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Nothing useful can be poured into a vessel that is already full of what is useless. We must first empty out what is useless.—TOLSTOY.

“The New Word.”

To say that a dispute is about words is usually taken as an assertion of its worthlessness; to prove it so is equivalent to demonstrating that all sensible people may dismiss it as of no consequence. The reasons for this attitude may not be hard to discover, but it is difficult to justify nevertheless. For so long as words form the necessary medium of thought the meaning attached to words by both speaker and hearer must be of first-rate importance. If everybody used identical words with precisely the same meanings, our disputes would be considerably reduced in number and, it might well be, more fruitful in results. If such words as “Evolution,” “Natural Selection,” “God,” “soul,” “Free-will,” “Determinism,” with hosts of others that might be named, were used and understood with precisely the same shades of meaning, what a change would come over both the quantity and quality of our controversies! But because this desirable state of things does not obtain, because with all words of importance there are numerous meanings—not always sufficiently distinctive to admit of statement, but powerful enough to influence thinking—a profitable preliminary to discussion will always be the precise meaning which words are intended to convey. Our disputes, therefore, are not often about words, but are necessarily with words; and the more important the matter under discussion, the more prominent does this aspect of the matter become.

Among the many words that form the subject-matter of almost endless discussion is the word “Idealism.” It may be used in various ways that convey a corresponding variety of meanings, and often used with no intelligible meaning whatever. What it should mean is the subject of a book, *The New Word*, recently published, but without any author's name on the title-page. Elsewhere in the work the author describes himself as having been a speaker and a writer, a lawyer and a soldier, a ruler and a judge; but this is the only hint given of his identity. The immediate occasion of his work was the publication of the will of Alfred Bernhard Nobel, part of whose estate goes to furnish annual awards to whoever makes the most important discovery in physics, in chemistry, medicine, or physiology; in promoting the cause of peace, and to the producer of the best work of an idealist tendency.

It is this word “Idealist” that sends the author of *The New Word* on a curious but very interesting search. Largely the inquiry is a philological one, although the many lines of inquiry lead to some exceedingly refreshing expression of opinion. For words have a life—often a buried life—of their own; they are the creation of thought; and in tracing the history of important words one is certain to encounter useful illustrations of the development of the human mind. It is useless treating words “as though they were all under a vow of celibacy”; they are not. They are all more or less fecund, they have both an

heredity and a progeny, and a knowledge of both is necessary to a complete understanding. Commencing, then, with various definitions of idealism, given by educated men in various walks of life, and which include such definitions as “Something to do with the imaginative powers, Fanatical, Altruistic, Not Practical, Exact, Poetical, Intangible, Sentimental, True, That which cannot be proved, The opposite to Materialistic,” we have a series of discussions on religious, scientific, and ethical terminology, until we reach a conclusion more or less satisfactory. This is that a work of an “Idealistic Tendency,” one of the kind intended by Nobel in his bequest, “must be a work of a practical tendency, and in some way or other of a reforming tendency.” But what, precisely, is meant by Idealism? It would occupy too much space to follow the author in detail; it will be enough to note that the inquiry involves an examination of many important words in science, religion, and ethics. In working out the meanings of words the writer is really trying to frame a consistent theory of the universe as a whole. This, in fact, is what he seems to believe was the aim of Nobel in framing his will. It was intended as a challenge to all those who have mistaken words for things, to force people to revise their terminology, and in so doing to clarify their thinking. If the Nobel bequest has this tendency it will have a wholly beneficial effect. It is also a noteworthy bequest inasmuch as it aims at benefiting genius rather than adding to the many schemes of largely useless philanthropy. For genius is, perhaps, the most neglected thing in the world. Societies for benefiting humanity seem to be largely conducted from the point of view of placing a premium on inefficiency or mediocrity. It is, says the author of *The New Word*,

“as though the vanity of benevolence were soothed by the sight of infirmity, but affronted by that of genius. Even the loafer and the criminal have found friends. The thinker and the discoverer have been left to the struggle for existence.....The dreadful death of Chatterton seems never to have raised a momentary pity in any philanthropist. Had that boy been blind, or dumb, or idiotic, or incurably diseased, how many benevolent hearts would have yearned over him? On his behalf the preacher would have preached, and the purse-proud would have loosened their purse-strings. But because instead of being blind he saw too well, saw the beauty and the wonder of the world, and would have told them, philanthropy turned its back and humanity would not suffer him to live.”

Unfortunately, there is but too much truth in such a statement. Genius is viewed with suspicion because it is more revolutionary in character, and both the timid and the interested dislike change. In addition to this, the public mind is largely dominated by a religious creed that has glorified weakness and cursed strength, smiled on falsehood, and looked with suspicion on truth. The author recognises this and expresses it forcefully enough in the following passage:—

“The first word of Buddhism is Know. The first word of Christianity is Believe. And the merit lies not in believing what is true, but in believing what is false. The greater the falsehood, the greater the faith. The anti-scientific instinct, which Christianity has hallowed as the cardinal virtue, is, therefore, not the fear that science may be wrong, but that it may be right.....The truth of the discovery is no excuse for the discoverer.

When the geologists found out that the earth was more than 5,804 years old, many good people thought them mistaken because the margin of the English Bible had fixed the date of creation at 4004 B.C. When the good men had it shown to them that this date rested on Archbishop Usher's authority.....they did not thank the geologists. Their feeling was that the geologists had shown great rashness and presumption, and that they would have done much better to have kept their discoveries to themselves."

The following description of the triumph of Christianity is also worth quoting:—

"The old, bright Pagan world did end. The old gods vanished from their Olympus. The oracles grew dumb. We can see men sinking down and falling asleep all round the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea. We see the rulers drooping and wearying at their task. We see the scholars ceasing to write, and the soldiers ceasing to fight. We see the hunted slaves creeping out of their sewers with their old mysteries and shocking rites. The books of science are burned. The schools are closed. The idiots put down the Gnostics. The beautiful literature is lost, or scrawled over with senseless legends that read like the talk of men in a nightmare. We see the northern folks descending on the exhausted southern lands, only to fall under the spell. It is God's spell. The mind of man has turned inside out. It is the reign of the saints. The world has gone to sleep for a thousand years."

The New World really lends itself far better to suggestive quotations than to aught else, and one is tempted to quote further. In the main, the book is a plea for truth and courage—the courage to resolve to live our lives freely and joyously, which can only happen when we have learned to speak the truth, careless of all that may follow. Whether he is right or wrong in calling this the task of Idealism, it is, at all events, a worthy object. It is the task of Idealism, he says, "not to reconcile science with religion, which means to drag down the White Man's faith to the level of the Black Man's fancy; but to reconcile science with literature, to put closer knowledge into more glorious words, and, in the beginning, to tell the truth." That is a rule that covers nearly all. If we would only begin by telling children the truth, all else would be comparatively easy. But we commence with suppression and wrong suggestion. We burden the growing mind of the child with false teaching, distort its judgment with false values, and marvel later when it develops in an undesirable direction. We have had plenty of faith in God, we now have to develop faith in Man. And this means faith in human knowledge and effort to solve its own problems, independent of all else.

C. COHEN.

The Moral Driving Power.

ACCORDING to the Rev. Archibald Brown, of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, the world is gradually getting worse, and there is no hope of its becoming any better until it has reached what he calls the "final apostasy." And yet, with this mournful fact staring him in the face, the reverend gentleman is convinced that ethics, social questions, and politics are "quite out of place in the pulpit." Evidently religion and ethics are, in his opinion, two entirely different things; and in the pulpit the man of God should be concerned with the former alone, and not at all with the latter. Mr. Brown is a typical evangelical preacher, to whom the Bible is still infallible, and Calvinism the only true theology. "J. B.," of the *Christian World*, represents a radically different school of divinity. To him Calvinism is an intolerable abomination, and the Bible a fallible book. And yet, great as is the contrast between these two religious teachers, they are at one in regarding religion and morals, at least in their manifestation, as two and not one. "If religion and ethics were one," says "J. B.," "language would have made them one. That it has always made them two is the initial fact we are bound to remember."

"J. B." makes another significant concession to the Secularists. He says:—

"There is visible before us an active religiousness which has the smallest regard for morality. There are bandits who go to mass as a preparation for robbery and murder. In Catholic cities, women of the town may be seen entering a church to light a candle to the Virgin before sallying forth to ply their trade in the street. Nor may Protestantism make too proud a boast."

Then he refers to "a recent New York transaction whereby the capitalisation of a railroad of a little under forty million dollars was swollen to nearly one hundred and twenty-three millions to cover an actual expenditure in improvements of twenty-two and a half millions," and indulges in the following observation:—

"The financiers who rob the public to this tune, and who are doing similar things day by day as part of their business, are, as often as not, members of orthodox communions, and make a point of being regarded as religious."

Now, in spite of these telling admissions, "J. B." has no confidence whatever in those social philosophers who are engaged in constructing a system of ethics which shall be independent of theology. He strongly deprecates the existence of societies which "seek to organise life on a non-supernatural basis." His first argument against the secularisation of morals is derived from the alleged fact that "so far, there has never been a nation or a civilisation which has lived on ethics without a religion." This alleged fact, however, turns out not to be a fact, but a baseless fancy. "J. B." frankly admits that Confucius was "a moralist rather than a theologian," but asserts that he did not ignore theology. However, both the admission and the assertion are entirely misleading. It is true that Confucius believed in the existence of spirits and of a spirit world; but it is also true that he confessed his total ignorance of both. "Respect the spirits," he said to his disciples, "but keep them at a distance." In his teaching he ignored theology altogether. This is what Dr. H. A. Giles, Professor of Chinese at the University of Cambridge, says:—

"He declined to speak to his disciples of God, of spiritual beings, or even of death and a hereafter, holding that life and its problems were alone sufficient to tax the energies of the human race. While not altogether ignoring man's duty towards God, he subordinated it in every way to man's duty towards his neighbor. He also did much towards weakening the personality of God, for whom he invariably used *T'ien*, never *Shang Ti*, regarding him evidently more as an abstraction than as a living sentient being, with the physical attributes of man. Confucianism is, therefore, entirely a system of morality, and not a religion."

We may thus cite China as a country in which life is not organised on a supernatural basis, as a nation or a civilisation which puts its supreme emphasis on morality as detached from theology.

Equally inaccurate is "J. B.'s" reference to Buddhism. In Buddhism the supernatural is not in evidence at all. According to its teaching a man must work out his own salvation without assistance from any outside source. As Professor Rhys Davids says, "*self-conquest and universal charity* are the foundation thoughts, the web and the woof of Buddhism, the melodies on the variations of which its enticing harmony is built up." Sir Monier Monier-Williams called Buddha an Atheist, and Professor Rhys Davids considers early Buddhism an Atheism, and affirms that Buddha denied the existence of the soul and a future life. Hence, however immense may have been the response which Buddhism met with in China when preached by its Indian missionaries, nothing could be further from the truth than to characterise that response as a proof that the Chinese longed to have their lives organised on a supernatural basis.

"J. B." laughs to scorn the notion that God and religion are the products of the human mind. Only those who "look at the matter from the outside" can come to so silly a conclusion. "J. B.," who looks at the matter from the inside (happy man!) declares that "a moral advance" is impossible with-

out the stimulating action of some supernatural being or power. He says: "When we talk about 'a moral advance,' about people becoming 'humane, benevolent, possessed with the spirit of love and service,' the further question obtrudes itself, how does this come about?.....What is the driving power that is behind our morality, that evolves it, that forces it upward from one level to another"? Of course, "J. B.," holding a brief for religion, has but one answer to give. The driving power behind morality is God. On the assumption that this answer is correct, all we can say is, that God has always been a deplorably poor driver. What moral advance has the world made during the last six thousand years? How much superior, morally, is our most highly-civilised English Christian to a raw Zulu, or to the Zulu as he was prior to any contact with civilisation? Remove the varnish, and the difference that remains will not be altogether unfavorable to that noble savage. Again, if God be the moral driving power of our race, why are some nations civilised and others savage? Why this glaring favoritism? And why is the moral tone of the very best communities so deplorably low?

At this point "J. B." loses himself in a wilderness of quotations. Paul and Wesley and Spurgeon and Russell Lowell are trotted out to give their inconsequent testimony. "Paul becomes a new man through the vision which blinds him on the Damascus road." Well, let us look at, and analyse, this "new man," in order to know what he is really like. The driving-power is now behind him, the Divine Spirit is pushing him upward toward the moral summit, and whatever he says or does bears the stamp of perfection. Well, turn to 1 Cor. vii. 1-9 and carefully ponder the apostle's conception of marriage. This divinely driven man teaches that marriage has no higher object than the satisfaction of uncontrollable lust. To the unmarried he says, "Remain single, if you can; it is the only truly blessed state." Married women he counsels to be in subjection to their husbands, yielding them slavish obedience in all things. When a person goes astray morally, and commits some great wrong, or becomes an unbeliever and advocates unbelief, this God-punished apostle delivers the offender to Satan. From the religious point of view, nothing worse can ever happen to one than to be given over to the Devil. In Paul's case, then, the God-driven morality is an exceedingly disappointing article; and the same is true of all other cases. As a matter of fact, God-driven morality is nothing but an interesting myth fondly cherished by the churches. The case for the supernatural basis or source of morals has completely broken down.

To say that the source of morality is in God is to contradict the facts of history. God has left no trace of himself in history, as all its students well know. Matthew Arnold's great refrain, "There is a Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness," the echo of which is still in our ears, is the very opposite of true. Whatever righteousness there is in the world is humanity's own product, as is all the unrighteousness as well. Even the *idea* of righteousness is our own, won from life. Goodness, justice, righteousness, and morality are simply relative qualities, applicable only to societies, never to individuals, *as such*. When we say of a man that he is good, all we mean is, that he is beneficently related to the people among whom he lives, either from self-love or from love of his neighbors, or from a mixture of the two. The love of self and the love of others are, therefore, the only driving-powers behind morality, the only motives to good conduct; and when these two loves are duly balanced, or fused into one tremendous human passion, there will be developed the highest and most perfect type of morality. The marriage of egoism and altruism would bring in an ideal state of society, and that marriage is a consummation already in process. When we begin to teach our children that the basis of morality is natural, that all its sanctions are in the human heart, and that its richest rewards are

earthly, and not heavenly; when we train them from earliest years in the doctrine that the moral life is an essential condition of social welfare, we shall find that the love of mankind will be to them what the love of Rome was to its ancient citizens, and that the welfare of the race will be the *Summum Bonum* of their ambition. God is invisible and silent, and faith in him often grows weak and faint, and sometimes dies out entirely; but humanity is both visible and vocal, its needs are well known and pressing, and the only motive-power required to make us its devoted and efficient servants is the love of it shed abroad in our hearts.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Comical Cato.

MR. JOSEPH MCCABE has broken out again. I thought I had given him enough, but he asks for more,—and he shall have it.

Four further columns on the old subject appear over his name in the new number of the Rationalist monthly, which seems, in the circumstances, rather suitably dated "April 1."

I have read these four columns carefully—*very* carefully. They have afforded me a good deal of amusement. They have also laid upon me a fresh duty, which is not at all amusing, but quite otherwise.

The amusement is in this way. Mr. McCabe takes himself with such preternatural gravity! He is "the pink of fashion and the mould of form" in intellectual matters. His taste is *the* standard for the Freethought party. We must, as it were, set our clocks and watches by him. To differ from him is an obvious error; to set him right on a matter of fact is a gross impertinence; to criticise him is a wilful sin; to argue with him is flat blasphemy. It is really grotesque.

I have never noticed from Mr. McCabe's writings that he sacrifices to the graces. George Meredith calls light literature "the garden of the soul." Mr. McCabe, I fancy, is more at home in the kitchen-garden, amongst the sober, respectable, and nutritious vegetables. I don't suppose he has read *Tristram Shandy*. It is the work of a man of genius, with an irresistible tendency to sail near the wind of "impropriety." (I am accommodating myself for a moment to the McCabe atmosphere). The opening sentences of Sterne's masterpiece are enough to send our Rationalist champion, with his supernal delicacy, into dangerous convulsions. The hero of the story (which *isn't* a story) is incompetently introduced to the world by his parents; he also receives an inimical name. A child named "Tristram" was bound to be acquainted with misery and tears. It was all very well for Shakespeare to say, "What's in a name?" Tristram Shandy could answer, "A lot." And I have always thought that my dear friend Wheeler was handicapped by his father's giving him the prenominal of "Mazzini." A more stolid name might have been better for one so prone to excitability. My parents treated me more considerately. They gave me two happier names; the "William" affording me a humble place in the tail of a long procession, with William the Conqueror and William Shakespeare in the front,—and the "George" looking towards the solid earth and good honest farming. Mr. Holyoake was called "George" too. Perhaps the "Jacob" was his misfortune. And the "Joseph" may be Mr. McCabe's. It seems a pity his parents didn't give him something to balance it. Of course, the Bible gentleman of that name was a very good young man, but the Italians put a tang of contempt into "*il casto Giuseppe*," and all the troubles of Jacob's favorite son arose from the insufferable airs he gave himself to his elder brethren.

I am afraid that Mr. McCabe and his admirers will regard all this as extremely frivolous. But I shall not apologise for it. We all act as we are built. And I seem to be a more composite person

than Mr. McCabe is,—possibly because I have two front names instead of one. (You see I am incurable.)

Bear with me, kind reader, while I suggest that there is a touching simplicity about this self-elected Rationalist spokesman. "My article," he says,—the article I replied to—"was a purely personal expression of opinion, voluntarily suggested to me by the Editor." The *naïveté* of this is difficult to beat. It gives the game away so unintentionally.

There is a charming artlessness, too, in the statements that "a distinguished Freethinker" told Mr. McCabe that his article was "the last word on the subject," and that "a reader of the *Freethinker*" wrote to him expressing "extreme disgust" at my "vulgar abuse." This trust in anonymous supporters is quite pathetic. I am not able to attain unto it. I am weak enough to print the names of my correspondents.

I am so delighted, also, to see that Mr. McCabe is "not going to stoop" to my "level of controversy." It is a pity, as he suggests, that he has to stoop to me at all. I can guess what it must cost his elevated character. It is lamentable that I "cannot be wholly ignored." I feel how painful it must be to him to "have to obtrude this miserable business on the notice of others." He has my deep sympathy. But it is mixed with a little wonder at his *beginning* the "miserable business." He started on me, not I on him. I never mentioned him, never alluded to him, never had him in my mind. I was not worrying about him in the slightest degree. I saw no reason for doing anything of the kind. Nobody was more surprised than I was when he suddenly set up as censor-in-chief of the Free-thought movement. I understood that he was not afflicted with an oppressive modesty, but I did not expect it would run to *that*. Neither, apparently, did anyone else; for I cannot hear of a single Freethinker who agrees with him except his anonymous correspondents and his semi-anonymous editor.

Perhaps I have misunderstood Mr. McCabe. He may be a super-subtle humorist. If this be true, it must be admitted that he has carried his art to the last degree of refinement.

In demolishing once for all the fabulous Holyoake tradition, I showed that Holyoake's prosecution, trial, and imprisonment were but one incident in a long struggle with the authorities over the *Oracle of Reason* and its attendant platform propaganda. Southwell was sent to prison, and Holyoake took charge of the paper; Holyoake was sent to prison, and Paterson took charge of the paper; and so it went on, until the storm-centre shifted from the south of England to the south of Scotland, with the *Oracle of Reason* still the oriflamme of the combat. Mr. McCabe, however, says nothing about this. He knows his book. Like the late Joseph Biggar, he is "sly, devilish sly." He keeps silent when he knows I cannot be answered; he only speaks when he thinks I can be answered. He devotes himself to correcting my "mis-statements,"—and he does this in a distinctly original and entertaining manner.

I am first corrected about Holyoake's indictment. "The phrase about putting the Deity on half-pay," I am told, "was *not* the whole, but just one half" of it. Well, I never said it *was* the whole. As a matter of fact, I printed the indictment *verbatim*. My readers had all the facts before them,—as I always like them to. Moreover, I said, after reproducing the full indictment:—

"And now I will ask the reader to note that there is but one count in Holyoake's indictment. He is charged with saying that he did not believe in God, but the charge on which the prosecution relied was the financial proposal respecting the Deity."

Mr. McCabe accuses me of concealing the fact that Holyoake was charged with saying that he did not believe in God, although he had those words of mine before him! I repeat, therefore, that he must be a super-subtle humorist. I should be sorry to think him a rogue.

A paragraph is then devoted to what happened before the magistrates when Holyoake was committed for trial. But that is of no importance whatever. All sorts of things are said in magisterial inquiries. For instance, both the prosecuting solicitor and the magistrate, at Bow-street Police Court, used the word "obscenity" more than once in respect to the charges against Mr. Boulter; and the case was heard in camera on the ground that his language was too shocking for decent people's ears; but all that nonsense was dropped at the Central Criminal Court. The truth is, that trials take place on *indictments* found by grand juries, and not on *committal-orders* from magistrates' courts. Accordingly, I dealt with what occurred at Holyoake's trial before Mr. Justice Erskine—and with that only.

Thirdly, I am given the lie direct with regard to what Mr. Justice Erskine said at Holyoake's trial. This is the most exquisite piece of humor of all.

I quoted Holyoake himself as stating in print, within a year of the event, that he had heard Mr. Justice Erskine charge him with "indecent reviling, improper levity, and ridicule." Mr. McCabe replies that Holyoake himself was mistaken; he never heard Mr. Justice Erskine say that. I am wrong,—Holyoake was wrong,—everybody is wrong except the infallible Mr. McCabe. Like old Omar Khayyam's deity, "He knows, he knows." And this is what he says:—

"Mr. Justice Erskine *never once* used the word 'indecent' in his interruptions; and the *only* qualification he expressly applied to Holyoake's words was 'improper levity'.....The word 'indecent' was used twice in Erskine's charge to the jury. On both occasions he was only putting the general interpretation of the law. When he came to address Holyoake directly, and qualify the language he had used, he merely charged him with 'improper levity'—not a word more."

Now if this be true I must have invented the passages I put within quotation marks in my article. In that case, I am a liar. But if I am not a liar, Mr. McCabe is—well, a humorist.

I shall not waste my time in superfluous demonstration. Two instances must suffice.

Holyoake *did* hear Mr. Justice Erskine, in his charge to the jury, refer to "indecent reviling." It occurs on page 66, lines 35-37. "Sober argument," his lordship said, "you may answer, but indecent reviling you cannot, and therefore the law steps in and punishes it." So much for that. And now for the statement that, in addressing Holyoake directly, he merely charged him with "improper levity"—and not a word more. Erskine only addressed Holyoake directly, of course, in passing sentence upon him; and this is what he said:—

"You have been convicted of uttering language, and although you have been adducing long arguments to show the impolicy of these prosecutions, you are convicted of uttering these words with *improper levity*. The arm of the law is not stretched out to protect the character of the Almighty; we do not assume to be the protectors of our God, but to protect the people from such *indecent language*. And if these words had been written for deliberate circulation, I should have passed on you a severer sentence."

I have had four words of this passage printed in italics, in order to bring them prominently before the reader. Mr. McCabe's statement is that "improper levity" is part of the text and that "indecent language" is not. And he states this with my quotation of those very words before his eyes, and the printed report of the trial to corroborate them. Need I say more?

Mr. McCabe's object is to make out a special case for Holyoake as a very different person from all the other "blasphemers." That is why he burkes every inconvenient sentence on the record. That is why he says nothing about the *Oracle of Reason*. This paper, which Holyoake was then editing, and which (I repeat) is about the warmest publication I ever saw, was incidentally brought before the court in connection with his trial. Before the judge passed sentence he had George Adams brought into the dock

to receive his dose of imprisonment. Adams had been found guilty of selling the paper at Cheltenham, and Erskine told him that its language was of the "most horrid and shocking character." Having disposed of Adams, the judge told Holyoake that it was fortunate for him that he had not been convicted of publishing that "horrid and shocking" paper; otherwise, his lordship said, "my sentence must have been very severe." This shows what Erskine thought of Holyoake's paper, and we have seen what he thought of Holyoake's spoken "blasphemy." So that the plain upshot is that Holyoake, as a "blasphemer," was well up to the best standard of the time. Which is precisely what I maintained.

Mr. McCabe tells his readers, many of whom have not seen, and will not see, my article, that I made a "venomous attack on Holyoake's character." This is his funny way of stating the fact that he admires Holyoake on one ground and I admire him on another. Mr. McCabe cannot help being amusing. He regards Holyoake as "one of the most original characters and writers of his time." I do not,—and Mr. McCabe is aghast at my "recklessness." A serious difference of appreciation staggers him: which is a sufficiently comical condition of mind in any man, and especially so in a man like Mr. McCabe addressing a person of my standing in the Free-thought movement.

And now for a few words, in conclusion, on this gentleman's extraordinary statement respecting my own prosecution and imprisonment, and his still more extraordinary explanation. This is what he said:—

"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."

My reply to this was simply crushing. The facts of the case were so clear, and so overwhelmingly on my side, that I could not fail to triumph. Mr. McCabe has to confess that he was wrong. "I was misinformed," he says; and I can guess who misinformed him. But instead of apologising for making romantic statements on a basis of ignorance, and with respect to a matter on which accurate information was easily accessible, this humorous gentleman rates me for being indignant, and indulges in further insults, which I must regard as a fresh outburst of his playful disposition. I suppose I must regard in the same light his remarkable assertion that "there was not the remotest suggestion of cowardice" in his original statement that I had "promptly abandoned" the features of the *Freethinker* which led to my prosecution. Anyone else who exculpated himself in that way would invite a cruel retort, but one has to make allowance for this gentleman's fantastic pleasantries. One must do so, indeed, even when he gives strange titles of his own, within quotation marks as if they were mine, to some of my old "Comic Bible Sketches." Wits—wits like Mr. McCabe—cannot be expected to be accurate. It is enough if they add to the gaiety of nations,—as this gentleman is doing.

But life is not, and cannot be, all fun; there is a serious side of things; and so, leaving the humorous Mr. McCabe behind, I think it is advisable to give the new generation of Freethinkers a more accurate view of my prosecution, trial, and imprisonment than they are ever likely to get from my enemies. I shall therefore see through the press, as promptly as possible, a revised edition of the book, containing the full history of my case, and entitled *Prisoner for Blasphemy*, which I published in 1886. The book is very rarely to be met with now; but its contents ought to be available—and I owe it to myself, as well as to the party that stood by me in the struggle, and honored me when I came through it erect and unstained, that the incidents of that great fight against the Blasphemy Laws, the only one which the second half of the nineteenth century really knew, should be established beyond the reach of cavil and misrepresentation.

G. W. FOOTE.

Perchance.

BY AMOS B. BISHOP.

SEDUCED by solitude and a far horizon I am tempted to emulate the courage at least of Montaigne—he who dared to be on occasion irrelevant and casual and short—and rove in the company of some ideas which, however old in essence, are fascinatingly new to me. Isolation can invite great guests to the mind, and it has been one of my surprises in a virgin land to find it preoccupying me with the gods.

The reason for it begins with the perception of the change in scale here between man and nature. Country long familiar with human presence is, as well as the city, man's handiwork. Nature is benedictory, or now and again obtrudes a cataclysm. But on the whole it has the effect of acknowledging a master. In the wilds this is reversed. Storm-distorted trees, creeping shadows, even the marching clouds, are instinct with a drama quite their own. Countless miles of forest utter a voice deep and steady as that of the sea. It is nature's realm. Her presence becomes almost visible. It threatens in the storm winds, it smiles in the afterglow that sets the earliest stars, and in the still white nights. The most sophisticated man, in the retirement of virgin woods and lonely waters, does not escape the realisation of a great presence abroad. Primitive, childlike men did more. They feared it, again they loved it. They deified it, and the gods were born.

The future fortunes of the gods are particularly engaging at a moment like the present, when religion has the effect of being in one of its periods of abeyance. Each race and every age has seen the gods withdraw as sophistication took the stage, to return when feeling surged up again to command. Religion, however, returns with a difference; just as the sophistication that exiles it assumes never twice the same guise. It is even very long since the gods became a euphemistic phrase. Religion to moderns means a God: although it is easy, by personifying attributes, to fill a pantheon; and certain creeds of the moment analyse to the Secularist into polytheism. However, it is monotheism alone that is acknowledged to-day. To the gaiety, the variety, the irresponsibility of the gods succeeds a God; single, grave, responsible, and perfect. With him religion stands or falls.

What can make him fall? What is now religion's chief foe, sophistication's latest avatar?

It is the fashion to instance science: and in the name of truth science has smiled austere at the title. Science does analyse cosmos into mechanism; and permeates thinking with an exactitude that eliminates much of the material on which religious cults thrive. But science rather passes by on the other side than charges into religion. It finds religion not germane to its inquiry. It leaves room behind the mechanical frame for a cause which shall be intelligent, responsible, or anything else. "Atoms, space, and law" do not of necessity tell the whole story. Science inherently declines to speak about more than these. It is for ethics to ask, Is there a God? For ethics approaches cosmos with a differing analysis. Its concern is to discover the nature of the order of the world: if it is moral, if evil and suffering "bear the high mission of the flail and fan," if cause and effect regard quality. Obviously it is a moral order alone that can rationalise a God. If the order of the world discovers itself not to be moral, not to regard quality, a single cause—intelligent and responsible—does not fill the measure of a God. Several causes dividing responsibility in the old fashion of Olympus can retain divine virtue by their loss of divine power. One or several causes frankly disclaiming divinity, acknowledging imperfection, make conceivable primal agents. In more definite phrase, if the order of the world is not moral, monotheism disappears from possible concepts, polytheism and pluralism are

ethically tenable. But Olympus is no more, and pluralism is not religious. Monotheism holds the scene.

Is, then, the order of the world moral? The test is to bring together descriptions of a moral order and of the actual scheme.

A moral order is one where cause and effect are qualitative. The most highly organised is the most precious. Wealth of consciousness conserves. Suffering brings ultimate benefit. Imperfection and struggle justify themselves. Quality is the selective principle on which creation moves.

Is this a description of the actual scene? A different situation stares from history and from every day. The child injured before birth, or born to be dwarfed, maimed, brutalised through no fault of its own and to its own permanent loss: the power of accident to cut off the most costly and potent life: "the distracted industry of nature" in a reproduction unequal to providing for its own: are facts apparently eternal and facts irreducible to good. They disclose an element of brute injustice in the scheme that no amount of analysis removes. Analysis discovers its source in the ascendancy of the mechanical categories. One physical reaction perforce starts another without regard to the conscious phenomena involved. A great machine grinds on, indifferent to the phenomena of consciousness. Consciousness can elude it, can manage it now and again: but fitfully, not fundamentally. It is physical reaction that is in command, consciousness that protests with less or greater success. The child can be ruined because it lacks the mechanical reaction to resist the mechanical attack. Reactions of the sexual organs create the immense human potential as carelessly as they create the brute. Satisfaction of physical needs is competent to start down the ages a stream of human woe; while an instant's mistake in a drug, in a calculation, can destroy a genius. This amazing incommensurateness between cause and effect displays the difference in the plans on which consciousness and the machine work. Value to the one is not value to the other; and the machine is able to make its standard of value, success in physical reaction, prevail. "It is doubtless more polite to deny God's existence than to accuse him of this." Because of it the place at the beginning of things that science leaves vacant, ethics leaves vacant too. Science declines to posit a cause, ethical perception irrationalises a God. The scheme of things affirms itself innocent of intention. If it is not moral, neither is it immoral. It is simply unmoral.

As ethics discovers this, religion of to-day finds its chief foe to be of its own household. Ethics arises from its position of servitude, and assumes to be the critic of its patron: with a measure of success that casts religion back on purely emotional supports, thus bringing into view a further agent for analysing cosmos.

Science and ethics are concerned wholly with the same material, the world yielded by observation and subject to ratiocinative proof. Neither of them transcends demonstration. Both are limited to the theatre of reason. With emotion it is a different story. Emotion's subject matter is needs and their fulfilment. Prove to emotion that humanity needs a God, and it will lay every mental resource under tribute to the utmost to provide that God. And nothing is more easy than to prove such a need. The possession of a God assures to the hard-pressed human soul an infinite background of help, of knowledge, of tenderness, that makes it strong to go forward and to endure. Before a God the spirit of man sinks humbly down into the blessedness of self-surrender, and gains a trust-transcending accident. As a methodological device for securing happiness, religion has no peer.

But through this very need for a God emotion realises that the world does not rationalise a God. It therefore makes bold to supply beyond the grave a world which shall correct the scheme of this. Heaven posits compensation for the ignoring of

quality on earth. It erects appreciation over against the power of physical reaction. In so doing it bestows divinity on a first cause, who, after all, has done things well. Viewed at this its summit, religion has travelled a long way from its origin. A mere cry to the void at length attains a fulness of content which presents, from the emotional point of departure, a logical completeness fairly magnificent. This completeness amounts, indeed, to a reproach. For, while the believer finds it too magnificent not to be true, the observer, accustomed to disillusionment in the character of truth, finds it too magnificent to be true. There is a great gulf fixed. Emotion's analysis of cosmos does not move on the plane used by science and ethics. Its supplementary world transcends their demonstration and eludes their proof. In the absence of an oracle to deny that both planes are real, an intellectual cleavage on the subject is likely to persist. The seeker after symmetry in the universe will find religion by assuming the supplementary world; and the observer, intent on exact thinking, lose religion by eschewing that assumption.

Something of the same sort happens in relation to the quality of ultimate truth. There is, apparently, no evidence, for truth refuses to be run down. Facts of to-day are probably hypotheses of tomorrow. Surds stare from analyses on every hands. Always, not quite, is truth's irrefragable motto.

In such case philosophic opinion decides itself by temperament. Some observers see the finer sides of consciousness in such high relief, that the truth back of a world merely illumined by them seems perforce very good. Others are attracted to the ascendancy of the mechanical categories, the unmoral working of the machine, and they gain the obsession that the root of things is a blankly-gazing sphinx before which man and all his works fall to pieces like the angel in Thompson's magnificent picture.

There is a very practical bearing to the dissonance of view, and the lack of support of either position by evidence. If any hypothesis as to the quality of ultimate truth is as tonable as any other: if, were the mists to dissolve before its face, truth is as likely to appear ugly or indifferent, as good; it is only the child who craves truth in its nakedness. Adjurations in high places to seek ultimate truth, to accept truth and truth only, might as well say, What children are here. For maturity should know enough to lay its emphasis on stabilities that prove themselves good. Love, for instance. Not the physical affair that serves to people the world, but love that cherishes another spirit beyond its own; love that comforts and companions in a world potentially hard and lonely. Further, there is honor, which gives the high pleasure of straightening the soul erect to a losing duty: and sacrifice, through which lies the way of freedom. These things, lovely and sure beyond dispute, deserve the attention of the average man more than the search for a truth which is possibly like the Prophet of Khorassan—too repellent to raise its veil. Strong daring makes the desirable equipment for explorers in philosophic seas. By which token, most minds are better at home.—*Open Court* (Chicago).

But ye, keep ye on earth
Your lips from over-speech,
Loud words and longing are so little worth;
And the end is hard to reach.
For silence after grievous things is good,
And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,
And shame, and righteous governance of blood,
And lordship of the soul.
But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,
And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root;
For words divide and rend;
But silence is most noble till the end.

—A. C. Swinburne.

Acid Drops.

A "private and confidential" circular of the Religious Tract Society has come into our possession. We did not ask for it, and we are betraying no trust in referring to it. The circular is headed "China for Christ—£10,000 Wanted at Once." This is in itself extremely rich. Fancy "Christ" wanting China, and being unable to get it without the intervention of the Religious Tract Society—or even to make a start without £10,000! It is enough to fill one with shuddering pity at poor "Christ's" impotence. How are the mighty fallen! But perhaps he is neither fallen nor risen, and the truth is simply this: that the gentlemen who run the Religious Tract Society want to raise the wind.

"China," this circular says, "seems now determined to vindicate her position as a great nation by adopting Western civilisation." She is so determined not "from any new-found love of Western people or of the Christian religion," but because she looks upon Western civilisation as a "weapon" by which she may "raise herself, as Japan has done, to an equality with the Western Powers." She is therefore "transforming her educational methods," and "at present her teachers are very largely Japanese." Ay, there's the rub! For Japan, alas, is not a Christian nation; on the contrary, "Where in Japan the old religions have lost their power, she is frankly materialistic, and the literature such professors and teachers use is purely secular. From Japan there are being introduced into China not only books which have no Christianity in them, but also books which attack Christianity." Well now, if the new learning in China is to be purely secular, and manipulated by infidel Japanese, "the 'Yellow Peril' is in a fair way to become a reality." A little later on the agony is piled up in a plea for the children of China, that Christian literature may save them from "the danger of reading the vilest publications"—as though they could possibly find anything "viler" than the horrible or filthy parts of the Christian Bible.

Poor China! "Shall her new learning be Christian or Agnostic? Is her soul to be stunted as her mind expands?" Perish the very thought! She must be won for Christ. "To meet the crisis," this circular says, "it is proposed to raise a sum of at least £10,000," which is to be spent—or what of it remains, after deducting working expenses—on tracts and periodicals. That will do the trick. Only shell out the £10,000, good Christians, and you may consider the thing done. China will become Christian—and have armies and navies, and workhouses, and lunatic asylums, and nice airy prisons, and paupers and millionaires, and purity societies, and Piccadillies—just like England and other Christian countries. What a treat is in store for her! And all for £10,000.

Presbyterian ministers in Dundee are angry with the Town Council for fixing the Spring holiday on April 27, the very day after Communion Sunday. This is said to be in violation of a twenty-years' old unwritten agreement. Rev. Dr. C. M. Grant talks on the subject as angry clerics are wont to. He says that the Town Council has treated the Church of Christ and the Christian community of Dundee as negligible quantities, and in doing so "had emphasised that as at present constituted the Town Council did not represent the best, but many of the worst elements in the city." Some other man of God may go one better and call the Dundee Town Council worthy of Sodom and Gomorrah. You never know where the "black-beetle" fraternity will stop when they are on the warpath.

The daily organ of the Nonconformist Conscience reports "A Free Church Victory at Watford." And what do our readers think it is? The Watford Free Church Council, after great effort, has got the Board of Guardians to appoint a Nonconformist chaplain to the Workhouse; and the people who believe that the State should have nothing whatever to do with religion (except when it suits their interest) are in a most jubilant condition. But there is still a fly in their precious box of ointment. The Nonconformist chaplain in Watford Workhouse is to confine his ministrations to Nonconformists. If he were only able to worry Churchmen and Catholics the Free Church victory would be complete.

William Booth, who is easily the first showman on earth now that Barnum is dead and Buffalo Bill has retired from business, sent a loving message "in the midst of my Dutch campaign" to his British fellows who were straining every nerve to raise the wind through (other people's) Self-Denial. He forwarded them his blessing and prayed for their success. And as they were collecting the money for him, it was a

noble disinterestedness on his part. But the great W. B. was born unselfish.

Any impudence is tolerated in the name of religion. On the Sunday in William Booth's "Self-Denial Week" a Salvation Army band paraded the streets of the place our Editor resides in, playing lively tunes, while the "lusty beggars" of the Blood and Fire Brigade went cadging from door to door. If any non-religious body ventured to follow suit the police would soon put a stop to the experiment—and some of the experimenters might make acquaintance with the inside of a prison.

Dr. M. M. Mangasarian, of Chicago, whose Freethought utterances are known to our readers, has been "letting himself go" on the Salvation Army. "It is of the nature of treason," he says, "for American citizens to take the oath of the Salvation Army and bend the knee to Gen. William Booth to-day and to-morrow to his son. Gen. Booth is building up a hierarchy for the Booth dynasty. America should protest against such a power. That of the Sultan of Turkey over his subjects is not more exacting." It appears to Dr. Mangasarian that the Salvation Army is "more after dollars than after souls." Its only means of support is "begging from the public," and on this basis it is really "a great church and business organisation—an army of beggars, of vampires."

Giving policemen one day's rest out of seven has resulted, at Reading, where the experiment has been tried, in a marked diminution of the sick-list. We should expect to find a corresponding decrease in the amount of "shamming" that has been necessary hitherto to get a day off.

We believe it is Neil Monro, the Highland novelist, who writes "Views and Reviews" for the *Glasgow News*. Recently the following occurred in one of his paragraphs on "Crank Literature":—

"The crank literature of Glasgow twenty years ago used to be almost exclusively supplied by a shop in Ingram Street, kept, if I remember correctly, by a Mr. Ferguson. It was the rendezvous of determined young Atheists, most of whom doubtless are now kirk elders; it was the only place where the booklets of Ingersoll and the pamphlets of Foote could be procured, and it was regarded as dreadfully as if it were a bomb-factory. Now and again the police, stung to exasperation by the display in the window of some new spicy pennyworth by Bradlaugh, Besant, 'Saladin' Ross, or the editor of the *Freethinker*, would get up a prosecution on the ground that it was Blasphemy, Wholesale and Retail. Mr. Ferguson (if that was his name) was a martyr, a quiet old pawky gentleman, who wore spectacles, and was said to be the generous friend of atheists out of a job and requiring money to pay their lodgings. I fancy that away from the shop he may have been a relentless Calvinist holding family worship twice a day. Ferguson's, as I say, was the only place then for the extremely cranky literature of Freethought, Spook journals, Malthusian manuals, and the like. Now there are few bookshops in Glasgow in which is not sold more Freethought literature in one day than the gentle, hunted Ferguson used to sell in a week. Ingersoll's lectures are displayed on every railway bookstall, the very same lectures which used to stimulate the police for their most infuriate raids."

There is some truth in this, mixed with some mistakes. Mr. Ferguson used to keep the shop in question in Ingram-street. He barely managed to live by it, but he was in the business mainly as a matter of principle. He was, indeed, a sturdy hero in a very unpretentious way. His prosecutions, however, were not frequent. We believe he was only prosecuted once, and that was for selling the "blasphemous" *Freethinker*. He was nearly eighty years of age then, but he would not budge an inch for all the police in Glasgow, and they locked him up. We instructed a local advocate to take legal action for his defence, and he was soon got out of prison. When the case was brought before the judge at Edinburgh he sat upon the prosecution, and it was practically abandoned in consequence. One very bright feature of the case was the action of the Glasgow advocate. He took our cheque for his bill of costs and gave all his own share of it to brave old Ferguson as some compensation for the indignity inflicted upon him by the Glasgow authorities.

There were "rats" then as there are "rats" in connection with every "blasphemy" prosecution, but we don't want to mention names at this time of day. The bulk of the Glasgow Branch, however, remained firm and true as steel; and volunteers went into Mr. Ferguson's shop and sold the *Freethinker* during the time that he was prevented from attending to the business himself. No doubt the readiness with which they sprang into the breach, and their obvious determination, convinced the police that they had tackled a job that was a good deal bigger than they expected. At any

rate. they never came on again; so that courage was the safest plan, after all.

Poor old New Theology! It has made a sad discovery. Wealthy people are not fond of novelties. "For some reason or other," Mr. Campbell says in a New Theology appeal, "which we do not quite understand, people who are well settled in life and comfortable and rich are not attracted to our movement, and some have ceased to walk with us." That's the way the money goes.

Dorothy Wheatley has written to the *Daily News*. She says that she has hitherto defended the Women's Social and Political Union and its "startling methods." She doesn't mind the leading ladies of the Union wrestling "catch-as-catch-can" with policemen, or holding public meetings on cabinet ministers' doorsteps, or ringing their enemies' front-door bells by the hour, or doing Sandow exercises with the knockers, or breaking up Liberal meetings, or any other of the thousand and one little amusements with which the ladies brighten up the dull political life of this country. But the W. S. P. U. leaders have got her back up at last. They have done something "appalling." They are organising a big London demonstration on a Sunday. This is more than Dorothy Wheatley can stand. She is "disgusted." And the knell of the W. S. P. U. has sounded. It is all over with it now. All that remains for it is to get buried. And its epitaph might be, "Died of acute Sabbatarianism."

Glasgow University has to elect a new Lord Rector. This hardy annual performance often affords good amusement. Lord Curzon and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman are the Conservative and Liberal candidates, and there is going to be a three-cornered fight this time, as a Socialist candidate has entered the lists in the person of Mr. Keir Hardie. Glasgow University, however, will be safe whoever wins; for Mr. Keir Hardie is as good a Christian as either of his rivals; indeed, you might sometimes imagine, in listening to him, that he is about the only real Christian in the United Kingdom. Let us hope he will live long enough to be the first Archbishop of the State Church under Socialism.

"Character Studies," with portraits, are appearing in the *Daily News*, and the reader is told that they "will be duly issued in book form." The subject of a recent Study was "Thomas Hardy," whose "Pessimism" is made the most of, probably in order that he may serve as a frightful warning. "Night has come down upon the soul" of the great Wessex novelist. "There is not a cheerful feature left," the *Daily News* man says, "not one glint of sunshine in the sad landscape of broken ambitions and squalor and hopeless strivings and triumphant misery. It is as the voice of one who is without God and without hope in the world." Thomas Hardy's mental career has "ended in despair." Well, even if this be true—and it is certainly not wholly true—how does Thomas Hardy differ from Jesus Christ? The Prophet of Nazareth was a thorough Pessimist with regard to *this* world; it was in *another* world that he prophesied an improvement. And as for ending in despair, it hardly seems possible to eclipse his performance in that line. His last words were, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Thomas Hardy misses that anguish.

Over against Thomas Hardy the *Daily News* man places George Meredith—"whose voice is of the morning, and whose vision is of the day." But we hope the writer does not imagine that Meredith has any more "God" than Hardy. Supposing that one is the greatest Pessimist, and the other the greatest Optimist, what does that prove? Why, simply this: that the greatest in any direction is sure not to be a Christian. Meredith and Hardy are both Free-thinkers,—and to pit one against the other does not prejudice the wisdom of being "without God in the world."

At the recent Conference of the South Wales Miners' Federation, under the chairmanship of Mr. William Abraham, M.P. ("Mabon"), a delegate wished to condemn the pulpit for saying that if the Miners' Eight-Hours Bill were carried "young men would have more time to sin." "Mabon" advised them to "let it be between the man and his conscience," but this did not produce pacification, and another delegate added, "This is not the first time for the pulpit to interfere." Nor will it be the last. The men of God were always a "hinterferin'" lot. And they must talk a lot about "sin." It is what they live on.

Joseph William Noble, sentenced to death for the murder of John Paterson at Windy Nook, seems to have had a very edifying time of it in Durham Gaol. What with the flowers,

and the Scripture texts, and the pious books, sent him by sympathisers (shall we say *admirers*?) he was kept from melancholy while awaiting his journey to heaven with a broken neck. A letter of his, published in the newspapers, contained some sweet advice to his "Dear son." "I impress again upon your mind," he wrote, "that it is my sincere wish for you, children, to continue going to the Sunday school and the church services, as you have been in the past, and think well of the commandments." Especially the sixth and eighth.

Robert Lawman, another murderer in the same Durham Gaol, wrote to a "dear pal" that he was "preparing to meet our Maker night and day," but at the same time he was "hoping for the best,"—in other words, to avoid meeting the said Maker through the agency of a reprieve. Here are a few tit-bits from this pious epistle:—"I think I will die happy when I do die.....I am happy and prepared to meet my God. Let us all meet in Heaven." Not a word about the poor woman he murdered! Our readers will not be astonished to learn that the gentleman spent his leisure in writing hymns.

The Worcester Education Committee has got rid of an admittedly brilliant art teacher at the Victoria Institute, because the parents of some of the scholars found out that he was an Agnostic, and the fact was too painful to be tolerated. Nonconformists and Churchmen agree together in acts of this kind. But the most sickening part of the business is the rancid cant of their common love of "religious freedom."

Rev. Joseph Duncan MacVicar, of Douglas, Cheltenham, left £41,253. Venerable Archdeacon Alfred Pott, of Woodside, Windlesham, Surrey, left £48,925. "For their works do follow them"—but not their money. Other good disciples of the Poor Nazarene have got hold of that.

Rev. Francis Paynter, of Stoke Hill, Guildford, was reported to be worth £1,500,000. It turns out, however, that he was worth only £43,814. But that was quite enough to keep him out of Abraham's bosom.

Rev. J. W. Gardiner, the fascinating young Ealing curate, has disappeared. A wealthy married lady belonging to his church disappeared at the same time. The couple are reported to be in Germany. There is no particular moral. Such incidents are too common in religious circles.

Mr. J. H. Higgins, a Channel pilot, of Cardiff, has obtained a decree nisi against his wife in the Divorce Court. The co-respondent is a cripple, who hobbles on two sticks. They all belong to the Plymouth Brethren. A lot of piety was mixed up with a lot of something else in the case.

Rev. Dr. Aked, who left Liverpool to minister to the spiritual wants of a New York millionaire church, still keeps a benevolent eye on the poor old country. It appears that he is delighted with our new Licensing Bill. But he sees one element of weakness in it. He regrets that Mr. Asquith has not "ventured on Sunday closing throughout the country." This is spoken like a true man of God. The professional laborers in the Lord's vineyard used to be on very good terms with the publicans; but their business has suffered so much of late years that they are anxious for Protection, and the first great step is to get a monopoly of the "spirit" trade on Sunday.

HIS DAY OF VINDICATION.

Long-suffering Wife: "Avery Gayman, you're no good on earth."

The Husband: "My dear, you'll change your mind when you hear the funeral sermon that will be preached over me some day."

THREE REASONS.

A very dignified bishop, after a long journey to conduct a service in a distant village, was asked by the spokosman of the reception committee if he would like a whiskey and soda to keep out the cold.

"No!" replied the bishop, emphatically, "for three reasons. First, because I am chairman of the temperance society; secondly, I am just going to enter a church; and thirdly, because—I have just had one."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

April, 5, 12, 19, 26, Queen's (Minor) Hall, London.
May 3, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

ABRACADABRA.—Glad you are able to resume contributing to our columns. Your articles are highly appreciated by many of our readers. Glad also to have your view that "there cannot be the shadow of a doubt" that the action we took in the Boulter case "was perfectly right." Your view of Boulter himself is widely shared; but, as we explained, it was the *principle* for which we were fighting, not the *man*. He was a stranger to us, and not in any way connected with the movement we represent.

C. CAVE AND J. R. LICKFOLD, in reference to our reply to "A. Martin," draw attention to the fact (which we knew, but had quite forgotten for the moment) that Shelley's fragmentary Essay on Christianity is contained in the *Essays and Letters of Shelley*, published by Walter Scott & Co. in the "Camelot Classics." How strange is memory! Ours is a pretty good one; yet we did not recollect a little volume which we have handled a hundred times, and which—pulling it down from a top shelf—we see is marked in scores of places by our own hand. Evidently we are not fit for the Pope's job. We lack the infallibility. But has he got it? We wonder.

T. H. ELSTON.—These interesting murderers!

THE "BLASPHEMY" DEFENCE FUND.—R. W. Morris, £1; R. Wallis, 2s.; John Latham, £1; T. J. Thurlow, 2s.; Saint, 2s.; R. D. Williams, 1s.

T. V. WILLIAMS.—"The blessing of God" was conventional language. It must not be regarded as a theological declaration.

MARY LAING.—Your husband could not have sent through more acceptable hands. We value your wish for "health and strength" to enable us "to continue the fight." It is a pure inspiration to know that the eyes of good women, in all parts of the country, are upon us.

J. BROUGH.—Thanks for cuttings; also for the Shelley reference.

T. C. BIGLIN.—You wish it were a thousand times as much; so do we—and that you could afford it.

A. H.—The suggestion shall be considered.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for useful cuttings.

DAVID ADAMSON.—Glad you "greatly admire" this journal; also that you have been able to get letters, even if not always as strong as you could wish, into your local press.

H. B. DODDS.—The statement that the Tacitus passage "defies all scepticism" is merely an expression of the writer's opinion. We went into the matter pretty fully in our *Sign of the Cross*. We hope you may see the things you are looking forward to from our pen. The expectation is a compliment.

H. W. F.—Bradlaugh's Oaths Act (1888) provides that every person required to take an oath may claim to affirm on the ground (1) that he has no religious belief, or (2) that the taking of an oath is contrary to his religious belief. One of these statements is all that is necessary, and the person claiming to affirm should respectfully decline to be catechised.

R. W. MORRIS (N. Nigeria) writes: "I wish you every success, and trust the day is not far off when the Blasphemy Laws will be as dead as the man who invented them. But I am not over sanguine."

W. HEAFORD writes: "You have done a splendid work in writing up the true history of the Holyoake trial and of the trial in your own case. It would almost seem necessary, for the information of the new generation of Freethinkers, to recount the prosecutions of early days. I think we would all eagerly forward week by week to the historical Freethought *feuilleton* containing—as far as possible in the language of the contemporary report—the struggles of the Freethought advocates of old with the judicial and persecuting wild beasts in our courts of justice."

D. LAW (Philadelphia).—Thanks for cutting, which has been useful.

A. J. WILKINS.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

A. WILKINSON.—Shall be sent. Pleased to hear you are doing your best in private as a Freethought missionary. But don't overdo it. Blend a little discretion with your courage. If the bigots, who plague you now, ruin you altogether, you will find the world a hard one. Don't risk more than you can afford to lose. Our own case is different. We crossed over and burnt our boats.

M. BARNARD.—Glad you "look forward to the *Freethinker* with great pleasure each week."

G. ROLIFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. RAILTON.—People who never fight are always very brave when there is no danger. Pleased to have your warm appreciation. We suppose there are few Freethinkers in your part of the country.

D. J. LODWICK.—We believe the Bradlaugh-Lawson debate is not in print now.

H. GEORGE FARMER.—Thanks for the document and the reference.

W. SANDERS.—Auberon Herbert died two or three years ago. He was a Theist, we believe, but not a Christian.

W. P. ADAMSON.—Thanks.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Yes, we are getting all right again.

E. BROOKS.—We have looked through the correspondence you send us from the *Blackpool Times* on "Socialism and Atheism." Your sister was too many for the pious "B." And she is only sixteen! Give her our best compliments and warmest wishes for her future.

T. FLINN.—Gratified to hear that you and your wife, having read the *Freethinker* for a few years, have come to regard us as "a dear friend." Don't mind what we "have to contend with," except to increase your good wishes. We shall never be at rest until we are ready for the crematorium.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

London "saints" will note that Mr. Foote is to deliver a special course of four Sunday evening lectures at Queen's (Minor) Hall during April. Full particulars will be found in next week's *Freethinker*. We hope our friends will do their best to give publicity to these meetings, as it is impossible to advertise them in the ordinary business way over such a vast area as that of London. Printed announcements for judicious distribution can be obtained of Miss E. M. Vance at 2, Newcastle-street, E.C.

Liverpool was scoured in vain for a hall for Mr. Foote's intended lecturing visit. At last a hall has been engaged—the large Picton Hall, where he has lectured before. Picton Hall is Corporation property; so that the situation at Liverpool a good deal resembles the situation at Birmingham. Mr. Foote visits Liverpool the first Sunday in May.

There is something quite pathetic in a letter that has just reached us from the Transvaal. The writer is Mr. John Latham, a dear friend of the late Joseph Symes. We had the pleasure of making his acquaintance in London a few years ago. Mr. Latham had not seen the result of the "blasphemy" prosecution when he wrote. He encloses a subscription for the Defence Fund, and says: "If Mr. Boulter is game I will not fail to send along further contributions if they seem to be required." Mr. Latham will be sorry he has to save his money.

The final financial statement respecting the Boulter case is postponed for another week. We had overlooked the fact that the N. S. S. Executive would not meet in time for a statement in this week's *Freethinker*. And as the statement is to be absolutely final, it must, of course, have the Executive's endorsement.

Mr. T. Robertson, the Glasgow stalwart, a quiet pillar of strength to the Freethought movement in that city, writes us that he has "read our articles on the McCabe incident with pleasure," and adds: "I re-read the whole of your trial at the Old Bailey lately, with mingled feelings of indignation at the bigoted and unfair judge who tried you, and pride at the magnificent defence you made." Such words from a man of Mr. Robertson's stamp are a tonic.

Mr. H. S. Wishart, who was a member of the Glasgow Branch many years ago, delivered two lectures at the Branch's hall on Sunday. "We were very favorably impressed with his matter and delivery," Mr. T. Robertson says, "and also with the capable manner in which he dealt

with his critics." Mr. Robertson thinks Mr. Wishart only wants more indoor practice to make "a very good lecturer." We are glad to hear it. The Freethought movement wants very good lecturers. The more the better.

One of our American subscribers, an M.D. in an Illinois town, in remitting for another year, writes: "Your articles are exceptionally excellent, and there is keen mental pleasure in perusing your pages."

The French Chamber of Deputies, by a majority of 356 against 164, has authorised a credit of £1,400 for the transfer of the remains of Zola to the Pantheon. A motion was made to refuse the co-operation of troops in the ceremony, but this was defeated by 390 against 120. Some furious speeches against Zola were made by prominent reactionists, but the country is tired of them and quite understands what kind of conspiracy they were carrying on against the Republic during the Dreyfus agitation.

FAITH'S CONSOLATION.

Your logic, my friend, is perfect,
Your moral most drearly true;
But, since the earth clashed on *her* coffin,
I keep hearing that, and not you.

Console if you will, I can bear it;
'Tis a well-meant alms of breath;
But not all the preaching since Adam
Has made Death other than Death.

It is pagan; but wait till you feel it,—
The jar of our earth, that dull shock
When the ploughshare of deeper passion
Tears down to our primitive rock.

Communion in spirit! Forgive me,
But I, who am earthy and weak,
Would give all my incomes from dreamland
For a touch of her hand on my cheek.

That little shoe in the corner,
So worn and wrinkled and brown,
With its emptiness confutes you,
And argues your wisdom down.

—James Russell Lowell.

IS THEOLOGY A SCIENCE?

Theology has been called the Queen of Sciences. Is it entitled to be called a science at all? A science rests on data that are certain, and proved by experience. Theology is purely speculative, and is aptly called *divinity*. A Doctor of Divinity is simply an adept at guessing; divination is his employment. Consequently there is no unity of doctrine among the theologians who run the multifarious religions, except on one point,—the collection. Even on fundamental dogmas they are all at loggerheads, and excommunicate each other. With science the case is just the opposite. Scientists are all agreed on their main positions; geology, astronomy, biology are not divided into sects or parties like religion. And the reason is obvious. Scientists walk on the earth and deal with facts and experience; divines soar on the shifting clouds among castles in the air.—F. Bonte, "From Fiction to Fact."

THE REAL REVOLUTIONARY.

If in the last hundred years the whole material setting of civilised life has altered, we owe it neither to politicians nor to political institutions. We owe it to the combined efforts of those who have advanced science and those who have applied it. If our outlook upon the Universe has suffered modifications in detail so great and so numerous that they amount collectively to a revolution, it is to men of science we owe it, not to theologians or philosophers. On these, indeed, new and weighty responsibilities are being cast. They have to harmonise and co-ordinate, to prevent the new from being one-sided, to preserve the valuable essence of what is old. But science is the great instrument of social change, all the greater because its object is not change but knowledge; and its silent appropriation of this dominant function, amid the din of political and religious strife, is the most vital of all revolutions which have marked the development of modern civilisation.—A. J. Balfour "Decadence."

GENEROUS, *adj.* Originally this word meant noble by birth and was rightly applied to a great multitude of persons. It now means noble by nature, and is taking a bit of a rest.—Ambrose Bierce ("Dead Grile").

Thomas Hobbes.

THE philosopher of Malmesbury, as he is often called, was one of the clearest and boldest thinkers that ever lived. His theological proclivities are well expressed in his witty aphorism that superstition is religion out of fashion, and religion superstition in fashion. Although a courageous thinker, Hobbes was physically timid. This fact is explained by the circumstances of his birth. In the spring of 1588 all England was alarmed at the news that the mighty Spanish Armada had set sail for the purpose of deposing Queen Elizabeth, bringing the country under a foreign yoke, and re-establishing the power of the papacy. In sheer fright, the wife of the vicar of Westport, now part of Malmesbury, gave premature birth to her second son on Good Friday, the 5th of April. This seven months' child used to say, in later life, that his mother brought forth himself and a twin brother Fear. He was delicate and nervous all his days. Yet through strict temperance he reached the great age of ninety-one, dying on the 4th of December, 1679.

This parson's son was destined to be hated by the clergy for his heresy. The Great Fire of 1666, following the Great Plague of the previous year, excited popular superstition, and to appease the wrath of God, a new Bill was introduced in Parliament against Atheism and profaneness. The Committee to which the Bill was entrusted were empowered to "receive information touching" heretical books, and Hobbes's *Leviathan* was mentioned "in particular." The old philosopher, then verging on eighty, was naturally alarmed. Bold as he was in thought, his inherited physical timidity shrank from the prospect of the prison, the scaffold, or the stake. He made a show of conformity, and according to Bishop Kennet, who is not an irreproachable witness, he partook of the sacrament. It was said by some, however, that he acted thus in compliance with the wishes of the Devonshire family, who were his protectors and whose private chapel he attended. A noticeable fact was that he always went out before the sermon, and when asked his reason, he answered that "they could teach him nothing but what he knew." He spoke of the chaplain, Dr. Jasper Mayne, as "a very silly fellow."

Hated by the clergy, and especially by the bishops; owing his liberty and perhaps his life to powerful patrons; fearing that some fanatic might take the parsons' hints and play the part of an assassin; Hobbes is said to have kept a lighted candle in his bedroom. The fact, if it be such, is not mentioned in Professor Croom Robertson's exhaustive biography. It is perhaps a bit of pious gossip. But were the story authentic, it would not show that Hobbes had any supernatural fears. He was more apprehensive of assassins than of ghosts and devils. Being very old, too, and his life precarious, he might well desire a light in his bedroom in case of accident or sudden sickness. The story is too trivial to deserve further notice. Orthodoxy must be hard pushed to dilate on so simple a thing as this.

According to one Christian tract, which is scarcely worth mention, although extensively circulated, Hobbes when dying said "he was about to take a leap in the dark." Every dying man might say the same with equal truth. Yet the story seems fictitious. I can discover no trace of it in any early authority.

Hobbes does not appear to have troubled himself about death. Bishop Kennet relates that only "the winter before he died he made a warm greatcoat, which he said must last him three years, and then he would have such another." Even so late as August, 1676, four months before his decease, he was "writing somewhat" for his publisher to "print in English." About the middle of October he had an attack of strangury, and "Wood and Kennet both have it that, on hearing the trouble was past cure, he exclaimed, 'I shall be glad then to find a hole to creep out of the world at.'" This story was picked

up thirty years after Hobbes's death, and is probably apocryphal. If the philosopher said anything of the kind he doubtless meant that, being very old, and without wife, child, or relative to care for him, he would be glad to find a shelter for his last moments, and to expire in comfort and peace. At the end of November his right side was paralysed, and he lost his speech. He "lingered in a somnolent state" for several days, says Professor Robertson, and "then his life quietly went out."

Bishop Kennet was absurd enough to hint that Hobbes's "lying some days in a silent stupefaction, did seem owing to his mind, more than his body." An old man of ninety-one suffers a paralytic stroke, loses his speech, sinks into unconsciousness, and quietly expires. What could be more natural? Yet the Bishop, belonging to an order which always scents a brimstone flavor round the heretic's death-bed, must explain this stupor and inanition by supposing that the moribund philosopher was in a fit of despair. We have only to add that Bishop Kennet was not present at Hobbes's death. His theory is, therefore, only a professional surmise; and we may be sure that the wish was father to the thought.

G. W. FOOTE.

Death of an American Freethinker.

WE have been favored with a copy of the *Washington Herald* containing an obituary notice of Mr. W. H. Burr, whose name was well-known to American Freethinkers, and particularly to the readers of the *New York Truthseeker*. Mr. Burr was born on April 15, 1819, and his death occurred on Feb. 28, 1908. He was one of the oldest inhabitants of Washington, and his family was one of the oldest in New York. He became a Master of Arts in 1838, and his mother hoped he would enter the Christian ministry; but he preferred portrait painting, phonography, and other pursuits, by which he earned a competence. He reported Louis Kossuth's speeches in 1861, and afterwards the proceedings of the House of Representatives at Washington. Literary researches occupied much of his time, and his friend, Colonel R. G. Ingersoll, called him "the great literary detective." His defences of the work and character of Thomas Paine were many and important. He also argued that Thomas Paine was the concealed author of "Junius." In this, however, he had no countenance from Ingersoll, and it always seemed to us to be perfectly fantastic. Mr. Burr likewise championed the Baconian authorship of Shakespeare, which belongs to the same category of maresnests. So amiable and useful a man was entitled to his hobbies, and no man was hurt by them. In any case they are far outweighed by his long and disinterested crusade against hurtful superstitions, and his numerous contributions to the literature of Freethought. He appears to have been highly respected by all who knew him, and loved by those who knew him best; and he bore with great fortitude what is most difficult to bear at all—the loss of his entire fortune through financial reverses in his helpless old age. A pleasant trait in his character was a love of music; many years ago he was a violinist of note, and a member of the famous Georgetown Orchestra. The *Washington Herald* praises his benevolence and hatred of hypocrisy, and his exemplary conduct in every relationship of life.

The theologians represent the Crucifixion as the most sublime fact in the world's history. It was sublime, but let us reverence also the Eternal Christ who is for ever being crucified for our salvation.—"Mark Rutherford."

Ghost, n. The outward and visible sign of an inward fear.—*Ambrose Bierce*.

A Freethinker's Childhood.

A TRUE STORY FOR THE YOUNG ONES.

(Concluded.)

LAST time (Jan. 5) I told you of my childhood days at home, and of the religious upbringing which was my misfortune. Then, I was a poor, willing, ignorant slave in the hands of a false religion. Now, after all these years, and as an emancipated thinker, I have veneration for the mighty words of Shelley:—

"Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man
Inherits vice and misery, when force
And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,
Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good."

You will remember that, having arrived at years of discretion, I ventured to dip into that book which, throughout my younger life I had abstained from even opening, because my mother had told me it was not a fit book for me to read. Doubtless I was a dutiful child, and probably satisfied my curiosity by merely glancing at the outside of it; perhaps dimly imagining that by its title—*Superstition Unveiled*—it was all about ghosts. And this was quite likely, for Spiritualism was rampant then, and table-turning and spirit-rapping in full swing; and Christian families who practised these things for pastime generally dubbed them *superstitions*. Most certainly I had never heard a word uttered as to the possibility of any kind of revolt against the dear, perfect clergy, or denial of holy and divine Christianity. Had I done so, I should probably have considered such doubters so depraved and wicked that, when not occupied in blaspheming, they were thieves and murderers.

But the reading of this book was my soul's awakening! I discovered for the first time that things were not what they had seemed, and I found incontrovertible arguments against all that I had been led to believe was "gospel." The writer had made a fearless onslaught on the Christian religion, and had merely announced himself as a "forty years' cultivator of the earth and follower of nature," not giving any name, and it was "printed privately for the author." It was therefore anonymous. That is, it was anonymous then, but is not now, as I explained to you before. In this matter you can see how the world changes. For in those days, had the author been discovered, he would have been socially ostracised at the very least, perhaps "pilloried," and finally buried at the cross-roads with a hedge-stake driven through his chest. And all because he wrote that truth which, in its strength, undermines theology.

Now, I believe my father must have been an "Infidel"—Freethinkers were called Infidels then. But I never really knew this, and unfortunately he died soon afterwards. If he was an Infidel, the exigencies of custom and his environment doubtless largely proved instrumental in sealing his mouth. Perhaps he had read the book, and agreed with it; perhaps he knew the author. But I want to tell you how this book, without the slightest warning, suddenly and mysteriously disappeared! It vanished from its accustomed place among the other books in the library. Could it be a fact that *Superstition Unveiled* had been spirited away? The table-rappers had told us—

"Millions of spirits walk the world unseen
Both when we wake and when we sleep;
There execute their airy purposes
And works of love and enmity fulfil."

Had one of them abstracted this book?

No. My mother had got rid of it with a number of other volumes she did not want. She had doubtless done this, prompted by the best of reasons for my welfare "here and in the world to come." But that which was lost was fated to be found. This book, like the threepenny-bit in Bible history, turned up again, for on one of my frequent expeditions amongst the old book-shops, seven years later, I came across the identical volume in calf binding, and "presented by the author" was still there on the fly-leaf! Needless to say, I forthwith bought it. Of course, you can see that had the book been a religious book—*Chalmers' Sermons*, for instance—the inscrutable finger of God would have been in it—in other words, it would have come back "providentially." Or had it been a Family Bible, with heavy brass clasps and antimacassar complete, sold by an Infidel parent to buy gin, no doubt the Christian Evidence Society, not to mention Dr. Torrey, would have long since issued a Tract specially to fit the case, entitled "The Wicked Sceptic Checkmated by the Holy Spirit." But, you see, it wasn't this sort of book, so of course the thing wasn't providential. It was only the long arm of coincidence at work.

As to where the book had been all those seven years, I know not. Perhaps it had been bought and sold many times; picked up cheap and dropped like a hot potato.

Perhaps some clergyman purchased it, and, finding what it was, exchanged it for Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Or a nervous psalm-singing crank got it accidentally, and afterwards put it back surreptitiously on the dealer's shelf in sheer dismay at its too truly horrible contents. Who can say?

Just one other true story. A friend of ours in those early days, whom we all considered so very, *very* good, used frequently to visit at my parents' house. We discovered later that this precious one, devout and holy, and with the odor of sanctity enshrining him like a halo, was a veritable snake-in-the-grass. We youngsters knew he was not actually a clergyman, though he always spoke like one. He said "grace" at the table, and a specially long and elaborate grace it was, during the slow progress of which my father usually decanted the wine. Had this Pecksniff ever arrived at the house wearing a white choker we should not have been a bit surprised, because in every other particular he was so typical of the clergy as a body. A peculiar mannerism, and drawing intonation; a touch of the lisp; a *soupyon* of that plum-in-the-mouth articulation which is always so essentially heavenly and clerical. Perhaps we got the idea that he was a kind of clergyman off duty, as it were, from the fact that one day, when he was announced, my father inadvertently muttered in our hearing, "Beware of a bull before, a horse behind, and a priest all round!" He said it quickly, and immediately after in walked the pious one.

It was not long after this period that my father died. Death always gives such godly mountebanks unique opportunity to display their wares. All sad and solemn occasions are harvest-times for them. So he assembled us round the body, caused us to kneel by it and pray aloud in the words of his own coining. I remember the occasion perfectly. Indeed, the faint odor from the camellias in the coffin comes again to me now in imagination. Some years later this unfledged divine, this angelic prestidigitator (this is only a long word for *humbug*), to the horror of all, figured prominently and disgracefully in bogus company promotions, which proved the ruin of honest men and the desolation of happy homes! The end of that man was worse than the beginning, and it surely ought to have "repented God" that he ever made *him*. I cannot mention names, but if I now had the money he and others of his crew filched from my father, I should be able to endow the Secular Society in perpetuity; or, in religious phraseology, "for ever and ever, amen."

Some may say that the "great God above" saw in advance what would happen; that omniscience knew, as it were, what the time was before there were any clocks; that he foresaw that I should one day write this for you to read, and so caused my parents to be robbed that their progeny should, metaphorically, have nowhere to lay their heads. Don't believe it, or anything like it; but know, instead, that there is the wealth of truth for us, which is the greatest wealth of all, and be satisfied.

I may just mention that this "dear friend"—he was *dear* in a way—always wintered abroad. He could not stand cold weather. Being now dead, a hasty judgment might lead to the conclusion that he is satisfied with his present climatic conditions. But if you think it out you will find this cannot be—for did I not say he was pious? Yes, *pious*. So, of course, he went aloft, which is the best place for such a soul. O! let us be joyful! for if there is a heaven or a hell we Freethinkers will never meet him in the next world. I recollect how, on the decease of a friend of his—a friend who, in his words, was "misguided and worldly," and "didn't believe in rewards and punishments"—he sang unctuously after him:—

"Saints by the power of God are kept
Till the salvation come!"

But he might have warbled other words instead, and words appropriate to himself:—

"When rising from the bed of death,
O'erwhelmed with guilt and fear,
I see my Maker face to face,
O! how shall I appear?"

In any case, he must have been wandering around all this time, and not found his sceptical friend yet. What do *you* think?

You recollect that I told you how I refused to take the Sacrament after my preparation for "Confirmation." This preparation had been a lengthy process, and I had been called upon by the Rev. William Chapman to write essays or letters to him on the various points. He always commended these, but every time deplored what he called a "vein of doubt" running through them. There was a vein of doubt, because my eyes had been opened by the book already mentioned, and by others I had subsequently obtained. I asked him questions on many things, but especially with reference to the "Holy Trinity," and emphasised these interrogations as they applied to the "third person, the Holy Ghost." The Holy Ghost had

always been an enigma to me. The Holy Ghost, invisible, undefinable, incomprehensible, had haunted my young life like a spectre. I explained to you that, as a child, I always thought the Holy Ghost resided in our great old coal-cellar. Just as Adam began badly with God in the Garden, so the Holy Ghost began badly with me in the coal-cellar. Certainly, now, he was no longer the "fluffy animal" of my earlier imagination; but, notwithstanding this, he was *incomprehensible* by the admission of the clergy, and yet they continued to talk glibly about him. So I demanded answers, but never got any. After all, if the word "ghost" in the Scriptures is *pneuma*, meaning *air*, a little license may be allowed in construing this into all *wind*, a mere passing breath of unreality. But I was confronted with that divine threat, "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." This really seemed too terrible to be true, yet for some time it hung above my poor head like a veritable sword of Damocles. So I continued to ask the Rev. William Chapman questions, much to his surprise and discomfort. He called me to his house, and in his study, with a lamp at the end of the room giving the orthodox dim religious light, we knelt and prayed. I prayed then, for I continued as a Deist for some years, and Deism is often the stepping-stone to Atheism. He got a bit personal, I thought, when he quoted to me: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things?" He admonished me not to trifle with holy things. "Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment." But I was not trifling; I wanted answers. Finally, I point-blank refused to crown the process of confirmation by taking the Sacrament, and I never did take it. To be a "communicant" was repulsive, too, in face of the admonition, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you."

Mr. Chapman's last remark to me was, "Remember, if you absent yourself, the whole process will have been for nothing, and you will go through the world unblessed by the saving power of the Holy Spirit." Well, at least I have been "blessed" with good health, and if the Lord has done nothing else for me he has "kept my memory green."

Then Mr. Chapman preached sermons at me, or about me, later on. From the notes I still possess I give you the following short extracts to show the style of balderdash, for his sermons were as "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal": ".....here, where we are surrounded and nursed in Christianity, we yet find some erring ones who prefer to steer their own course on the ever-bounding sea of life, until they will assuredly be lost on the quicksands of worldliness..... they pass through life heedless of the beauties of nature, and with no words of thanks to their Creator.....turu away in the hour of worldliness self-confident, and stride to that broad path which leadeth to destruction.....Infidelity is rife amongst us, and pernicious books are sowing the seeds of eternal pain.....'Come, now, let us reason together,' saith the Lord [this seemed to catch hold of me, but I never traced any reasoning]; and with those of you, my brethren, who may be in doubt or error, come to where the music of the spheres harmonises with the godly, but clashes discordantly with the heretic," and so on; mere words, and no argument. He may have had good intentions. His ideas were not ours. He lighted the path of faith with the Holy Altar's candle. I walked the way of fact and truth illumined by the torch of reason, and have not stumbled yet. I only hope that you will take reason as your guide through life, and, in turning away from superstition, let your hymn be:—

"Thy spirit, Independence, let me share;
Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye!
Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky."

A. Fagg.

FROM MA'ARRI, AN ARABIC POET.

Praise God and pray.
Walk seventy times, not seven, the Temple round—
And impious remain!
Devout is he alone who, when he may
Feast his desires, is found
With courage to abstain.

Hanifs are stumbling, Christians all astray,
Jews wildered, Magians far on error's way.
We mortals are compound of two great schools—
Enlightened knaves or else religious fools.

We laugh, but inept is our laughter;
We should weep and weep sore,
Who are shattered like glass, and thereafter
Re-moulded no more.

—Taken from R. A. Nicholson's "Literary History of the Arabs."

The President's Honorarium Fund.

(1) DONATIONS.

Previously acknowledged, £125.

Received since:—F. Bonte, £40.

(2) ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Previously acknowledged, £122 17s. 6d.

Received since:—Dr. E. B. Foote (New York), £5; A. H. Smith, 10s.; D. Bourne, 2s.; D. Richards, 2s. 6d.; J. F. Williamson, 2s.; J. W. C., 6s.; W. S., 5s.; Bertram Dobell, £1 1s.; S. Burgon, £1; L. Stern, 1s.; James Brodie, 2s. 6d.; R. Taylor, 2s. 6d.; J. Partridge, 5s.; G. Davey, 5s.; F. Schaller, 10s. 6d.; E. B., £1 1s.; W. Ollis, 2s.; H. Silverstein, 10s.; G. F. H. McCluskey, £1 1s.; G. Roleffs, £1; Jas. Crossley, 2s.; J. T. Griffiths, 5s.; R. Lancaster, £1; Enquirer, 5s.; Firenze (per W. Heaford), 10s.; Owenus Ton Pentre, 10s. 6d.; John Latham, £2; T. C. Biglin, 2s. 6d.; David Adamson, 7s.; Twenty-five Years' Subscriber, 2s. 6d.; Dr. James Laing, £2 2s.; Felix Herrmann, 10s. 6d.; M. Barnard, 2s. 6d.; E. G. Taylor, £1 1s.; J. Railton, 2s. 6d.; T. Thelwall, £1; Wm. Stevens, £2 2s.; J. Roeckel, £1 1s.; (Mrs.) Minnie S. Dole, £1 1s.; J. Cartwright, 2s. 6d.; T. and S. Flinn, 2s.; E. Kirton, 5s.; C. D. Stephens, 5s.; C. Shepherd, 5s.; S. Deane, 10s.; Charles Bowman, £2.

MORE EXTRACTS FROM SUBSCRIBERS' LETTERS.

F. BONTE writes: "Your articles on your own 'blasphemy' case are a splendid presentation of it, and will make history for all time to come in the records of Freethought. I am sure your friends have all read your *apologia* with pride. I marvel at the clear and precise account of every detail in such a long history. No doubt you will now be left in peace on that score."

G. F. H. McCLUSKEY writes: "I never subscribed to the Fund with greater satisfaction than I do this time, especially as some Freethinkers think you ought not to have taken the course you did in the recent prosecution; they don't seem to realise the principle involved. Your last article on your own trials for 'blasphemy' gave me keen pleasure, not without some pain though, when I thought of what you endured and still have to bear as a reward for your unflinching courage and devotion to the good old cause. I well remember the battle as it proceeded at the time, and to read it again now at your hands seems like fighting it over again. Your vindication should inspire the young bloods to greater activity in the cause of free thought and free speech."

H. SILVERSTEIN writes: "Were I wealthy, forty times the amount enclosed would hardly measure the extent of my admiration for you and your work in behalf of Freethought. I have been a consistent member of the N. S. S. since 1891, and therefore know no other leader; but whatever virtues your predecessor may have possessed which you do not possess, I am quite content to continue my allegiance under your leadership, having the profoundest trust in your judgment and great ability."

Dr. E. B. FOOTE (New York) writes to "Dear Brother Foote" and winds up with "Best wishes for you and your family and your co-workers."

E. B. "regrets that he is unable to make his contribution to the Foote Honorarium Fund commensurate with his appreciation of the fearless writer."

F. SCHALLER writes: "Let me say that Mr. Foote's splendid work has more than justified the confidence reposed in him by the late Charles Bradlaugh when he nominated him for the Presidency."

BERTRAM DOBELL writes: "I was much pleased to get your letter enclosing the extract from —'s letter. The approval of one such as he is enough to console you (if you wanted consolation, which, of course, you don't) for any amount of ignorant detraction on the part of those whose brains (if they any) are devoted to the service of the great god Respectability."

J. W. C. writes: "Accept admiration for your past efforts for the movement, and best wishes for the future."

J. F. WILLIAMSON writes: "I only wish I could send more. I have been a reader of your valuable paper for nearly a year, and it has become part of my life."

J. T. GRIFFITHS writes: "To you, more than to any other man, I owe my freedom from superstition. May the Fund grow and flourish, and may you long live to enjoy it, and give the benefit of your invaluable services to the cause."

"ENQUIRER" writes: "I deeply admire and respect you for your noble and disinterested action re the late 'blas-

phemy' prosecution.....Freethinkers must feel a certain sense of pride in the knowledge that there is at least one man left of the Old Guard who is prepared to fling defiance in face of the enemy at all cost."

"OWENUS TON PENTRE" writes: "Although I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing or hearing you, after studying most of your writings, and bearing in mind your courageous attitude during the recent 'blasphemy' prosecution, and your life-long devotion on behalf of intellectual freedom, I think I know what manner of man you are.....Of the few papers I read the *Freethinker* appeals to me most. I was the only one in this place receiving the *Freethinker* three years ago; there are many readers here now."

E. KIRTON writes: "I think every Freethinker in the country should do all he can to make this Fund a success."

Correspondence.

THE SALVATION ARMY AND CANADA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—*Apropos* of your remark in last week's *Freethinker* that "the compensating feature" of General Booth's dumping shiploads of emigrants into the already overstocked labor-market of Canada, "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," permit me to say that this is what really is happening. Mr. W. R. Trotter, who has been sent to England by the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress—the equivalent there of the Trades Union Congress here—speaking last month at a meeting of the London Trades Council, produced two newspaper cuttings, one from the *Newcastle Chronicle* containing an appeal from the Salvation Army for 600 emigrants for Toronto, and another from a Toronto paper containing an appeal from the same source for funds to provide food and clothing for the destitute in that city. Thus they trade on poverty at both ends.

F. A. DAVIES.

SNAKERY.

In the Psalter of St. Louis itself, half of its letters are twisted snakes; there is scarcely a wreathed ornament, employed in Christian dress, or architecture, which cannot be traced back to the serpent's coil; and there is rarely a piece of monkish decorated writing in the world, that is not tainted with some ill-meant vileness of grotesque—nay, the very leaves of the twisted ivy-pattern of the fourteenth century can be followed back to wreaths for the foreheads of bacchanalian gods. And truly, it seems to me, as I gather in my mind the evidences of insane religion, degraded art, merciless war, sullen toil, detestable pleasure, and vain or vile hope, in which the nations of the world have lived since first they could bear record of themselves—it seems to me, I say, as if the race itself were still half-serpent, not extricated yet from its clay; a lacertine breed of bitterness—the glory of it emaciate with cruel hunger, and blotted with venomous stain: and the track of it, on the leaf a glittering slime, and on the sand a useless furrow.—*John Ruskin, "The Queen of the Air."*

FISHING BOATS AND FISHING WORK.

They are real; there is something about them that forms a link with the facts of the sea, with the forces of the tides and winds, and the sunlight gleaming on the white crests of the waves. They speak to thoughts lurking in the mind; they float between life and death as with a billow on either hand; their anchors go down to the roots of existence. This is real work, real labor of man, to draw forth food from the deep as the plough draws it from the earth. It is in utter contrast to the artificial work—the feathers, the jewellery, the writing at desks of the town. The writings of a thousand clerks, the busy factory work, the trimmings and feathers, and counter-attendance do not touch the real. They are all artificial. For food you must still go to the earth and to the sea, as in primeval days. Where would your thousand clerks, your trimmers, and counter-salesmen be without a loaf of bread, without meat, without fish? The old brown sails and the nets, the anchors and tarry ropes, go straight to nature. You do not care for nature now? Well, all I can say is, you will have to go to nature one day—when you die, you will find nature very real then. I rede you to recognise the sunlight and the sea, the flowers and woods now.—*Richard Jefferies.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, A. Allison, "Ghosts." Selections by the Band before lecture.

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club Rooms, 12 Hill-square): 3, Andrew Paul, "Astronomy."—Hall, 84 Leith-street: 6.30, W. D. Macgregor, a Lecture.

GLASGOW (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class—D. Ross, "Preparation for Christianity"; 6.30, R. M. Lockhart, "Abraham Lincoln."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Ethical Society's Hall): 3, H. S. Wishart, "What Should Limit Freethought and Blasphemy?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, R. C. Phillips, "Socialism and Individualism."

OUTDOOR.

Huddersfield (Market Cross): Thursday, March 26, at 8, H. S. Wishart, "Christ and Socialism."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall Square: Friday, March 27, at 8, H. S. Wishart, "Damnation." Wednesday, April 1, at 8, "Christ the Savior."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Statue, Lime-street): 7, H. S. Wishart, "Why Should We be Christians?"

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