are considerably vocal at present. What with politicians, pressmen, preachers, and authors, the air is filled with a daily increasing clamor. We are at every moment listening to someone, or asking someone to listen to us." In the religious world silence is unknown. "People swarm to conferences, to allocations; there is a constant creation of new platforms. Whatever else the Church lacks, it fails never in the zeal of discussion. It abounds in *pros* and *contras*, in revised statements of its faith, in displays of its logic and of its rhetoric."

In this statement "J. B." is guilty of no exaggeration. The gifts of speech are undoubted; and in the Protestant camp everyone speaks with absolute authority. Hence there are incessant bickerings, wranglings, and controversies, all charged with gall and wormwood. Some time ago, the Rev. Dr. Horton published a book, entitled *Does the Cross Save?* In the *British Congregationalist*, a minister reviewed it who believes that the Cross does not save. This annoyed Dr. Horton very much, and in his last published sermon, he declares that those men, who differ from him and his friends "will either have to leave Congregationalism or alter their view." Dr. Horton knows perfectly well that the scandal of all the centuries has been that the Cross does not save, that the world has not been redeemed by Christianity; "and yet," he has the audacity to assert, "this, which is a stumbling-block and a scandal to the Pharisee and to the philosopher, is the power of God unto salvation, and the only power of God unto salvation." We have spoken, this Protestant pope seems to say, and let all who cannot say Amen to our speech keep silence.

Now, what is all this heated, bitter quarrel about? What is the theme of this everlasting speech of the Churches? On what authority do the

sects denounce and excommunicate one another in such voluble rhetoric? The all-significant fact, which must be borne in mind, is that in all their voluminous speech religious leaders proudly assert that they represent Heaven, God, Christ, the Holy Ghost. The Pope and his cardinals, the speakers at Church Congresses, at the meetings of various denominational Unions and of the Free Church Council, all make their declarations, however contradictory and mutually destructive, in Heaven's name and by Heaven's own special request. And yet, while the Churches are thus so vocal in Heaven's name, Heaven itself is profoundly silent. "How modest is God," exclaims "J. B."; "how marvellous his reticence, his self-repression!" How does "J. B." know that there is a God if he is reticent about himself and his doings? It is all very well to say that "there is nothing in the universe so mysterious, so awe-inspiring, and yet so suggestive as its silence," and that "while we talk and talk it goes on doing everything and saying nothing"; but in the face of this "saying nothing," what right has "J. B." to postulate "a supreme personality who, intent upon his work, wants no fuss about himself"? Why, the Churches are perpetually fussing about a God who has never uttered a word about himself or about anything else. Even "J. B." often waxes eloquently vocal in description of a deity that has never seen fit to describe himself. Millions of preachers undertake every week to give the minutest information concerning the Divine will, mind, and character. They are more intimately acquainted with the Supreme Being than with their closest earthly companions. They know all about Father, Son, and Spirit, how they are related one to another and to the world, and what special work each has to do. *And yet the Being thus analysed and depicted in all his parts is both invisible and silent!*

"J. B." pins his faith in no Sacred Writings, Christian or Pagan. He says:—

"Primitive peoples, whose universe was so much simpler and more intimate an affair than we find it, imagined an intercourse of audible speech between heaven and earth—revelation delivered in good Hebrew, or whatsoever other language the receivers happened to speak. When later it dawned upon the world that these histories were legendary; that man all this while had had the talking to himself; that—

'The sky which noticed all makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure,'

a sudden chill, a sense of forsakenness, fastened on the minds of men, from which we have hardly recovered yet."

It is a great confession, on the part of an ordained clergyman, to openly avow that all histories of spoken revelations from Heaven are legendary; but having made such a bold admission "J. B." is yet unable to free himself from the influence of the primitive belief based on the legends. It is thus he writes:—

"All the time revelation was going on, not the less real that it was a silent one. Not by speech, by spoken vocables, but by a steady development of the human spirit, opening its eyes, enlarging its outlook, deepening its moral consciousness, did the work proceed. He who is 'closer to us than breathing, nearer than hands and feet,' has put himself on terms of intimacy with his child in ways too deep and delicate to be expressed in language. Spirit touches spirit and that is enough."

This is Tennyson's Higher Pantheism in all its glory; but how does "J. B." get at his "supreme personality who, intent upon his work, wants no fuss about himself," and who "avoids show and ceremony, and so much prefers reality"? Does the clever essayist grant that, after all, God as Father, Son, and Spirit is nothing but a poetical personification of Nature, and that all pulpit descriptions of him are purely fictitious? Is any other conclusion possible once the theory of spoken revelation is given up? Even when Tennyson sang so confidently—

"Speak to Him Thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet"—

he was obliged to put in this significant line:—

"For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool."

And after those two glowing lines in the middle, the famous poem closes thus:—

"And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He?"

"This Vision," glorified by a capital V, what is it? Only "a straight staff bent in a pool." The conclusion arrived at in "The Higher Pantheism" is, that God, if there be a God, is unknown and, under present conditions, unknowable. In the final sense, "this Vision" is purely suppositional. As a matter of fact, we can neither hear nor see; but *if we could*—? What a slippery *if* on which to build a supernatural religion!

"J. B." is justly severe in his condemnation of the Church, which "was never easy unless it was holding councils, drawing up creeds, devising new word-juggles, keeping its logic-and-rhetoric mills incessantly grinding," a process by which, "it may safely and also sorrowfully be said, it never taught the world one single thing, never advanced by a foot its real knowledge." This is perfectly true and well said; but is it not also true that by no other road whatsoever has any real knowledge of God reached the world? Equally just are his denunciation of dogma as "the result of speech" and commendation of science as "the result of silence"; but what about his own dogma of the Fatherhood of God redeeming the world through Jesus Christ? Is not this dogma, like all the rest, a result of speech, of man's talk with himself? It is certainly not a scientific discovery; it is not knowledge, but a conjecture. Knowledge is born of thought in firm contact with phenomena; it is the outcome and reward of genuine experiment. It may come in silence, but only in response to the practical appeal of intelligence. It may also come in solitude, but only in so far as solitude may facilitate thinking. What is certain is, that it is never acquired by magic, or as the result of dreaming.

Towards the close of his interesting article "J. B." makes his escape into the realm of emotionalism. Intellectually, he is out and out an Agnostic, while emotionally he pretends to be a Gnostic. There is much truth in the essay, but it is obscured by an atmosphere of mysticism, of which one is conscious all the way through. He says that "if we would cherish deep and abiding convictions we must be chary in our talk about them." Are we to infer from that that ministers, who are professional talkers, cannot have "deep and abiding convictions"? It is rather absurd for people who do nothing but talk, by tongue or by pen, to expatiate on the virtues of silence. Our point, however, is that the absurdest thing of all is to speak familiarly about a realm of utter silence, to orate without end in the name of, and for, a being who is admittedly too modest to say a word for himself, and to hurl abusive and insulting censure at the people who conscientiously decline to set their whole mind and affection on the unknown things of an unknown sphere at the alleged bidding of an unknown and eternally silent God. This, indeed, is the greatest and most culpable of blasphemies.

J. T. LLOYD.

"Suffer Little Children."

THERE are various ways of getting on in the world in a Christian country. Some of these involve very hard work, and adequate remuneration is uncertain. Others may bring a good return, but the risk of failure may also be great. There are other methods that would be successful were it not for the interference of the police and the Public Prosecutor. So perhaps the easiest method of all, the one combining the most certain return with the least amount of risk, is to set up as a religious philanthropist. Thanks to Christian civilisation, there is never any lack of more or less deserving objects of charity on the one side, and human nature, in its normal state, will always provide a fair proportion of people who can be affected by stories of distress and destitution. And between the two, as middleman, comes the professional Christian philanthropist. Real as the distress is, it suffers no loss when passed on in his appeals to the charitable public. The London children who have never seen a blade of grass have, for instance, become stock figures in the provinces. No Londoner has ever come across a child of this description, unless he happened to be blind, but he is more or less a fixture in the appeals sent from London to the provinces, and he is believed in with the confidence begotten by persistent repetition. The large number of people who are in need of charity is a most distressful feature in our civilisation, but from one point of view, the number who live by doling out help to this class, is more distressful still.

One institution that appeals to the charitable public—it is a type of who knows how many more?—is called the "Poor Children's Society," with headquarters at Shaftesbury Hall, Trinity-street, London, S.E. This Society was founded in 1885 by a Mr. G. H. Breton, who appears on the annual report as "founder and director"—for "director" one may, apparently, read proprietor. Mr. Breton is an ex-post office official with a pension of £1 per week. The annual report and balance sheet of this Society, of which more later, has the common characteristic of many such documents. There is an apparently detailed statement of money received and of work done, but in reality an absence of just what one would like to learn. Some information has been furnished me by a gentleman who has been carrying on a crusade against this Society, but I prefer confining myself to the actual balance sheet that lies before me. Mr. James Day, the gentleman in question, was once a subscriber to the Society. Growing suspicious, he asked for information, which was refused. He then set to work in his own way. He looked up the records of the promoters of this Society, and found little to admire, with plenty to condemn. Unable to get satisfaction otherwise, he hunted up the collecting boxes of the Society, in shops, public-houses, etc., smashed them open, handed the money to the shopkeeper, and then sent the broken boxes to the Society, inviting them to prosecute. He also had printed numerous gummed labels to be affixed on other boxes, declaring the Society to be a swindle, and giving details of money collected and expended, with the character of the Society's promoters. Still the Society remains silent, and silence, in the face of such plain charges and such drastic action, carries its own condemnation.

The annual report for 1906-7 is written by a (Rev.?) J. Stanton, who hurls at the head of the public statistics of work done, quite in the style of the Salvation Army, and which are about as convincing. During the year, for instance, Mr. Stanton says the Society gave away 60,866 free meals. On this was spent, according to the balance sheet, £247 18s. Seeing that the number of meals included over 4,000 "roast beef dinners," the amount spent cannot be called excessive. It is less than one penny per meal. It is, of course, impossible to say the meals were not given, but one feels inclined to venture the opinion that either the number fed is

exaggerated or the quality of the meals would bear improvement.

Mr. Stanton says that he several times attended "that splendid institution, Shaftesbury Hall," and adds that "the terrible amount of destitution with which the Society comes in contact compels it to draw very freely upon its none too plentiful resources to provide breakfasts, dinners, and teas for thousands of needy children and women." How much is drawn will be seen from the following. The Society's income is principally derived from some thousands of collecting boxes, bearing the legend, "Free Meals, Free Holidays." Women are employed to collect the money from the boxes at a weekly salary, and are further authorised to take their expenses from the collections. During 1906-7, the total income of the Society is given as £3,884 19s. Among the items of expenditure—summarised—are the following, concerning many of which, one would like fuller information:—

	£	s.	d.
Wages	1,094	12	5½
Utensils	76	13	5
Rents, Rates, and Taxes ...	174	13	10
Furniture and Bedding ...	22	10	7
Postage and Printing ...	816	19	7
Building Repairs	316	9	1
Coals and Gas	53	0	7
Petty Cash	55	10	10
Travelling Expenses (Staff) ...	79	19	11
Total	2,690	10	3½
Add to this, Balance in Hand ...	35	10	2
Grand Total	2,726	0	5½

Deducting this from the total income, we get an expenditure of £658 10s. 6½d. spent on the "Free Meals and Free Holidays."

That the last balance sheet is no exception to other years may be seen from the fact that in 1905-6, out of an income of £3,309, no less than £2,931 went in expenses. Of course, some proportion of the above £2,691 might be justly written of as part of the charity expended, but as the staff—at least, the principal ones—apparently live in "mission premises" and are fed at the expense of the "mission," and as there is no attempt made to split up the cost of rent, etc., one is compelled to lump the sums as above. But even on the most favorable estimate it is impossible that more than a quarter of the money received should be expended on the object for which it is given. "The Poor Children's Society," says the annual report, "devotes a very large share of its funds and attention to providing food for the hungry and holidays for those who would never know their joys but for its assistance." What this very large share is, the above analysis shows.

Several exposures of this Society's work have already been made in the press, including one in *Truth*. It has been placed upon the Black List of the Charity Organisation Society, and promises have been made from time to time of a reform in the Society's methods. Hitherto the result has been nil. Some time ago, a Lieutenant-Colonel Gibbings joined the Committee in the hopes of getting things managed in a better manner. Finding that the Committee was a sham, and had no real control over the Society's administration, he resigned. He was not even allowed to examine the books and accounts of the Society. Mr. Breton, who appears to be the proprietor of the "business," prefers things as they are, and trusts to the short memory and good nature of the public. From his own point of view, this is probably the wisest course. In the case of the Salvation Army, this method has worked with considerable success. Any exposure that may be made can only reach a few. And the few simply cease to subscribe. But outside this number there is the great mass of the public, careless and thoughtless, and it is upon such that these organisations depend.

Personally, I am in no degree surprised at the methods or the results of the "Poor Children's Society." When I was collecting facts for my pamphlet on "Foreign Missions" I came across quite a number of small missions devoted to metropolitan work which were obviously proprietary concerns. The general method I found to be as follows. An ordinary mission-helper, or a clergyman with a poor living, looks around for some method of advancement. London's wealth and London's poverty provide many opportunities. A mission of some kind or another is founded, and circulars duly prepared and distributed. A house is taken as headquarters, in which the promoter lives. His rent, food, and personal expenses come out of the mission funds. These figure on the balance sheet—which few read and fewer still understand—as "expenses." Whereas his total income before blossoming out as a philanthropist may not have exceeded two pounds per week, he is now enabled to live up to the tune of three or four hundred a year, besides appearing before the public with the halo of religious philanthropy around him. And any criticism that may be passed on his methods may be easily evaded, either by pointing to the proportionately little good done, or by twisting it into an attack on religious belief.

The statement that every country has the government it deserves, is of tolerably wide application. We have the poor we deserve and we have the rich we deserve, and we have the parasites that prey upon both as a natural consequence. A country which has its intelligence debauched by superstition, and its sense of social responsibility so little developed as to regard as normal and inevitable the existence of hosts of people unable to secure the wherewithal to live decently, invites all the abuses it gets. Charlatans and impostors breed and multiply in such an environment. To crush them in one direction is only to prepare the way for their springing up in another. The evils of Christian supremacy are writ large in many directions, but to the careful student of life they are nowhere more apparent than in the development of a whole class that *prays* with the distressed in order that it may *prey* upon the generous and the sympathetic.

C. COHEN.

The Dear "Daily News" on Blasphemy.

BLASPHEMY is in the air just now, and therefore it was to be expected that the pedantic piffers of the *Daily News* would be obliged to darken counsel with vain words.

In a late issue of that paper is one of the very latest examples of the extremes to which some curious type of mind can and will go in the idle work of proving white to be black and water to be dry.

Over the initials "H. N. B.," is a column of the idlest word-spinning that ever drew a cheque.

"On Burns and Bacchanalian Verse" is one more attempt similar to those which we have lately had quite a crop, by which religionists claim that only out of religion can any good things come.

Bradlaugh was a Christian, we are told, only he did not know it; all his work for humanity was—in spite of all his professions of anti-Christianity—inspired only by religion; and so on through the whole list of men and women who have antagonised the orthodoxies of their time but who, when dead and defenceless, are derided by the opponents of all progress.

There must surely be something wrong somewhere when the force of a convention is so great

"that the minister himself is proscribed to take part in a carousal in honor of Rantin' Robin, who ridiculed the kirk and sang the De'il and gave to the genius of the most Puritan people in Europe its highest expression in terms of sheer devilment and religion."

This is in terms simply a restatement of the old objection that the Devil is stronger than God; the force and power of Burns' blasphemy overcomes

Puritanic beliefs and conventions of respect. This, too, in spite of "H. N. B.'s" statement that, after all, "The Cotter's Saturday Night" is "one of the least considerable of Burns' achievements," and justification of this statement by claiming that its opening stanzas are an echo of Gray's "Elegy" and two of the best lines from Pope.

These two statements are, of course, very agreeable to our Christian apologist. Gray and Pope stand very high for Christianity mongers, and so, of course, it is natural that Burns, having exhausted Gray in five stanzas, and Pope in two lines, leaves the rest to as sheer banality, and that the whole secret of the power of the poem over the Scottish heart lies in five stanzas which deal with the Cotter's evening devotions. But even here our Christian quibbler is not satisfied. Having shown—or stated—that Gray and Pope have the first call on Burns' genius, there is still a reservation:—

"But even in these, the words that linger in the ear, the lines which have become the current tags of daily speech are Bible rather than Burns."

There you have it again. You can't keep King Charles' head out of the petition. "It is the sentiment rather than the craftsmanship which has made it ('The Saturday Night') a classic."

Well, so let it be; "H. N. B." and his class are entitled to all the satisfaction they can get out of it; but Rationalists, Freethinkers, and Atheists may just take note of one detail and pass on.

If "H. N. B.'s" opinion were of any value it would simply suggest again that Freethinkers have just a little more reason to oppose the use of the Bible in schools as a mere classic. It justifies to the full the suggestion made years ago by Oliver Wendell Holmes: "The religious currency of mankind, in thought, in speech, and in print, consists entirely of polarised words," and that is one of the strong reasons why Freethinkers should keep up the fight to drive the Bible out of the schools and so drive the quibbling "H. N. B.'s" out of their last ditch.

That there is much need of this final exclusion is shown in the article now challenged; for our scribe having now quite satisfactorily—to himself—settled Burns' claim to further consideration, proceeds with his sermon; and as discussion and trials turning on Blasphemy are about, we are interested, and we go on. We learn—

"That it is a most curious and significant fact about the Scottish race, that despite its intense loyalty to religion and its pre-occupation with theology, it has produced no great devotional literature. Scotland has been governed by religion, fought for religion, starved for religion, above all, argued for religion, but the breath of song was absent from her prayers."

English literature has a long list of men "who have blended sweetest music with devotion," but no Scot. Heaps of terror and subtlety, but no grace, humanity, or mysticism. "Its understanding has been fettered by a rigid, logical theology." It has been formed on the Shorter Catechism, nourished on the Psalms, and found its pleasure in pursuing the premises of its creed to the last conclusions, "and so the Lowland Scot believed sincerely in religion but he remained a Pagan." "His pleasant vices were all deliberate sins."

"His drinking had the significance of an inverted act of devotion. When he did not live to the Glory of God he lived quite unconsciously to the defiance of God. Had he believed less, he would have been a natural, sensual man. Had he felt more he would have been a saint. That is the secret of Burns' extraordinary power. An African savage gets drunk on Hamburg spirits because he is so nearly a beast. Burns became the singer of revelry because revelry was for him a spiritual act. It was a defiance, a challenge to Heaven and Earth, a sort of Blasphemy."

Now the argument is complete, or almost; "H. N. B." has settled it. Every Freethinker is a Freethinker because he is a believer; every Blasphemer is a Blasphemer because he is a believer.

"I can quite accept the truth of the current saying that the blasphemer dies crying for mercy. For,

after all, the whole attraction of blasphemy would be gone if one did not in one's heart believe," and "H. N. B.," when he was a child, had a companion who, one evening, got on to a chair in the nursery and solemnly and deliberately blasphemed the Holy Ghost. At nightfall, he was found sobbing his heart out because he had challenged the wrath of God. "H. N. B." detects a similar thing in Burns.

"Burns blasphemed in sheer defiance of, and because, he believed in an Almighty God."

It would be doing "H. N. B." altogether too much honor to think for a moment that he really grasps his own argument, for summed up it is a blasphemous indictment of his God as a puny weakling, who, instead of resenting or revenging an insult, seems rather to rely on his rebels to prove his omnipotence. It is a puerile and knavish argument all through, quite closely allied to the "Bradlaugh a Christian" dodge, claiming, as that does, that God's most earnest and powerful enemies are all the while Christians at heart only they do not know it. It is surely the ghastliest sort of sham ever tried on humanity.

Just by one of those chances which happen now and again, at the back of the article on Burns is a character sketch on one of the champion mediocrities of the day: Foley Winnington Ingram, Atheist smasher and blasphemer. The article is a two-column lament on the poverty of the Church of the day; "the poverty is real, but it is not the poverty of money, it is the poverty of men"; and the droll fashion in which the pessimistic laudation of the Bishop, by "A. G. G.," justifies the piffle of "H. N. B.," is beautifully summed up in one paragraph, which is almost the only sane and solid bit of work in three columns:—

"Arthur Foley Winnington Ingram is therefore typical of his generation. When he preached on Guy Thorne's shallow novel, he reflected the poverty of the thought of the Church just as Mr. Hall Caine reflects the poverty of literature and drama or Lord Northcliffe the poverty journalism.....We feed on this emotional gruel and the Bishop of London shares our food."

Which seems rough on "H. N. B." on the other side of the paper.

T. S.

The President's Honorarium Fund.

To Freethinkers.

January 1, 1908.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

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

In these circumstances, it has been suggested that a definite honorarium should be raised for him of (say) £800 per annum. Towards this President's Honorarium Fund a preliminary promise has been made by Major John C. Harris, R.E., who offers to give a donation of £100 and to contribute a yearly subscription of £10.

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

time of life when family and personal expenses tend to increase rather than diminish.

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

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

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

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

A considerable number who replied to Mr. de Caux's circular letter preferred writing and remitting direct to Mr. Foote. They can still do so if they wish. Their donations and subscriptions will be paid over to the Fund. Communications to him should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

Trusting to hear from many donors and subscribers at an early date, in order that the Fund may be available during 1098,—Yours faithfully,

J. W. DE CAUX, J.P., 92 St. Peter's-road, Great Yarmouth: R. T. NICHOLS, 28 Park-road, Ilford (Vice-President of N. S. S., and Director of Secular Society, Ltd.): A. J. FINCKEN, 66 Mount Grove-road, Highbury, London, N.

SUBSCRIPTIONS RECEIVED TO DATE.—Continued.

		£	s.	d.			£	s.	d.
J. H. Gartrell	...	1	1	0	Liverpolitan	...	0	10	0
C. B. A.	...	1	10	0	A. Frayn	...	0	3	0
John McGlashan	...	1	0	0	T. W. and H. I.	...	0	6	0
James McGlashan	...	1	0	0	J. Lazarnick	...	0	10	6
S. Hudson	...	1	0	0	J. G. Dobson	...	0	2	6
Jas. Woodall	...	1	0	0	Edwin Andrews	...	1	1	0
F. G. Holden	...	0	5	6	Robert Stirton	...	0	18	0
C. (U. S. A.)	...	2	0	0	T. Dixon	...	0	5	0
W. H. Deakin	...	2	0	0	R. Castillo	...	0	7	0
F. J. Voisey	...	0	10	6	R. Lloyd	...	0	2	6
H. Higgins	...	0	2	0	Joseph Bevin	...	1	0	0
A Loyal Freethinker	...	0	10	0	J. G. Finlay	...	1	0	0
R. J. Henderson	...	0	10	0	H. Wyllie	...	1	0	0
J. H.	...	0	3	0	J. W. de Caux	...	2	0	0
A. Cayford	...	0	2	0	"Tome"	...	1	0	0

Extracts from Subscribers' Letters.

The following extracts from subscribers' letters will interest some of our readers. We have not thought it necessary to state, in each case, to which of the four persons concerned the letters were written. The extracts will tell their own tale.

G. L. ALWARD writes: "We are deeply interested in your work, and the *Freethinker* is looked for in our family with great interest."

G. F. FINN writes: "I wish I were in a position to follow Major Harris. Good luck and health to him! I will give a subscription as long as I can. Mr. Foote deserves it. He would have been enriched if he had been on the other side."

J. D. writes: "I hope that the list of subscribers may be a large one, and that the sum aimed at may be realised."

F. S. writes: "Once more it gives me pleasure to forward a contribution to the Fund. I hope the sum aimed at may be realised, and, better still, exceeded."

GEORGE PAYNE writes: "Whilst much regretting the necessity for this, I heartily approve of the movement, and am willing to contribute £20 per annum thereto."

J. SUMNER, JR., writes: "I know that nothing we can do in this way can adequately compensate Mr. Foote for the time, talent, and enthusiasm he has devoted; the most we can do is to show him that these are appreciated."

GEORGE BRADY writes: "I trust the fund raised on your own behalf will represent a very tangible recognition of the splendid work you have done for a humanity which is ready to lay the burden on the willing shoulders, and accept as a matter of course the life-work of those who are strenuous and unselfish."

N. D., promising an annual subscription, writes: "Mr. Foote should be supported. His unwavering devotion to freedom, and his fearless advocacy of truth and justice, are remarkable in a high degree."

G. EHLMANN writes: "I congratulate you on your happy idea of creating a Fund for our much respected and loved President. I hope every Freethinker will make a little effort and join."

S. HOLMES writes: "I have the greatest possible pleasure in enclosing cheque. I hope the Fund will receive most generous support, as it deserves."

ELIZABETH LECHMERE writes: "I greatly admire the *Freethinker* and its noble editor."

F. PARSONS writes: "Kindly allow me as an outsider to make a small contribution towards the Honorarium Fund mentioned in the *Freethinker*, as some token of admiration for the noble manner in which you have bestirred yourself in this dastardly Blasphemy prosecution."

G. LUNN writes: "Mr. Foote stands ever ready to defend the noble idea of liberty in all its aspects."

JOHN GRANGE writes: "I am good for a guinea a year, and 350 guarantors at one guinea would mean 350 guineas a year. The thing is simple enough, and there is no reason why it cannot be accomplished. This should be absolutely independent of donations for other purposes. Personally, I value your great service to Freethought more and more as the years roll by. Your loss would leave a terrible gap in our party, and we must do our little best to keep you with us by lessening the worries of life."

RICHARD JOHNSON writes: "I have much pleasure in sending cheque, and sincerely hope you may get subscribers enough to ensure the yearly Honorarium proposed."

H. WALSH writes: "I wish I could afford twenty times the amount."

R. DANIEL writes: "He stands in grand contrast to the reverent Agnostics, who have only sufficient courage to praise their enemies."

Donations Received to Date.

		£	s.	d.			£	s.	d.
Major John C.	...	100	0	0	C. J. Peacock	...	5	0	0
Harris, R.E.	...	5	0	0	Frank Smith	...	15	0	0
G. L. Alward	...	5	0	0					

Subscriptions Received to Date.

		£	s.	d.			£	s.	d.
George Payne	...	20	0	0	Rank-and-Filer	...	0	5	0
F. Boute	...	10	0	0	Manchester	...	0	2	6
J. D.	...	10	0	0	G. Lunn	...	0	5	0
Major John C.	...	10	0	0	W. E. Pugh	...	0	10	6
Harris, R.E.	...	5	0	0	J. Clayton	...	0	10	0
A. J. Fincken	...	5	0	0	W. P. Ball	...	1	0	0
F. S.	...	5	0	0	John Grange	...	1	1	0
Sydney A. Gimson	...	2	2	0	Richard Johnson	...	5	0	0
G. L. Alward	...	1	1	0	P. Rowland	...	1	0	0
A. Chick	...	1	1	0	C. J.	...	1	0	0
A. Hurcum	...	1	1	0	H. Walsh	...	1	0	0
G. F. Finn	...	1	1	0	R. Daniel	...	0	5	0
R. Green	...	1	0	0	George White	...	0	10	0
W. Rowland	...	0	10	0	Blackheath	...	0	2	0
J. Sumner, Jr.	...	0	10	6	W. Cromack	...	0	5	0
W. Clarkson	...	2	2	0	J. Dunlop	...	1	0	0
L. Gjenro	...	2	0	0	G. B.	...	0	4	0
G. Brady	...	1	1	0	A. Rowley	...	0	5	0
G. Ehrmann	...	1	1	0	D. J. D.	...	1	0	0
S. Holmes	...	2	2	0	W. Bailey	...	5	0	0
J. W. F.	...	1	1	0	H. Jessop	...	5	0	0
F. Jagger	...	1	0	0	W. H. Spivey	...	0	10	6
Elizabeth Lechmere	...	0	10	0	W. Dodd	...	1	0	0
F. Parsons	...	1	0	0	L. Devreux	...	0	5	0
A. J. Young	...	0	10	6	W. Palmer	...	0	2	6
J. K.	...	1	0	0	R. Gibbon	...	1	1	0

GEORGE WHITE writes: "Enclosed is my annual subscription. I hope you will have a good response. Mr. Foote certainly deserves every encouragement from the party."

J. DUNLOP writes: "He is a splendid worker and writer and well deserves any amount that you can raise for him."

W. BAILEY writes: "I am delighted you have taken the matter up, and hope there will be a good response."

H. JESSOP writes: "Words could not express the help and encouragement your writings have been to me. I hope the Fund that Mr. de Caux has opened will be a decided success."

W. H. SPIVEY writes: "Look at his action in the latest 'blasphemy' prosecution, and then say if he is not a real General. If my means were anything like my admiration my shillings would be guineas."

W. DODD writes: "How little we give to our teachers compared with what Christians pay to their preachers."

J. K. sends £1 "as a thank offering for emancipation from the bonds of superstition through reading the *Freethinker*."

R. J. HENDERSON writes: "I wish we could find money enough to pay you £1,000 a year. It would be little enough."

JOHN AND JAMES MCGLASHAN send "Best wishes that the Fund may grow to a handsome sum."

T. W. AND H. I. write: "We send the enclosed to help put the required weight behind your fist."

ROBERT STIRTON writes: "Please find 18s. as a quarterly subscription to the President's Fund. I have received the co-operation of four other friends in the matter.....I trust a sufficient number of the party will be found capable of steady effort in this direction."

"C." writes from the United States of America: "I shall be pleased to send a similar amount every year as long as the Fund is required, as I think the Secularist party owes a lot to Mr. Foote for his untiring energy on its behalf."

J. G. FINLAY writes from South Africa: "I hope the amount aimed at will be raised. Added to Mr. Foote's other worries, sordid money troubles must be very vexing; they absorb so much brain power that might be better employed in demolishing the ancient superstition."

Acid Drops.

There is nothing like having a good opinion of yourself. The *Academy* was described last week, in its own pages, as "the only uncommercial paper in London." The *only!* What price the *Freethinker*? This journal is boycotted out of a paying circulation; we get nothing a year out of it, payable quarterly, monthly, or otherwise, just as we like to have it; and we wonder how much less the editor of the *Academy* receives. To call the *Freethinker* a "commercial" venture is the best joke of the day.

Somebody has been complaining that the *Academy* paragraphs are too "acid." The editor admits the acidity; nay more, he justifies it. "It is no surprise to us," he says, "to find that people whose whole attitude of mind is diametrically opposed to our own disapprove of the 'tone' of our notes." So the "acid flavor" of the notes is to continue. Perhaps the *Academy* editor will come to detect a trace of inspiration in our own heading of "Acid Drops."

On one point we rather agree with the *Academy*. The editor defends anger as one of the virtues. This is what Johnson meant, we take it, when he "loved a good hater." Anger is one of the strong sinews of the soul. Even the New Testament, with all its teaching of submissiveness, says "Be angry, and sin not"—which is an admission that anger may be *without* sin. We wonder our pious contemporary did not seize upon this illustration. Anyhow, the editor has our sympathy when he asserts that the emotion of anger has been responsible for some remarkably fine literature, and that "without liability to anger there can be no real sincerity." Vauvenargues said that "Never to praise with enthusiasm is the mark of a mediocre nature." We might add that never to be angry with malice and treachery and cruelty, and the rest of the baser vices, is a mark of the very same character.

When the Secular Education League held its first Demonstration at the Memorial Hall, the *Christian World* was the only religious paper that mentioned Mr. Foote's presence, although he had the biggest reception of the evening; and the *C. W.* only mentioned Mr. Foote's presence to deplore it as a dreadful thing. The *Christian Commonwealth* did not mention him at all—and the *C. C.* is the organ of Mr. Campbell and the New Theology. We now see that this same paper gives a brief report of the Secular Education League's

annual meeting. Once more it mentions all the other speakers and leaves Mr. Foote's name out of the list. These tactics do not provoke Mr. Foote's anger; they only excite his contempt—with a little mingling of pity at the spectacle of men so stultified and debased by their "faith." It is a pity they do not read the *Freethinker*, if only to learn better manners and better temper.

The same number of the New Theology organ prints a sermon by Mr. Campbell, in which we note the following:—

"When the Dreyfus scandal was brought to light who was the indomitable friend of the oppressed who insisted that justice should be done, and dared all risks in order to arouse public opinion on the question? Not a Christian preacher, but the anti-clerical novelist, Emile Zola."

This admission is commended to the attention of Mr. Campbell's friends and associates. Not that it cost Mr. Campbell very much. Zola was a Frenchman, and there are so many of these "liberal-minded" Christians who (as Hosca Biglow says)—

"du believe in freedom's cause
Ez fur away ez Paris is."

The case is altered when it comes to London. Moreover, it is to be observed that Mr. Campbell minimises his admission by calling Zola merely an "anti-clerical." But that was only Zola's political attitude towards the priests. Zola himself was an Atheist. And so, by the way, were nearly all the other leaders on the side of light, liberty, and justice in the Dreyfus struggle. For the truth is that Zola, although he played a magnificent part on a critical occasion, was far from standing alone in the fight. Clemenceau himself was one of its protagonists. And his religious opinions were (and are) the same as Zola's.

Mr. Henderson, M.P., the Labor Party leader, was one of the "lions" at the Free Church Congress, and he seems to have roared in the requisite manner. He flatteringly stated that "Everywhere the people were looking to the Churches to take the lead in that great revolution which should result in the solving of social and economical problems." Everywhere! What a large order! And who are "the people"? Are the *Clarion* readers included? Are our own readers in the little lot? Are the millions who don't go to church included as well as the myriads who do? And if the Churches are to take the lead, what will become of Mr. Henderson? Won't he be superseded by Dr. Horton, or Dr. Clifford, or Mr. Rattenbury, or Mr. Stewart Headlam? The honorable gentleman would seem to be just keeping the seat warm for his clerical successor.

Mr. Henderson was followed by the Rev. A. T. Guttery, who went in as a whole-hogger for Socialism. But it would have to be "Christian" Socialism. According to the *Christian World*, this high and mighty gentleman very strongly admonished the Labor Party not to have anything to do with Anti-Christian literature, which would make it difficult for ministers to associate with them. Good God! What a calamity that would be! Fancy the Labor party severely, if sorrowfully, ignored by the Soul-Savers! The idea is too awful. Surely the Labor Party will be wise in time, and cast out Blatchford and all his works.

One of the Free Church Congress speakers sailed round the Socialist problem beautifully. He declared, amidst great applause, that Christianity needed to be Socialised, and that Socialism needed to be Christianised. Nobody on earth could attach any definite meaning to this declaration. But that is the beauty of these "thrilling" utterances—in the country whose inhabitants, according to Carlyle, are "mostly fools."

In spite of all the warnings, official and unofficial, as to lack of employment in Canada, the Salvation Army continues to push its emigration business with might and main, and to advertise for people "wanted" to complete their sailings. Still the fact of unemployment is so patent that the *War Cry* feels compelled to issue a warning to people not to go unless they are sure of employment, adding, however, that it is all right if they go out under Salvation Army auspices. Sensible readers will take this last with the proverbial grain of salt. But assuming that the Salvation Army does succeed in putting all they take out into employment, for the time being, will they keep in employment? And even though they did, it is pretty obvious that the dumping of thousands of fresh emigrants into a country already suffering from lack of employment means the ousting of those already in work. The compensating feature is, doubtless, that the people thus pushed out of work provide the occasion for the Army making appeals for money in Canada as well as here.

Why is the Army so evangelic over this emigration work? It must be remembered that it does not merely send out all those who come to it, it advertises for emigrants, and by means of lectures, pamphlets, etc., holds out inducements for people to go. Would the Army be so anxious if there were no bonuses and commission attached to its emigration work? The *Methodist Recorder*, the other week, stated that during 1907, the Army received about \$200,000 from this source. Colonel Lamb, of the Emigration Department of the Army, stated the other day, in reply to a statement of Mr. Cohen's, that every penny gained in commission went, after paying expenses, in assisting emigrants. He also said that last year the Army spent in this way £10,000. Well, this would still leave a sum of £30,000 on the year's working. Does Colonel Lamb mean that the expenses of the emigration office were £30,000 in one year? If so, it looks as though the office is ruinously expensive and that someone is getting a fair salary out of it. Either that or—readers may fill up the hiatus as they please.

There is one other aspect of this emigration work worth noting. Mr. Jesse Collings, in a recent letter to the *Times*, called attention to the serious drain on the country by the emigration of some of the pick of the industrial classes. He pointed out that if the money spent in this way could be devoted to placing people on the land much permanent good might be done. Mr. Bramwell Booth thereupon wrote to the *Times*, calling Mr. Jesse Collings a "little Englander," and pleading that to send our best to the colonies was a source of strength instead of weakness. Nothing is to be allowed to interfere with the Army's lucrative emigration business, clearly. Yet the complaint of Mr. Collings was not only a just one, but a very necessary one. Originally propounded as a means of saving the "submerged tenth," the Army's emigration scheme does nothing of the kind. It now boasts that the people it sends are all fine, healthy, admirable specimens of manhood and womanhood, such as the colonies are pleased to have. This may be; but if the colonies are pleased to have them, we should be pleased to keep them. There is a class, unfortunately, that this country would be the better for losing, but they are rigorously kept here. Meanwhile the fact of 40,000 or 50,000 healthy, able-bodied men and women being selected for exportation every year, leaving the poorer type behind, is creating a social problem of the very gravest character. The Army in fact, like all organisations of its kind, while posing as a socially reformative force, is in an insidious manner a force that makes powerfully for social demoralisation.

We have said before that nearly all that is sensible and valuable in the "New Theology" is a re-echo of teachings that have been commonplaces with Secularists for generations. Here is yet one more proof. Replying to a correspondent, who is concerned about the question of a future life, Dr. Warschauer replies, in the columns of the *Christian Commonwealth* :—

"I am bound to say that I consider that curiosity rather idle and not altogether healthy. Why not take one world at a time? We shall find our hands quite full enough with work that waits to be done here and now; we shall find objects of beauty, of interest, of marvel in abundance to occupy sense and mind here and now; we shall find hearts to heal, troubles to lighten, ideals to pursue, joys and sorrows to share here and now. One world at a time.....My objections to Spiritualism are many, but not the least of them is that it directs healthy attention from matters of pressing and present interest to details of which we can well afford to remain ignorant for awhile."

Quite so; and this is precisely the lesson that Secularism is always trying to drive home. It is not important to know about the next world; it is not important to know about God. If there is a future life, we shall all have a share; if there is a God, he evidently is not sufficiently interested in human affairs to interfere. Therefore let us imitate his example: look after our own affairs here in the best way we can, and leave the next world until we come to it. One world at a time, says our "New Theologian." Good teaching this, but Secularists were enforcing it before Dr. Warschauer and the New Theology were born.

Apparently there is going to be a New Theology organisation, which may lead—who knows?—to the formation of another Church. Rev. R. J. Campbell tells a *Daily News* interviewer that something is in the wind. "Many," he says, "who are in sympathy with the New Theology are practically excluded from the Churches, or are being deprived of all ordinary opportunities for Christian service. Opposition to the new views appears, in fact, to be hardening all along the line." A good many of the boycotted ones are Socialists, but they "do not find their needs satisfied by Socialist organisations; they want a religious atmosphere."

Quite so. The split will affect the Socialists as well as the Christians. We may see Christian Socialists and non-Christian Socialists arrayed in opposite camps. We don't know whether this will conduce to progress, but we think it will certainly conduce to sport.

General Booth has left (by proxy, of course) one of his Self-Denial Week circulars at our Editor's house, with a form enclosed to be filled up with the necessary £ s. d. We are entitled, therefore, to express our opinion about this Self-Denial Week; and we have no hesitation in saying, straight away, that it is one of the biggest humbugs of the age, and worthy of the grandest old showman on earth. When it was really a Salvation Army Self-Denial Week, it was worthy of a certain respect. If the Salvationists like to deny themselves tea and sugar, or even soap, for a week, and hand over the amount economised to their dearly beloved General, we should hardly call them wise, but we should recognise them as disinterested. When, however, they cadge from the general public, east, west, north, and south, and beg from door to door, even including the doors of Freethinkers, it is monstrous impudence to call it *their* Self-Denial week, and simply disgusting to boast of the larger and larger sum they raise year after year. They should call the effort by an honest name. "Cadging Week" would do for a start.

General Booth tells our Editor, in this circular, that his Self-Denial Week is "the most practical form by which a suffering world can present its needs to sympathetic human souls and be assisted in the alleviation and removal of its woes." Now there is one word applicable to all this—"Blarney!"

There is worse than blarney inside. We pass by the professional statement that the Salvation Army was "originated by God"—though it reminds us of the audacity of the pill and patent-medicine advertisements. We prefer to note what is said about the work of the Salvation Army abroad. People are asked to give money, and more money, and still more money in England for the Army's "hospital work in India." And what sort of work is it? We are treated to a sample. A bald-headed Hindu (it is quite a superior head, by the way, a great improvement on Booth's own) is depicted buried up to nearly the neck in the earth. We are told that he buried himself there "thinking that by this means he would be cured of a painful disease from which he was suffering." He was found in that interesting situation by a Salvation Army officer, away in the jungle (beware of tigers!) and "promptly enlightened and sent off to one of our Hospitals." So we are invited to give William Booth money, forsooth, in order that he may send his agents to India to hunt up more or less cranky Hindus who go in for a kind of cometary treatment of disease. How touching! He must suppose us all to be millionaires. Are there no cranks knocking about in England? Why go all the way to India to find them? What about Christian Scientists? Booth should take a turn at them. But perhaps he thinks they might take a turn at him. It is easier work fussing round the mild Hindu.

After India comes Japan. Our Heathen Ally's speciality, judging by Booth's circular, is something often mentioned in the Bible. We may call it Rahabism. We are treated to a picture of the "window of the notorious house, known to Europeans as 'number ninety-six,' in Yokohama licensed quarter." Of course, there are no such houses in England, or even in Scotland. It was necessary to go all those thousands of miles to Japan to find them. Perhaps the special feature is the "licensing." It wouldn't be so bad if they were free-trade establishments like our own. Anyhow, Booth has been at work amongst them, and the "devilish traffic in immorality" in Japan has "received a most salutary check." "It is computed," Booth says, "that no less than twenty thousand girls have been released from the most dreadful servitude of all, entirely as a result of the heroic action of our officers." This statement is so characteristic of the wily William. He is a master of non-committal sentences. He says "it is computed," but he is careful not to say *by whom*, so he evades all responsibility. Well, for our own part, we must say that anyone who swallows these Japaneasy statistics must be a terrible simpleton. The figures correct themselves. William has overdone it.

The Salvation Army does wonderful things—at a distance; and the farther off the more successful it is. In a few years it has lessened the number of "unfortunates" in Japan by 80,000. In forty years in England it hasn't lessened the number by one. We are not questioning its "rescues," neither shall we discuss them, for there is no way of getting at the real facts of the case. It is enough

for us to point out that statistics and police evidence, to say nothing of what every observant man may see for himself as he walks along the streets, show that what the Churches call "the social evil" is as flourishing as ever. Yet it was one of Booth's promises in *Darkest England* that he would transplant the girls of Piccadilly to the strawberry-beds of Essex. You have only to walk through Piccadilly at night to see how Booth has done it.

Mr. Lloyd-George, the Nonconformist pet in the Liberal Ministry, had a great reception at the Free Church Congress in Southport. He addressed a big crowd in the Albert Hall, which included a few of the inevitable "suffragettes" who had to be turned out. While he was expatiating on the vastly agreeable subject of Welsh Disestablishment, a voice cried, "When are you going to give votes to women?" The interruption might have been overlooked, as Mr. Lloyd-George, to do him credit, wished; but too many of the good Christians sprang to their feet, and were not going to sit down again without a little cheap exercise; so they pounced upon the offending female and put her outside in a jiffy. Five minutes later another offending female was promptly served in the same way. The ladies ought to have reckoned on no quarter in such a pious assembly.

Of course the ladies were in the wrong; but can't they be borne with occasionally? It seems to us that Freethinkers show Christians an example in this respect. Mr. Foote, for instance, in the whole course of his platform experience, has never (except on one occasion) had a person turned out of any of his meetings. That one occasion was at Stratford Town Hall, when his friends had to deal with deliberate and prolonged disorder. Then some men went up to the rowdies who, at any rate, wore men's clothes, and fought them out of the building. That was good, honest business. But it is contemptible to get into a rage with every interrupter. Mr. Foote has had thousands of them in his time, and has dealt with them all satisfactorily, without resorting to violence. Sometimes it is policy to let the interruption pass. The interrupter wanted to get something "off his chest," and he is often quiet afterwards. Sometimes the interruption gives the speaker a splendid chance of scoring. That is the interruption he should notice. All the others should be allowed to drift into oblivion. And how soon they got there!

The ladies being disposed of by the muscular Christianity present, Mr. Lloyd-George appropriately went on to talk about Education. On that point he was grand. At least, the Free Churchmen considered him so. He talked nonsense enough to please them up and down and round about. Church schools, which wouldn't have Nonconformist teachers, belonged to a vicious system, that corrupted youth and rotted the conscience. He himself had been educated in one of them, so he ought to know; which sounds rather odd—doesn't it?—but the Free Churchmen cheered it wildly, and it served the turn. Mr. Lloyd-George looked forward with delight to the destruction of those Church schools. They were going to have (but *will* they?) a lot of beautiful Simple Bible Teaching schools instead. Not Nonconformist schools. Oh dear no! They were not going to exclude Churchmen and Catholics. Let 'em all come! There was no sectarianism about the Nonconformist policy. Perish the thought! He forgot to mention that there were people not included in Churchmen, Free Churchmen, and Catholics, even if *these* all laid down and slept together in a happy-family bed. Instead of mentioning them, he sought to slide round the topic by declaring the great and glorious truth that, just as there was nothing *dogmatic*, so there was nothing *denominational*, about the Nonconformist preference in religious education. That was enough. The audience roared applause. You can always fetch Free Churchmen with those two blessed words, "unsectarian" and "undenominational." Yet every man of sense—including Mr. Lloyd-George himself, under the rose—is perfectly well aware that Birrell-McKenna religion is as sectarian as Balfour religion. For, at the finish, Christianity itself is "sectarian" and "denominational" in a country like England, where three-fourths of the population never go to church or chapel, and where there are crowds of Jews, Freethinkers, Secularists, Rationalists, Agnostics, and Atheists, not to mention the Nothingarians. In this country, every religion is a sect, and therefore "unsectarian" religious education is not only impossible, but inconceivable.

Mr. Lloyd-George indignantly denied that Simple Bible Teaching schools were Nonconformist schools. "You might as well say," he went on, "that the Board of Trade is a Nonconformist institution because there is a Free Churchman at its head for a moment." And his Free Church audience laughed and applauded like anything. But a sillier

illustration never came from human lips. There is absolutely no analogy between the two cases. A Nonconformist at the head of it does not make the Board of Trade a Nonconformist institution, because the Board of Trade is not concerned with matters over which Nonconformists, Churchmen, and Catholics have a long-standing and extremely bitter quarrel. But a majority of Nonconformists running the nation's schools, including the religious teaching in them, on lines that are positively hated by Churchmen and Catholics, to say nothing of others, do obviously make the schools, to all practical intents and purposes, Nonconformist schools. And any man who cannot see it is a blind partisan or a born fool. We do not think Mr. Lloyd-George is either. He is a clever politician, and he says what pleases his clients. That is all.

M. Jean Richepin has been elected to fill André Theuriet's vacant chair in the French Academy. According to the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News*, M. Richepin is "universally loved." "This admirable romancist and dramatist," we are told, "has shown himself profoundly sympathetic for the sufferings of the poor, and is respected for the frankness and independence of his character." The political organ of the Nonconformist Conscience does not add (naturally!) that one of M. Richepin's volumes of verse is called "Blasphemies." We may add that it merits its title.

"We badly want a new set of theological phrases," the *Christian World* says. We do. "Damn" is nearly worn out.

The Dean of Manchester calls it cowardice to put aside the question, "What is the explanation of this world?" It is the business of every man and woman, he says, to form some judgment on the universe in which he or she lives. Surely not as to its *origin*. Most people do think about its *character*. It is a common opinion that the world is overrun with Black Beetles.

The cause of the trouble in Russia is out at last. The Bishop of London has just returned from that country and declares that the "secret of the unrest in Russia is that the young people have no public school games." How proud we all ought to be of so profound a thinker as Bishop Ingram?

Nonconformists are airing yet another grievance. It appears that in none of the asylums under the control of the Metropolitan Asylums Board is there any arrangement made for religious ministrations by Nonconformists. About £4,000 is paid every year to Church of England and Roman Catholic clergymen, and Nonconformists, naturally, want their share. A resolution calling attention to the matter has been moved on the Board, and things will probably be rectified. We are strongly of opinion that as many Nonconformist preachers as is possible should be sent to hospitals and asylums to keep company with those ministers already established therein. If necessary, we would forward to the committee a list of names.

Fancy a "relic of the true cross" being marketable at this time of day! There is actually a suit going on in the courts with respect to an ancient reliquary said to contain a piece of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. At one time there were enough pieces of that cross knocking about Europe to have built a ship with, if they could only have been put into planks. But credulity is not what it was then, and the holy-splinter trade languishes. One hears of it occasionally, though, and this is a case in point. The reliquary in question was sold for £775, but the purchaser wanted the money back, on the ground that the seller's representations were false and fraudulent. The action has been tried before a jury, who gave a verdict for the seller, but a new trial has been ordered by the Court of Appeal, and the purchaser may now have a look in. Unfortunately the only person in the universe who could settle the dispute keeps quiet.

The *Vegetarian* draws attention once more to the foul air which is usually found in churches and chapels, through neglect of the simplest laws of hygiene. In some old churches there are draughts that cannot be stopped, but in the great majority of the rest no admission is given to fresh air and no exit to foul air. The result is a comatose, poisoned congregation. But the Church, as the *Vegetarian* observes, is "notorious for its neglect of life's physical evils."

Rev. John Martyr Ward, of Gressenhall, East Dereham, Norfolk, left £41,980. Let us charitably hope he has a seat near the door now.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

April, — Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 15, Manchester.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—May your "More power to you!" be realised.
- T. H. ELSTOR.—Glad you liked Mr. Gould's article so well, and that you think so highly of him personally, in spite of intellectual differences. Your tribute to the *Freethinker*, and to our action in the "blasphemy" case, is much appreciated.
- W. HALL.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- "BLASPHEMY" DEFENCE FUND.—B. Siger, 1s.
- W. GARTON.—Sorry you write from bed and have had to lie there since Christmas. You suggest that the "splendid article" on the Two Imprisonments should be expanded so as to include the whole subject of last century's 'blasphemy' prosecutions." We certainly think of writing a history such as you suggest, but we cannot do it just now. Glad to hear from one who has read the *Freethinker* from the first number, who took twelve copies a week during our imprisonment. You know the facts, and you will enjoy *this* week's article.
- COHEN'S "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—W. Garton, 2s. 6d.
- J. CHAMBERS.—We use cuttings when we can. It is not every cutting on which we can base a good paragraph.
- E. POMEROY.—In our next.
- A. DAUMOND ends an interesting letter by saying—"It was your pamphlet *Was Jesus Insane?* that knocked the legs from under my treasured religious opinions. I had it about three months before I could pluck up courage to read it. Since then I have become a confirmed Atheist—for which I am grateful." This correspondent's order is attended to.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your useful cuttings.
- S. HARRISON.—We know nothing about the matter, and have no time at present to waste on the vulgar abuse of the *Labor Leader*.
- T. BENNETT.—Pleased to hear the Welsh Freethinkers are proud of the President's attitude and action in the "blasphemy" case.
- "A LEATHER."—You have overlooked Mr. Adamson's letter on the subject in our last issue.
- H. M. RIDGWAY writes: "About a week ago, two Salvation Army Insurance canvassers had the cheek to call at my house, although there is a large brass-plate on the door, with the words, 'Agent to the Royal Insurance Company' under my name."
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- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
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Sugar Plums.

We had not space last week to deal with the first Annual Meeting of the Secular Education League, which was held on Tuesday evening, February 25, at 10 Adelphi-terrace, London, W.C. Mr. Harry Snell, the secretary, presented the Report and Balance-Sheet; and it was agreed that good progress had been made during the first year of the League's existence. The number of influential names on the list of the General Council, scattered all over the country, was constantly increasing. No less than three hundred ministers of religion had, in a few weeks, signed a manifesto in favor of Secular Education which had been drawn up, on religious grounds, by some clerical members of the League. This was not officially issued by the League itself, but was nevertheless a valuable piece of information, as it showed how earnest Christians could rally round the League's platform,

in spite of the quarrels and protestations of the various Churches in the political arena with respect to national education. After some little discussion on the Report, an Executive Committee was elected for the new year. Amongst the twenty names were those of Mr. G. W. Foote and Mr. C. Cohen, who, however, are well-balanced—if we may say so without offence—by four Christian ministers. In reality all sections of the League's supporters are represented on the Executive Committee.

After the formal business had been disposed of, the meeting was addressed by Sir Henry Cotton, M.P., who had just left the House of Commons, and who gave his impressions of the new McKenna Bill. It was a very interesting review of the situation. Sir Henry thought that the Secular Education vote would be larger this time than on the previous division. Another speech, and a bright one, was given by Mr. H. C. F. Luttrell, M.P. for West Devon, who had a particularly engaging naturalness of manner. He quite took the meeting when he said it was all nonsense to assert that the people would not have Secular Education. His own supporters in Devonshire naturally included a large percentage of definitely religious people; but, although he had voted for Secular Education when Mr. Birrell's Bill was before the House, and was the only Devonshire member who had done so, he had not received a single letter of protest or remonstrance of any kind from his constituency. On the whole, he believed that the people would be rather glad to see the sectarian squabble over the children and the schools put an end to for ever in the only successful way. Mr. Luttrell's transparent sincerity made a great impression on the meeting. He was followed by Mr. Halley Stewart, M.P., the chairman, who delighted all present with the honest vigor of his denunciation of false Nonconformity and championship of true Nonconformity, which meant that the State should have nothing whatever to do with religion, either in churches or in schools, but leave it entirely to the free consciences of individual citizens as parents, or as members of Churches, or in whatever kind of voluntary association. Mr. Stewart tickled the meeting with his earnest, yet humorous, criticism of London County Council Religion, which was apparently to be established by Mr. McKenna's new Bill. Even if you could contract-out of it, under certain conditions, you couldn't contract into any other. That was the only form of religion the State was prepared to supply. Once or twice the Chairman nearly lost himself with indignation at this monstrosity, but it was only nearly and not quite, and the meeting smiled pleasurably, liking him all the better for his passionate earnestness.

A resolution against the new McKenna Bill as another merely partisan measure was moved by the Rev. Hugh C. Wallace in a bright and witty speech, and seconded by the Rev. Donald Hole, whose brief speech was full of the magnanimity of principle. Mr. Halley Stewart asked Mr. G. W. Foote to support the resolution. Mr. Foote, however, said that a speech from him wasn't necessary; besides, he had to catch his last train home. But he would just tell them something important. He had just heard from their most distinguished member, Mr. George Meredith, who had sent a subscription through him; and the greatest writer in England had observed in this letter that Secular Education was "one of the certainties of the proximate future."

The *Socialist Standard* devotes a whole page to a favorable notice of Mr. Cohen's new pamphlet on *Socialism, Atheism, and Christianity*. "No Socialist," it says in conclusion, "in the struggle for working class emancipation can honestly avoid the religious conflict."

Mr. Lloyd delivers two lectures to-day (March 15) in the Secular Hall, Manchester. We hope the district "saints" will give him large audiences and an enthusiastic welcome. Those who have not heard him before should do so now. They will know then what they have missed on previous occasions.

One of our valued American exchanges, the *Blue Grass Blade*, in an article on "The British Blasphemy Case," says that "Mr. Foote is to be warmly congratulated on the fight he has made," and regrets that Mr. Boulter "has made a practical surrender of that individual liberty in which Englishmen have taken such just pride."

Occasional extracts from interesting letters will be useful in this column. A Yorkshire correspondent writes:—"I have often conceived the idea of writing to you, but have always modestly refrained. However, I must tell you how thoroughly I enjoy reading your *Freethinker*, which I have read for the last two years. Up to then I was a staunch

Churchman, eminently orthodox, confirmed, etc. But somehow the preaching and the practice of our Rev. Pastor, and the beliefs and lives of members of the congregation, seemed so absolutely inharmonious that I threw up the sponge. Now I am an enthusiastic Freethinker. Out of my modest supply of pocket money I purchase three *Freethinkers* for distribution weekly.....I have perused quite a number of your works with the keenest enjoyment—notably the *Book of God*, *Bible Romances*, and *Will Christ Save Us?*—and most of Ingersoll's lectures and Paine's *Age of Reason*." Letters like this show what a fertile field there is for Free-thought propaganda. Many who are reckoned within the fold would find the *Freethinker* the very thing they want, if it were only introduced to them.

Some of our readers will like to see an extract from another letter we have received. We do not give our correspondent's name or address; he has good reasons for keeping away from publicity. "Some time last September," he says, "I picked up a *Freethinker* somehow. I was struck by its plain speaking, and as I had for several months been passing through certain phases of thought I was glad to get hold of something which was definite in its teaching, even if I did not wholly agree with it. So I continued to get the following numbers as they came out, and whenever I was in town I used to buy some half-dozen copies of back numbers, until I had practically obtained all those published last year. I have now decided to become a regular subscriber. I must congratulate you on the style and general get-up of the paper. It is so different from others professing Free-thought principles. The leading articles are marked by real literary ability, forcefulness and clearness of diction, and, best of all, so convincing. I have derived much intellectual enjoyment from them during the past few months. I thought you would like to know this.....But it is difficult to avow one's views openly. I am a schoolmaster. You can understand what would happen if I promulgated my views, even though I am Head of a Council School. I have been surprised to find out, however, that here and there others of my acquaintances hold similar views, but they have to keep things quiet. *Liberty of opinion!* There is no such thing. Why? Because the spirit of persecution in our Christian friends has by no means become a thing of the past. There has only been a change in the manner of effecting its purpose.....I trust you may long live to carry on the work to which you have been so devoted and at such cost." There now! The writer of that letter only met with the *Freethinker* accidentally six months ago, and see how he values it! And he is not a vulgar, illiterate person, as our readers are supposed to be (by those who don't know us), but an educated man—a teacher—a schoolmaster. Surely this should encourage our friends to place the *Freethinker* into as many fresh hands as possible.

IMMORTAL SELFISHNESS.

Like Frederick's grenadier, the Salvationist wants to live for ever (the most monstrous way of crying for the moon); and though it is evident to anyone who has ever heard General Booth and his best officers that they would work as hard for human salvation as they do at present if they believed that death would be the end of them individually, they and their followers have a bad habit of talking as if the Salvationists were heroically enduring a very bad time on earth as an investment which will bring them in dividends later on in the form, not of a better life to come for the whole world, but of an eternity spent by themselves personally in a sort of bliss which would bore any active person to a second death. Surely the truth is that the Salvationists are unusually happy people. And is it not the very diagnostic of true salvation that it shall overcome the fear of death? Now the man who has come to believe that there is no such thing as death, the change so called being merely the transition to an exquisitely happy and utterly careless life, has not overcome the fear of death at all: on the contrary, it has overcome him so completely that he refuses to die on any terms whatever. I do not call a Salvationist really saved until he is ready to lie down cheerfully on the scrap heap, having paid scot and lot and something over, and let his eternal life pass on to renew its youth in the battalions of the future.—G. Bernard Shaw, *Preface to "Major Barbara."*

WHAT IS BLASPHEMY?

I hear everywhere the cry of blasphemy. The Christian is a blasphemer in Asia, the Musselman in Europe, the Papist in London, the Calvinist in Paris, the Jansenist at the top of the Rue Saint-Jacques, the Molinist at the bottom of the faubourg of Saint-Medard. Who, then, is a blasphemer? Everybody or nobody.—Diderot.

Two "Blasphemy" Imprisonments.

II.—THE "FREETHINKER" CASE.

IT will be remembered that I am writing the story of these two "blasphemy" imprisonments with special reference to the statements and criticisms of Mr. Joseph McCabe. Now the editor of the *Freethinker* has always had one virtue; possibly more, but certainly that one—a strong sense of fair play. Whenever anyone is replied to in this journal, his exact words, sometimes to the point of tediousness, are laid before the readers. Those who can carry their minds back to the "Atheist Shoemaker" controversy may recollect that I printed in the *Freethinker* every word written on the subject by the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes and his strange coadjutor, Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, although not a single word of what I wrote was allowed to appear in the *Methodist Times*. I scorn a bastard victory over an absent adversary. For twenty-six years I have given the readers of this journal an opportunity of hearing both sides in every dispute; and I trust I shall maintain that honorable policy to the very end. Let us, then, have Mr. McCabe's exact words before us, at the outset; and by "us" I mean the reader and myself.

There are two passages I have to reply to. The first is this. After asserting that "prosecution for opinions, or for assailing other people's opinions, is no longer possible in England," Mr. McCabe says:—

"For more than half a century there has been no prosecution for an attack on Christianity, in decent terms, in this country."

The second passage is this. After referring to the Pooley case in 1857, which need not be discussed at present, Mr. McCabe says:—

"The other case is that of Mr. Foote and his colleagues in 1882 and 1883. A case had occurred in 1867 that brought the law into public notice indirectly, and it was then that the Commission on Criminal Law declared that, though the law literally forbade all denial of the truths of Christianity, it would only be set in motion against those who were charged with 'insult to God and man.' In 1883 Mr. Foote, Mr. Ramsey, and Mr. Kemp were sentenced in accordance with this interpretation of the law. I need not discuss the 'comic Bible sketches' and other features of the early *Freethinker* that led to the trial. They were promptly abandoned by their publishers."

Those are the two passages,—and I proceed to show that they are as accurate and impartial as Mr. McCabe's account of Holyoake's prosecution and imprisonment in 1842.

In answering the first of Mr. McCabe's statements, I deem it advisable to say a few words as to the general character of "the early *Freethinker*."

When I was young and inexperienced, in the twenties of my own life, and the seventies of last century, I fondly imagined that Free-thought had gone through its last battles in England, that Supernaturalism was hopelessly scotched if not slain, and that our future task was simply building on the ground we had won. That youthful illusion was roughly dispelled by the reaction which followed the election of Charles Bradlaugh to parliament in 1880. I was obliged to recognise that religious bigotry was still tremendously powerful. When I saw Bradlaugh thrown out of the House of Commons as if he were a tap-room brawler I was inexpressibly shocked, and my mind underwent a great change. I was filled with a bitter hatred of Christianity. I experienced both a "conversion" and "a call." It seemed to me to be my duty to attack what Shelley called "the bloody faith," to take my share in the effort indicated by Voltaire in his "Crush the Infamous!"

The *Freethinker* was started in May, 1881. I was its editor from the first. My associate on the business side was Mr. W. J. Ramsey. I stated in the opening number that the paper would wage "relentless war against Superstition in general and the Christian Superstition in particular." It would

"do its best to employ the resources of Science, Scholarship, Philosophy, and Ethics against the claims of the Bible as a Divine Revelation," but it would also "not scruple to employ for the same purpose any weapons of ridicule or sarcasm that might be borrowed from the armory of Common Sense." It was the last part of the program, Common Sense, that did the mischief.

People who have never seen "the early *Freethinker*" have quite a mistaken notion of it. While it learnt more and more to Voltairian methods of attacking Christianity, it was never without a large proportion of solid, serious matter. Some of the best things I ever wrote (if I may be allowed to say so) appeared then, including a long and careful study of Etienne Dolet. In the fifth number we printed our first Comic Bible Sketch—an exquisite little burlesque of the Calling of Samuel, done by a skilful artist. Subsequently the *Bible Amusante* was drawn upon, and in the course of time we printed Comic Bible Sketches of our own, sometimes suggested by the French publication, and sometimes quite original. Sketches of this kind were promised in our fifth number. "We shall be greeted with shrieks of pious wrath," I said, "but we are not easily frightened." And I added what I still believe to be true, that—

"Superstition dislikes argument, but it hates laughter. Nimble and far-flashing wit is more potent against error than the slow dull logic of the schools; and the great humorists and wits of the world have done far more to clear its head and sweeten its heart than all its sober philosophers from Aristotle to Kant."

may have been mistaken, but I do not see how even the most hypercritical can call such writing "vulgar."

Mr. McCabe says that I did not attack Christianity "in decent terms." But he also says, in this very article, that "decency is a vague word." Why, then, did he use it? Was it because the vaguest word hinted the most offensiveness while involving the least responsibility?

When I was prosecuted for "blasphemy" the word "indecent" was used against me, as it had been used against Holyoake and every other "blasphemer." But I am rather astonished at Mr. McCabe's throwing out that insinuation at this time of day; or rather I should be astonished if I did not know what company he has been keeping. I disdain to answer him in any other words than those of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. This is what that gentleman (I trust Mr. McCabe understands the word) said to the jury, in seconding my efforts to repudiate the odious accusation of "indecent," which formed no part of my indictment:—

"Mr. Foote is anxious to have it impressed on your minds that he is not a licentious writer, and that this word does not fairly apply to his publications. You will have the documents before you, and you must judge for yourselves. I should say that he is right. He may be blasphemous, but he certainly is not licentious, in the ordinary sense of the word; and you do not find him pandering to the bad passions of mankind."

In view of this vindication of my "decency," it may be concluded that when Mr. McCabe says that I did not attack Christianity "in decent terms" he probably means that my style is not his,—or, if he prefers it so, that his style is not mine,—which may be granted, perhaps, without detriment to my own reputation.

Coming now to Mr. McCabe's second passage, I have to say that it strikes me as extremely foolish, while the last sentence is demonstrably false.

But let me interject a few words about my "colleagues." I was solely responsible for the contents of the *Freethinker*. Mr. Ramsey was prosecuted for his business associations with the paper. Mr. Kemp was prosecuted as publisher, although he was only our shopman. They suffered nine and three months' imprisonment respectively. And they went through it manfully,—for the day of "undertakings" had not arrived. My sentence was twelve months. Judge North gave me a "stretch," as

prisoners call it, because I was "a man gifted by God with such great ability" who had "chosen to prostitute his talents to the service of the Devil." It was a purely theological sentence. And my reply to it—short, sharp, and decisive—emphasised the fact. I held up my hand, stilled the uproar of the crowded court for a moment, and said with a last sarcasm: "My lord, I thank you; it is worthy of your creed."

But I must get back to Mr. McCabe. He states that we were imprisoned for "insult to God and man." He does not say what man we had insulted—or what "God" either, if it comes to that; and I think I had better leave Mr. McCabe and the "God" (whichever it was) to settle the amount of damage between them. In the meanwhile, I proceed to prove the absolute falsehood of his (I mean Mr. McCabe's, not his friend's) last statement—namely, that the "features of the early *Freethinker*" that got me, and my two friends, into trouble "were promptly abandoned by their publishers."

The *Freethinker* was the subject of two prosecutions. The first was started in July, 1882, and was removed by *certiorari* to the Court of Queen's Bench. Several numbers of the paper were included in the indictment. The case came up for trial in the following April. Early in 1883 a prosecution was started against the Christmas Number. A *certiorari* was refused, and the trial took place at the Old Bailey. I defended myself, and the jury disagreed. Mr. Justice North, a bigoted Roman Catholic, refused to renew our bail, and kept me and my co-defendants in Newgate until he could try us again. Once more I defended myself, and the jury (a packed one) found us Guilty. Six weeks afterwards I was brought up from Holloway Prison, with Mr. Ramsey, to be tried on the first indictment. I defended myself again. Lord Coleridge never took his eyes off me. When I had finished he told the jury he would sum up the next morning, and that would give them an opportunity of reflecting on my "very able and striking speech." The *Times* said that my "remarkable defence" would make the trial historic. Another paper said that "the defendant Foote argued his case with consummate skill." Even the *New York World* said that I "delivered a speech which, for closeness of argument and vividness of presentation, has not often been equalled." But when I read these flattering criticisms I only smiled. Six weeks before I was a "vulgar blasphemer"—and all at once I was a person of "remarkable ability"—but I was the same man all the time. The real gain was that the jury disagreed again; and as I was getting quite used to addressing juries, and Lord Coleridge made no secret of his intention to see that I had fair play, the prosecution was abandoned by means of a *nolle prosequi*. So I went back to prison and served out the rest of Judge North's sentence.

Obviously, then, it is absurd to suppose that the man who was tried for "blasphemy" three times in two months, and defended himself with spirit and address each time, was likely to "abandon" anything whatever. I abandoned nothing, either "promptly" or otherwise, as I shall prove. I will add that Mr. McCabe's reference to the "publishers" only shows that he writes from a plentiful lack of knowledge.

Both cartoons and letterpress figured in each of my two indictments. Naturally the cartoons were the more "objectionable." But they were never "abandoned" when the prison doors were in front of me, and I resumed them as soon as the prison doors closed behind me.

From July, 1882, to March, 1883, when I disappeared for twelve months, the policy of the *Freethinker* was absolutely unchanged. There was a Comic Bible Sketch in every number. The Christmas Number was full of pictorial "blasphemy." I never meant to yield to menaces, and I never did. When I announced the fresh prosecution, in the *Freethinker* of February 4, 1883, I ended by saying, "We despise and defy them." In the next number my sub-editor, Mr. J. M. Wheeler (dear Joe! with the lion's heart in

the frail little body), wrote a bold aggressive article on "The Fight of Forty Years Ago." I was asked not to publish that article. I said I meant to. And the result of my determination may be seen in the following "Personal" directly after the Answers to Correspondents:—

"With this number of the *Freethinker* I assume a new position. The full responsibility for everything in connexion with the paper rests with me. I am editor, proprietor, printer, and publisher; my imprint will be put on every publication issued from 28 Stonecutter-street, and all the business done there will be transacted through me or my representatives. This exposes me to fresh perils, but it simplifies matters. Those who attack the *Freethinker* after this week will have to attack me singly. Whoever else yields, I will submit to nothing but physical compulsion. If the *Freethinker* should ever cease to appear the Freethought party will know that the fault is not mine. Certain parts of the mechanical process of production are dependent on the firmness of others. One man cannot do everything. But I pledge myself to keep this Freethought flag flying at every hazard, and if I am temporarily disabled I pledge myself to unfurl it again, and if need be again, and again, and again. *De l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace.*"

The *Freethinker* of March 4 was the last I edited before my imprisonment. It was published the very morning that I stepped into the dock of the Old Bailey. It had its Comic Bible Sketch in the old position, and an article of mine headed "No Surrender." These were its last sentences:—

"We are prepared to stand by our principles at all hazard. Our motto is 'No Surrender.' What we might concede to criticism we will never yield to menace. The *Freethinker*, we repeat, will go on whatever be the result of the present trial. The flag will not fall because one standard-bearer is stricken down; it will be kept flying proudly and bravely as of old—shot-torn and blood-stained perhaps, but flying, flying, flying!"

That number of the *Freethinker*, like the previous one, bore the imprint, "Printed and Published by G. W. Foote at 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C." When I came out of prison I put that imprint back—and it stopped there.

Mr. Wheeler was to have conducted the paper and the shop business during my absence. But he broke down. His brain gave way. We loved each other, and he could not bear my troubles like a Christian. Mrs. Besant, like the brave woman she always was, formed a Committee; Dr. Aveling became editor, and the paper was carried on in that way until I could take the reins again myself.

I left Mr. Wheeler a paper of instructions, which he printed in the *Freethinker* of March 11, 1883. The first instruction was this:—

"I distinctly forbid you to publish any Comic Bible Sketches in the *Freethinker* while I am in gaol. I will not let you, who have bravely undertaken to conduct the *Freethinker* and all my other business at Stonecutter-street during my incarceration, run any unnecessary risk; nor do I wish to find that the paper has been, for any reason I could obviate, suppressed in my absence. When I come out of prison I will fulfil my own promises, in my own way, at my own risk."

Some men will understand me when I say that I am more proud of that "instruction" than of anything else I ever wrote.

The *Freethinker* has now been carried on to the very last day of my freedom, and the reader sees how much I "abandoned." I had to "abandon" the paper altogether in prison. But the mood I was in as I paced up and down a narrow cell, with no tidings from the outside world, and no company but my own thoughts, may be gathered from the following sonnet. I wrote it on a slate, for I had no pen, ink, or paper, and gave it to Dr. Aveling when I went up for my third trial, and he printed it in the *Freethinker*:—

GIORDANO BRUNO.

"O fiery-souled and daring-hearted lord
Of all the martyrs of the whole wide world,
Thou by whose hands the banner was unfurled
By priests and despots utterly abhorred;
Bruno, the flames that round thy body curled,
After thy taunt was at the tyrants hurled,
Gleam through the years and make thy name adored.

They could not fright thee with the Church's ban,
Dungeon nor torture could thy spirit tame,
Nor hell on earth wring from thee plaint or cry;
No weeping women or disciples came,
None shared thy seven-years' Gethsemane:
Thou stoodst alone against all men for Man."

We will come now to Monday, February 25, 1884, when I was released from Holloway Prison. There was a crowded breakfast party at the Hall of Science, with Bradlaugh in the chair, and in the course of my speech I said:—

"The rogues ran me aground, but they never made me haul down the flag. Now I am floated again I mean to let the old flag stream out on the wind as before. I mean to join the rest of our fleet in fighting the pirates and slavers on the high seas of thought."

Such was my "abandoning" mood. The next day I set about editing the *Freethinker* again. I wrote the front article "To Our Readers" and wound up with the following announcement:—

"I promise the readers of the *Freethinker* that they shall, so far as my powers avail, find no diminution in the vigor and vivacity of its attacks on the shams and superstitions of our age. Not only the writer's pen, but the artist's pencil, shall be busy in this good work; and the absurdities of faith shall, if possible, be slain with laughter. Priests and fools, as Goldsmith said, are the two classes who dread ridicule, and we are pledged to an implacable war with both."

In the next number of the *Freethinker* (March 9) I announced that "the woodcuts will be resumed next week." "My duty," I said, "is clear. The *Freethinker* shall be illustrated precisely because they say it shall not. If there were no other reason that would be sufficient." "I would rather return," I added, "to the loathsome brick vault I have tenanted for a whole long year than suffer them to divert me a hair's-breadth from the policy I have pursued since this journal was started."

Bradlaugh presided at a banquet in my honor on March 12. In the course of my speech I made an announcement that was greeted with indescribable enthusiasm:—

"Mr. Bradlaugh has said that the Freethought party—which no one will dispute his right to speak for—looks to me, among others, after my imprisonment, to maintain with dignity whatever position I have won. I hope I shall not disappoint the expectation. But I should like it to be clearly understood that I consider the most dignified attitude for a man who has just left gaol after suffering a cruel and unjust sentence, for no crime except that of thinking and speaking freely, is to stand again for the same right he exercised before, to pursue the very policy for which he was attacked, precisely because he *was* attacked, and to flinch no hair's-breadth from the line he pursued before, at least until the opposition resorts to suasion instead of force, and tries to win by criticism what it will never win by the gaol. It is my intention to-morrow morning to drive to the West of London, and to leave the first copy of this week's *Freethinker* pulled from the press at Judge North's house with my compliments and my card."

I kept my word. Judge North had that copy of the *Freethinker*. It contained a "Comic Bible Sketch.—No. 61,—No. 60 having been published on the morning I faced him in the dock. In an "Open Letter" to his lordship I drew his attention to what I had done. "This week's *Freethinker*," I reminded him, "is just as 'blasphemous' as the number you tried me for publishing."

For years I continued to edit the *Freethinker* on the old lines—Christmas Numbers and all. The bigots had ample opportunity to prosecute me again if they chose. And they would have found me at every point of danger. I was editor, proprietor, and publisher.

In the course of time the policy of the *Freethinker* underwent a change. Comic Bible Sketches were eventually dropped because we had worked the old book out. And there were other changes, which need neither explanation nor justification. I am only concerned to refute the statement that the "publishers" of this journal "promptly abandoned" the features that led to its prosecution. I have proved that this statement is absolutely false, and the very opposite of the truth. And I may now leave Mr. McCabe to the judgment of sensible and honorable men.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Law and Blasphemy.

One need not have any sympathy with the methods or doctrines of Mr. Harry Boulter in order to perceive how really dangerous to the cause of true religion is the prosecution which ended at the Old Bailey in his being found guilty of "blasphemy." Underlying the charge that was made against this man—its sole justification, indeed—is the doctrine that religion must be maintained by physical force, that only those who hold certain beliefs are to be allowed freedom of speech, and that the answer to the attack on the religion of the majority, or of the governing caste, must be, not appeals to the mind and heart, but the bayonet of the soldier and the baton of the policeman. In this assumption we have not the least hesitation in saying there is more real blasphemy than in all the stupid words and irritating, prejudiced denunciations which may have flowed from the mouth of Mr. Boulter. For when the policeman interferes to put down opinion, when the law decrees (to quote the text of a statute similar to that by which this street orator was convicted) that:—

"If a man is educated, brought up as a child in the Christian religion, and if he maintains that there are more Gods than one, and denies the Christian religion to be the true, or the whole Trinity, or the whole Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be Divine authority, he shall be subject to imprisonment, the loss of his goods and chattels, and the deprivation of his rights to citizenship."

When the law says this it says in effect that the Christian religion is incapable of winning men by appealing to their reason and their noblest aspirations. It is the knock-down blow of a heated disputant's fists erected into the law of the land.

Mr. Justice Phillimore, in directing the jury, told them that, while a man is free in England to say and teach what he believes about religious matters, and free to choose the people and place to whom he may expound his negative or positive doctrines, he is not entitled in a public place, where passers-by can hear his words, to make gross and scurrilous attacks upon doctrines which the majority of the people hold dear, and which may even lead to a breach of the peace if some warm-hearted believer passes by. This, however, is mere sophistry. First of all, the man was not convicted for doing something that might lead to a breach of the peace, but for making statements contrary to the religion of the land. In the second place, there is absolutely no fairness in the selection of language calculated to break the peace. At street corners any heated partisan may attack the Church of Rome, may describe her as the Scarlet Woman, and may even condemn the lives of priests and popes without suffering interference. And what is more to the point, it is such attacks that lead to disturbances much more frequently than the contemptible froth of Mr. Harry Boulter. In the third place, the assumption that a man or woman imbued with the true spirit of the Christian religion, with its meekness, its long-suffering, its tenderness for the erring, would be tempted to apply violence to a stump orator who used what is called blasphemous language is a libel on Christianity itself. It is a greater blasphemy, we are inclined to say, than the blasphemy of this unbeliever; for it assumes that the Christian religion has no restraining power on the passions of its adherents.

The makers of our laws have no right to assume that men will be angry because their most cherished beliefs are condemned or even ridiculed by others, because where no personal attack is made it is the duty of all men to restrain their temper. They need not listen; no one compels them to hear what the street orator pours forth. Moreover, the greatest possible injury will be done to Christianity if in our Courts of Justice countenance is given to the belief that there is one law for the Christian and another for the non-Christian. The Atheist and all his doctrines can be denounced at street corners. In some of our public places, rival extremes may be seen side by side. In certain countries where toleration is not widespread and deep restraints on public orators have to be imposed, and they may be justified as temporary expedients; but, as we have in England abolished religious tests for the highest places in the land, we must in fairness remove tests from street oratory, and put all on an equal footing. The wise man knows that not by heated harangues and whirling denunciations will any doctrines, negative or positive, be propagated, and that it is not by irritating people or insulting them that converts can be made. But haranguing suits a certain temperament, and our clear duty is to take all sectarian distinctions from our laws and let the preachers of affirmation and negation have a free field and no favor, confident that truth, when the appeal is to reason, will prevail over falsehood.

—North Eastern Daily Gazette.

Correspondence.

"SCURRILITY": SIR LESLIE STEPHEN AND THOMAS PAINE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It may interest those of your readers unfamiliar with the sequel to Mr. Leslie Stephen's "scurrilous" description of Thomas Paine—referred to by Mr. F. A. Davies—to know that Mr. Stephen had, subsequently, to regret that the portrait of Paine which he presented in the first edition of his *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* was "drawn by an enemy." This admission occurs in the second edition of the same work.

When it is remembered that Olio Rickman's real *Life of Thomas Paine* was in existence at the time Mr. Leslie Stephen wrote, such a display of "educated ignorance" on the part of the latter writer is astounding.

Now, since it is upon the late Sir Leslie Stephen that Mr. McCabe relies chiefly for his suggestions anent other prominent Freethinkers, of a somewhat different calibre to the ordinary "Rationalist" type, is it improbable that not only is he, but also Sir Leslie Stephen, again at fault, and that the ground of their insinuations is of that flimsy character usually "drawn by an enemy"? F. R. THEAKSTONE.

O PALE GALILEAN!

Thou has conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from thy breath;
We have drunken of things Lothcan, and fed on the fulness of death.

O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods!
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,
I kneel not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end

Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou being dead art a God,
Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen, and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to thee dead.

—A. C. Swinburne, "Hymn to Proserpine."

THE WORST GOD IN THE WORLD.

I have a hundred times heard him [his father] say, that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked, in a constantly increasing progression, that mankind had gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God, and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity.—J. S. Mill, "Autobiography."

"Is it well with you, Saunders?" said the parson. "Na na, sir," said his parishioner. "The sweep's gane an' ta'en the shop ower my head." "You must make the matter a subject of prayer, Saunders." Saunders promised to do this, and the minister departed. In less than a week he saw Saunders again, and found him whistling merrily at his work. "Well, Saunders, how is it now?" "Oh, it's a' richt, meenister; I prayod as ye toll'd me, an'—the sweep's dead!"

One Monday a parson saw the local editor fishing by the riverside, and said to him: "You're a keen fisher, Mr. Russell, and I, too, am a fisher—a fisher of men." "O, indeed," said the editor drily; "weel, I had a keek into your creel yesterday—ye didna seem to ha' catch'd mony."

On his rounds the minister saw a parishioner's wife reading a romance. The book looked, outwardly, like a Bible, and the preacher expressed his gratification at Janet reading "a book one would never grow weary of reading." "Ah, Janet, I'm glad to hear you say that, for Oh! to think of what He did and suffered for us!" "Ay, sir," said Janet; "an' to think how he swam through the Carron water on a cold, frosty mornin', wi' his sword in his teeth—it was awfu'!"

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.

SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE: 11.15, Herbert Burrows, "Christianity and Blasphemy."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "The Great Jesus Myth." Selections by the Band before lecture.

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, H. B. Samuels, "Miracles."

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (84, Leith-street): 6.30, a Lecture.—Club, 12 Hill-square: 3, Discussion Class.

FAIRFORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Mrs. Eddie, "Woman."

GLASGOW (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class—Mr. Douglas, "Socialism and Biology"; 6.30, E. Shinwell, "The Atheism of Socialism."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "The Secular Safety-Lamp"; 6.30, "Dreams, Delusions, and Christianity." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (above Tram Hote Market-place): 7.30, Northern Secular Federation, etc.

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (The Meadows): 3, Meets for Discussion. (Weather permitting.)

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Statue, Lime-street): 7, H. Wishart, "Christian Thefts from Freethought."

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