

# THE Freethinker

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*The God of eternity and of all that is real, is not the God of passing dreams and shadows of man's imagination. The God of truth is not the God of fable; the belief of a God begotten and crucified, is a God blasphemed. It is making a profane use of reason.*

—THOMAS PAINE

## Lightning Conversion.

CHRISTIAN missionaries make very slow progress in converting the heathen world. They go into all the world, and try to preach the gospel to every creature, but they get extremely few to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Those they do rope in generally belong to the lowest strata of the population, and the well-known expression "rice Christians" shows the common opinion as to the mercenary character of the converts who figure in missionary society statistics. No impression is made on the educated classes in any heathen nation in the world. The destitute and the outcast furnish the overwhelming majority of the "winnings for Christ." And the few who are won by the missionaries in this way are immensely outnumbered by what may be called the "losses for Christ" in Christian countries. Myriads of people become indifferentists every year. Thousands become Freethinkers. There are seven millions of "unbelievers" in France alone—which is more than all the heathen that ever were converted in Asia and Africa.

Now the men of God who are engaged in the soul-saving business abroad are in one important respect just like those engaged in the same business at home. They have all been ordained. They have received the Holy Ghost. And with "the Spirit" operating inside them they ought to gain converts as fast as a Yarmouth trawler hauls in herrings off the Dogger Bank in October.

Why is the process of conversion so slow nowadays? Has the saving virtue of the Holy Ghost been exhausted? Or have the soul-savers not really received the Holy Ghost, as they are said to have done in the prospectus? Were their ordinations like unsuccessful vaccinations? Did the "imparting" operation fail to "take"? Some sort of answer should be given to these questions.

Nothing is more certain than that the Holy Ghost used to be a splendid missionary; at least, when he (or it) commenced operations in this world—an event which was celebrated last Sunday throughout Christendom.

The Jewish day of Pentecost comes fifty days after the Passover, and on the first day of Pentecost after the Passover on which Christ was crucified the twelve apostles (including Matthias, who had taken the place of Judas) were "all with one accord in one place." It is not very precise, but it will do.

They were sitting together in some room of an unspecified house. Suddenly there was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and cloven tongues of fire sat upon each of the captains of the first Salvation Army. That the tongues were cloven is a most interesting feature of the occurrence. A cloven tongue is the symbol of lying, and this is an art in which Christian advocates have always been remarkably expert. But that is by the way. The

narrative goes on to state that the apostles were "all filled with the Holy Ghost," and that they "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." A moment before they were all Jews, who spoke nothing but Hebrew, or whatever bastard dialect was common at that time—the Yiddish of A.D. 33. Now they are speaking fresh lingoos, and must be wondering what the deuce they are talking about. But the spectators and auditors who had flocked to the spot, attracted by the rumor of the windy noise and the cloven fiery tongues, are wondering still more, and for an excellent reason. They belonged to "every nation under heaven," and they heard the apostles talking in all their different languages. They were "amazed" and they "marvelled"—and no wonder. It was as if a Salvation Army company, in a London back street, suddenly gave up talking bad English and spoke good French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese. This is the clear meaning of the text in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. But the apostle Paul, or whoever wrote the epistles bearing his name, had an opinion of his own about those same "tongues," and sneered at them as a more or less inarticulate species of insanity. Nor will the readers of Carlyle's *Reminiscences* ever forget his graphic account of the "tongues" he heard at Edward Irving's house, and the foolish "lal-lal-lals" of the excited female disciples in the next room.

There is even a discrepancy in the story itself, for some who heard the apostles talking under the influence of the Holy Ghost said that they were "full of new wine," which they could hardly have said if they heard the many-tongued preachers holding forth distinctly and intelligibly. And it must be admitted that Peter's answer to the taunt was, to say the least of it, rather singular. He replied that he was not drunk—it was only nine o'clock in the morning; as though the accusation might have been fairly reasonable had it been nine o'clock in the evening.

That observation of Peter's was the introduction to a vigorous sermon, which is reported verbatim, and which made a powerful impression upon his audience. And the result was highly gratifying; no less than three thousand converts were made that very day.

Well, now, our point is this. If the Holy Ghost, speaking through one missionary's mouth, could convert three thousand unbelievers in a single day, how is it that Christian missionaries, who generally profess to have received the Holy Ghost, are not more successful? Thousands of them are at work, and they ought to make several millions of converts every week. In a few years all the heathen in the world should be brought within the Christian fold. Yet there are far more of them outside it now than there were a hundred years ago.

What is the matter? Are the missionaries only impostors? Have they never received the Holy Ghost? Or is the Holy Ghost himself (or itself) dead? Or is he (or it) in the last stages of decrepitude? Anyhow, the days of lightning conversion are over. Evan Roberts himself is in the doctor's hands, and the great Welsh Revival has dropped from fresh "fizz" to stale "swipes."

G. W. FOOTE.

## Shall London Have Another Mission?

THERE are, on a rough calculation, 50,000 parsons in Great Britain. They are all specially trained for their vocation—that is, they are so trained as to be of very little value in any other profession. Nearly all of them profess to be called by God to their labors, so that one may assume that they are specially fitted for their work. They exist as clergymen, they assure us, in order to minister to the inextinguishable craving of the human mind for religion, and most of them tell us from time to time how greatly the Lord has blessed their work. So far, good. They are a numerous body of men, existing to satisfy a want which cannot be suppressed, which defies all efforts at eradication; and it would seem there is little more to be said. But here arises a curious aspect in the situation. In some unexplained manner this inextinguishable craving dwindles and dies. People contract a habit of turning up their irreverent noses at what Mr. Gilbert calls the dignified clergy, as well as at those who are not dignified. Instead of attending church or chapel, they prefer a football match or a day in the country. The bicycle proves itself more attractive than the sermon; the open air offers stronger allurements than the prayer-meeting. When the Lord “called” the parson to preach to the people, he omitted to inspire the people with a corresponding desire to listen to the parson. The scheme of things obviously admits of improvement.

An attempt is made to improve matters. Every now and again the clergy, with commendable modesty, publicly profess the ineffectiveness of their ordinary ministry by engaging in a more, or less, united mission. Special missionaries are engaged; “star turns” are announced; for the time being the religious service takes on the character of a music-hall entertainment—minus the humor and dresses. The revivalist preaches with all the readiness of a travelling salesman working country markets, and “converts” attend with the same regularity that certain bibulous characters stop for a drink at every public-house passed during their Sunday walk. Both have been there before. The preacher knows his converts perfectly well, but it would be bad business to acknowledge the acquaintanceship. And if there were three hundred and sixty-five “missions” during the year, each of these people would “give themselves to Jesus” three hundred and sixty-five times. To them a mission has all the attractiveness that a public-house has for the dram-drinker. It is their substitute for alcohol. And it may well be that, with so cheap a form of dissipation, the alcoholic one loses its attractiveness. It is easily accessible; it is religious, and so far respectable; and—a great attraction to thrifty souls—it is economical. Youngsters do not look forward with greater expectations to the season of pantomime than do these habitual attendants at revivals to the periodical mission—and the clown is a prominent personage at both entertainments.

At present there are three movements on foot to engineer another “great mission” for London. Mr. C. Alexander, of the Alexander-Torrey mission, is here with a new hymn-book, the profits from the sale of which he anticipates will cover the expenses of the revival. Dr. Torrey is left behind on this occasion, but his place is taken by a Dr. Chapman—degrees are notoriously cheap in the States. There are also two English performers, each ready to lay siege to London in the most approved style. But, and it is worth noting as showing that even religious people learn something from experience, the proposed mission is not being received with universal favor. Quite a number of clergymen are asking whether these missions really do any good? They point out that we had in London a United Free Church Mission, the mission of John McNeil, and that of Torrey and Alexander. Yet London seems as far off being converted as ever. The newspapers were filled with glowing reports of the success of these missions—true many written by the promoters

themselves—thousands of converts were reported—again by the promoters—and then things were as before. Man never is, but always to be blessed. London never is, but always to be converted.

Against the proposed missions, a “ministerial correspondent” of the *Christian World* enters a rather strong protest. He asks whether these missions do any good? Whether American religious hustlers have been so successful in their own country that we need place any dependence upon them in this? He asks “What of the thousands of converts of which we heard? [during the Torrey mission] How shall we explain the fact that, in a large number of cases, the converts could not be found at the addresses given by them?” He concludes by asking for a very careful and serious inquiry into the amount of good done by these missions before any fresh moves of a similar kind are undertaken.

Now, this criticism, while sound enough from one point of view, yet proceeds on a false assumption. It assumes that the only purpose served by missions is the making of converts. But this I do not feel quite convinced is the case. In the first place, there is the professional evangelist himself who, with his keen eye to the financial side of the undertaking, would probably be ill pleased were everybody to become converted, and thus leave him with his occupation gone. It would, too, be charitable to his intelligence to assume that he is under no delusion as to either the nature of his work or the quality of his converts. His constant experience of revivals must enable him to detect at a glance the type of person who is captured by praying, posturing, and preaching. He has met them before, and he will continue meeting them till the end of the chapter. His interest in the mission is—the mission. Whether it results in more church members or in a “deepening of the spiritual life” is quite a subordinate matter.

Next there is the mission attendant. A surface explanation of alcoholic drinking has it that it is the result of a craving for stimulants. Accepting this for what it is worth, it becomes apparent that this craving may express itself in various ways. It may seek satisfaction in drinking, gambling, or in revivalism. The psychological difference between the man who staggers home liquor-laden, convinced that he has been having a glorious time, and the one whose glorious time has consisted in the emotional debauch of a revival meeting, is really microscopical; and it ill becomes the man who advocates the closing of public-houses to ask for the continuation of missions, just as, on the other hand, it is incongruous to decline to limit the number of whisky-shops while wishing to stop revivals. True, it may be argued that if the public-house is closed a number of people may be induced to attend revivals, seeking there the stimulant that is denied elsewhere; and I cheerfully admit there may be something in the argument. If the public-house is the poor man’s club, the mission-hall may easily be the “virtuous” man’s dram-shop.

Besides, consider the enormous amount of moral satisfaction certain people get from a public confession of an immorality too deep to be described in any but the most general terms. Only the veriest sceptic can question the moral value of the man whose form swells with the sense of importance derived from discovering himself to be the biggest sinner in the gathering. And who shall blame the newly-captured convert if, in the fervor of his fresh-born devotion to truth, he lies like a Trojan concerning his past misdeeds, or if his desire for salvation leads him to confess to crimes that he has never had an opportunity of committing? The recital of past misdeeds by a hardened ruffian of fourteen years of age, or the wistful way in which a retired burglar of seventy looks forward to a life of peaceful religious virtue, opens up ethical vistas too valuable to be lightly sacrificed. To these people missions bring their own justification. To close down the missions would rob them of their only chance of making their past useful—that of obtaining social importance or making a living by its recital.

Nor should the advantage of home-missions, as a method of cultivating the imaginative powers, be quite overlooked. Foreign missions are good in this direction, but they have their limits. The missionary is a long way off; the field of his labors is little more than a name to ninety-nine out of every hundred people; he simply lets his imagination run riot. The home-missioner works under greater difficulties. He has to repeat the stories of his successes on the spot where they are said to have taken place. Where the foreign missionary cannot report actual conversions he has to be content with "deepening the spiritual life," etc., etc. And all has to be done in such a way as to convey the impression that thousands of unbelievers have been brought to their knees before the Lord. Personally, I must confess that the lies of the average mission-preacher fill me with admiration rather than anger. A finished artistic liar is among the most interesting products of human evolution. The stories of Infidels who are converted by seeing an old woman on her knees, of the hardened criminal rescued from a life of crime by reading part of a tract that had been used to enwrap his pennyworth of "shag," or of the drunken parents made sober by a bishop walking through the streets at midnight in his nightshirt carrying an acetylene lamp, are all tales that I, for one, would not willingly let die. The moral gradgrind, who confines himself to a plain statement of things as he sees them, is a very uninteresting creature at the side of the evangelistic Ananias of the mission-meeting. Besides, lying for the greater glory of God is too old and too valuable a practice in the Christian Churches for them to lightly shut down so valuable a school for training practitioners.

Finally, the mission has its uses in enabling the clergy to close their eyes to the decay of their cult. When one reads reports of organized mission-tours, the rousing receptions, the scenes of enthusiasm, etc., etc., one feels that here is another justification for missions. Of course the attendants are all drawn from other churches, and so resemble the march-past of a stage army. But for the moment it looks real, and the clergy are thus enabled to persuade themselves that the enthusiasm of those present is representative of those who have stayed away. For awhile they are thus enabled to blind themselves to the fate that is marching upon them. And it really is a matter of opinion whether, once a man is condemned to death, it is a greater kindness to leave him in ignorance of the date of execution or to announce the date weeks in advance. And the clergy have now so little to cheer them up, that one feels loth to deprive them of whatever comfort may be derived from this source. By all means, then, let the missions continue. They certainly provide fools with a vent for their folly, and knaves with an occasion for the exercise of their knavery. And who shall say if they were not both employed in this way that they might not be employed in a worse?

C. COHEN.

### Partial Truths Misused.

IN a book which everybody ought to read and study, *The Way of All Flesh*, Samuel Butler says that "a clergyman can hardly ever allow himself to look facts fairly in the face." "We forget," he continues, "that every clergyman with a living or curacy, is as much a paid advocate as the barrister who is trying to persuade a jury to acquit a prisoner. We should listen to him with the same suspense of judgment, the same full consideration of the arguments of the opposing counsel, as a judge does when he is trying a case." We are not to infer from this that every clergyman is a hypocrite, preaching as truth what he knows to be falsehood, any more than that a barrister is dishonest when he does his utmost to clear a man who may be guilty. But there is a most important difference between a clergyman and a barrister,

which Butler himself points out. While one counsel has full liberty to prove the accused innocent, an opposing counsel is granted an equal opportunity to establish his guilt, and between the two, with the assistance of judge and jury, there is some chance of getting at the truth. But in the case of the clergyman, "the misfortune is that by the law of the land one side only can be heard." And yet, even in the law court the truth does not always prevail. It is said of that distinguished lawyer, Montagu Williams, that he seldom lost a case, and he himself, in his published *Leaves*, unblushingly boasted of the number of undoubtedly guilty scoundrels he had succeeded in getting triumphantly acquitted. It was he who defended one of the most notorious murderers of the nineteenth century. His address to the jury was most moving, and he could see that the impression it made on their minds was entirely favorable; but it was delivered late in the afternoon, and at its conclusion the court adjourned till next morning. A brother barrister said, "You've got him off." "No," answered Montagu Williams; "no chance; a whole night intervenes between my address and the summing-up."

Even at the Bar, with all its opportunities of unearthing the truth, justice is sometimes drowned in a flood of impassioned eloquence, with the result that the guilty is acquitted and the innocent punished. But in the pulpit only one side is ever heard. No opposing counsel is allowed to pick to pieces the arguments presented, and no judge may sum-up as between the two sides. The consequence is that the case for Christianity gets practically all the hearing, while the case against it is forcibly suppressed. It is to this fact that it owes whatever success it has ever had. It is because of this fact that its advocates have been able to pose as Heaven's spokesmen. It is on the strength of this fact that merely plausible arguments have been permitted to pass as positive evidences. It is this fact which accounts for the notorious inability of the theologian to shine in a formal debate. He has been so long accustomed to mistake dogmatism for reasoning that when his dogmatism is challenged in the name of reason, he is at a loss what reply to make. When he has the field all to himself, and only a packed jury to address, he is quite in his element, and boldly pretends that he and the few who think with him are alone in possession of God's truth, and of a Divine mandate to proclaim it.

A peculiarity of the theologian is that when he gets hold of a partial truth he invariably makes a wrong use of it. Only a few days ago, a divine known on two continents gave a wonderful exhibition of his carefully-trained skill in that fine art. I want to speak to you on the subject of education, he said; not the education we have received and are now imparting, but the education which most of us have so sadly neglected. That was an ingenious beginning, and the congregation was on the tip-toe of expectation at once. He proceeded to show that the so-called educated man of to-day has lost the use of several valuable senses, because he has sinfully departed from nature. The dog can do many things we cannot. By his sense of smell, the dog can unerringly follow a trail which for us does not exist. That sense of smell is yours and mine, only we have not developed it. In other words, we have lost it through disuse. Animals are led by instinct to right conclusions. A dog was once poisoned, and the best doctors were consulted in vain. One wiser than the others said, "Loose the animal, and let him go." The dog went, and was followed in his wanderings till he reached a certain tree, where he stopped and eagerly devoured a plant that grew there. In a few hours the dog was as well as ever. We have the same instinct, only in us it is now latent, and not available when an emergency arises. Our education has robbed us of many of the most precious and practically useful of our natural instincts. All this was exceedingly well told, and the people were profoundly interested. But this only led up to something else of greater importance.

These natural instincts are ours in common with the animals, went on the preacher. But we have natural instincts, as human beings, which the animals do not share, and these also our modern system of education has, in many instances, almost completely destroyed. By means of our souls we can communicate with one another, no matter what space may lie between us. There is a wireless telegraphy of the spirit which annihilates all distances. A wife in London can hold intimate personal communion with her husband, who is at Tokio, by means of this higher mental telepathy. Yes, if you give yourselves free course, as spiritual beings, you can enjoy hourly talks with God and the angels and departed spirits. If you do not do so, the reason is that you have educated your intellects at the expense of your hearts. Children and women are usually so much more religious than men, because their spiritual instincts have not been tampered with by false education to the same injurious extent. An evangelist once asked a lad of eighteen, "Who made you?" and the lad could not answer. But a little boy of six, without a moment's hesitation, put up his hand, and blurted out, "God." Then, addressing the lad of eighteen, the evangelist said: "How is it that you are ignorant of what this tiny chap knows so well?" "O," replied the lad, "it is not so long since he was made." Women and children are nearer the source of their being, and the mist of intellectualism has not obscured their vision.

As long as the reason is kept away from it that sort of talk sounds very plausible, and to a prepared congregation it proves a most palatable spiritual food. There is, of course, an element of truth in it, but all the truth in it escapes in the application. For example, no wireless telegraphy is possible between minds. I cannot breathe my thoughts out into space and drive them along through the ether to my dearest friend in Timbuctoo. We can think of each other as much as we like; but our communion, apart from correspondence or occasional visits, is *purely imaginary*. And this brings us to the innermost essence of all religious experiences. A Christian says: "I had an hour's interview with the Lord Jesus Christ only this morning." Another exclaims: "I had such a delightful talk with my God last last night, and I have been supremely happy ever since." Such, we are told, is the unequivocal testimony of experience, and it cannot be set aside. We have no desire to set it aside, but we do claim the right to explain it. And the explanation of it is as simple as the alphabet. "What is God? God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." That theology is excellent, and cannot be improved upon. According to that definition, God is infinitely superior to man in every respect. Furthermore, man is said to be God's child, whom he passionately loves and fondly longs for as a companion, a bosom friend. Well, which of the two takes the initiative in establishing friendly intercourse? Which makes the first approach to the other? We know what the Bible says on this point, how in one place it declares that the Lord cannot be found without being duly sought, and how in another place it describes him as seeking man, and often failing to find him. If the one statement is true, the other must be false; and both frequently recur in the Bible. Can you fancy a child never finding his father without seeking for him, or an almighty and all-loving father seeking for his own child and not finding him? Appealing to history and personal experience, we discover that God takes no notice whatever of unbelievers. Theoretically, he is the loving father of all alike; but practically, he ignores all who have not been successfully trained to believe in his existence.

Now, we hold that if God existed he would be absolutely incapable of such partial, arbitrary, and unfatherly conduct. There would be none to whom he would be unknown, none from whom he would hide his face, as if he were sulking, or pettily resent-

ing a trivial slight. We firmly maintain that the conduct ascribed to the Christian God by those who claim intimate fellowship with him is an unanswered and unanswerable argument against his existence. No man takes to the Divine Being by instinct as a babe takes to its mother. No one turns to the Lord without first laboriously learning to believe in him; and the contents of the alleged communion with him are absolutely identical with those of the belief in him. Therefore, we contend that the more of real knowledge a man acquires the less religious he becomes, that the nearer he gets to nature the farther he is from any god, and that the more intimate he grows with himself and his fellows the more convinced he will be that his natural instincts tell him nothing of any life other or higher than the one he is seeking to live as a citizen of the world that now is. All else is sheer illusion, the dream of an imagination that for centuries has been educated on wrong lines.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Sayings of Jesus.—XI.

(Continued from p. 365.)

THE most important of the "revelations" made by Jesus to mankind are, in the opinion of all good Christians, those relating to "eternal life." We are asked in one of the Gospels (Matt. xvi. 26): "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The word translated "soul," however, also means "life"; hence we find the latter word given as the better translation in the Revised Version. It would seem, then, that the most a man can lose is his life; but this is reckoning without Luke, who has made Jesus say:—

"Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But.....fear him which after he hath killed bath power to cast into hell" (xi. 4-5).

These two Gospel sayings were suggested by several passages in 2 Esdras, including the following, in which Esdras, after hearing God's plan of salvation and judgment, says:—

"For what profit is it for all that are in this present time to live in heaviness, and after death to look for punishment?.....For what profit is it unto us, if there be promised us an immortal time, whereas we have done the works that bring death?" (vii. 117, 119).

To escape the doom foreshadowed in the foregoing quotation from Luke, and to be admitted into the realm of bliss beyond the skies are what the Gospels call obtaining "salvation" or "eternal life." The Christian Savior, it would appear, was much concerned at the idea of mankind being excluded from this "eternal life," and so went about giving instructions as to how that boon might unfailingly be obtained. We have now to see that Savior's utterances upon the subject.

1. In the famous Sermon on the Mount Jesus is described as saying to the multitude:—

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. vi. 14-15).

This is a fair and equitable condition, devised by "the Father" for admission into his heavenly kingdom. The only point which renders the alleged message doubtful is the fact that Jesus (or his biographer) appears to have taken his instruction, not from "the Father," but from one of the "holy books." In Ecclesiasticus xxviii. 2 it is enjoined—

"Forgive thy neighbor the hurt he hath done unto thee; so shall thy sins be forgiven when thou prayest."

2. In the Third Gospel we find the following interesting narrative:—

"And behold a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, *Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live*" (Luke x. 25-28).

In this case, it will be seen, the condition upon which one might obtain "eternal life" is somewhat different to that given in the Sermon on the Mount. It may also be noticed that in the First and Second Gospels the foregoing incident has been transformed almost beyond recognition. Witness the following:—

Matt. xxii. 35-40. "And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, Master, which is the great commandment of the law? And Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is This, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (See also Mark xii. 28-31.)

In this version of the story, as well as in that by Mark, it is Jesus—not the lawyer—who resolves the ten commandments into man's duty to God and his neighbor. Jesus had been asked, Which commandment of the ten was of the greatest importance? This he evaded by a quibble. The reply put in his mouth was copied verbatim from the "holy books."

Deut. vi. 5. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Lev. xix. 18. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

3. On another occasion, recorded by all three Synoptists, Jesus again replied to the question as to how to obtain "eternal life." The following is the shortest of the three accounts:—

Luke xviii. 18-22. "And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him.....Thou knowest the law? And Jesus said unto him.....Thou knowest the law? Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother. And he said, all these things have I kept from my youth up. And when Jesus heard he said unto him, One thing thou lackest yet. Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

The last-named requirement was too much for the young ruler, who, being rich, and not entirely destitute of common sense, could not make up his mind to beggar himself to give temporary relief to other beggars.

4. In the account of the Last Judgment in the First Gospel (Matt. xxv. 31-46) Jesus, the great Judge, separates "all the nations" into two immense groups, sheep and goats, placing the first on his right hand, and the second on his left.

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you* from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me.....Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."

Finally, it is decided that the goats "shall go away into eternal punishment," and the sheep "into eternal life." This is the only saying ascribed to Jesus which finds a parallel in the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead; but the Gospel writer was not indebted to Egyptian writers for any of his manufactured sayings. In this case, as in each of the preceding, the writer had the authority of the Hebrew "scriptures" for the words placed in the mouth of Jesus.

Isaiah lviii. 7. "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him.....Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer."

Prov. xix. 17. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and his good deed will he pay him again."

5. On another occasion, recorded only by Luke, Jesus is represented as saying to the assembled multitude:—

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (xiii. 5).

These words imply that only those who repented of something would gain "eternal life." The saying was evidently suggested to the Gospel-maker by the following passage in one of the "holy books":—

Enoch xlix. 3. "He who *repents not* before him shall perish."

As to the nature of that of which the people were to repent no information is vouchsafed. Many of the Jews, no doubt, lived good lives, were just and charitable, and would scorn to do a mean action. What these were to repent of goodness only knows; Jesus tells us nothing. In vain we search the Gospels for light upon the subject: the people are to "repent"; that is all. We read, for instance:—

Matt. iv. 17. "From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Mark i. 14-15. "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel."

It would thus appear that Jesus went about calling upon the people to "repent," saying nothing else, and having nothing else to say. Moreover, the people could not "believe in the gospel"; for in the time of Jesus no Gospel had been written, and the materials for making one had not then been got together or even thought of.

6. In one of the long discourses with which Jesus is credited in the Fourth Gospel, that Savior is described as saying (John iii. 16):—

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Here, again, the condition imposed by "the Father" for granting "eternal life" differs essentially from all the preceding. We also see from the passage the meaning attached to the word "perish."

7. Upon another and later occasion, according to the Second Evangelist, Jesus is recorded to have said:—

"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth is condemned" (Mark xvi. 16).

In this case, apparently, simple belief in Jesus is of no avail unless accompanied by the rite of baptism. I may perhaps be told that the last twelve verses in Mark's Gospel are a later addition, and do not properly belong to that Gospel. To this I need only say that Ironæus, who first names the four Gospels, has quoted one of these verses as part of the Second Gospel. There were therefore no doubts as to the authenticity of those verses in his day.

It will be well, now, to recapitulate the conditions announced by Jesus for granting to suffering humanity the much-coveted "eternal life." These are the following:—

1. To "forgive men their trespasses"; then "your heavenly Father will also forgive you."
2. To love God with heart, soul, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself. "*This do and thou shalt live.*"
3. To keep the ten commandments, sell all your possessions, and distribute the proceeds among the poor.
4. To feed, clothe, and minister to the wants of the poor and needy belonging to the class whom Jesus calls his "brethren."
5. To repent of something unnamed.
6. To simply believe on Jesus.
7. To believe on Jesus and be baptised.

Here we have seven different ways of getting to heaven, every one of which—if the special conditions be duly observed—is guaranteed to give the observer the much-desired "eternal life." Jesus has pledged his sacred word, as well as that of "the Father," to the absolute reliability and efficacy of each and all of the methods here enumerated; consequently, those who desire to participate in the delights of this future life have but to make a selection from the seven conditions named, and act in accordance with the one chosen: the promised "eternal life" will then be completely assured. To prevent mistakes the candidate for "eternal life" might also take with him a copy of the conditions of salvation, to show to Peter at the celestial gates; and to avoid

misunderstanding the conditions should be written in the Hebrew spoken in Palestine in the first century—that is to say, Aramaic.

Now, looking at these seven ways of obtaining "eternal life," it will be seen that only in two of them is belief in Jesus necessary; and of those two, one is a fictitious statement composed by the forger of the Fourth Gospel, and the other is found in the last twelve verses of the Second Gospel, which our English Revisers have marked as of doubtful authenticity. The explanation of this remarkable fact is extremely simple. The first five of these conditions of salvation were taken from the literature of the Nazarenes, who believed Jesus to be merely an ordinary man, until filled with the spirit of God at his baptism, after which, no doubt, he was considered a prophet.

The last two conditions for entering Paradise were derived from the teaching of Paul—not the fictitious Paul of the Acts, but the Paul of the Epistles—whose doctrines were conceived and formulated by himself, without any reference to the teaching of the Apostolic party. He taught:—

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9).

The Nazarenes received converts only from "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"; Paul preached long and strenuously among the more numerous Gentiles, and the latter teaching at length prevailed. By the middle of the second century the Christianity founded by Paul was everywhere received (by Gentiles) as that preached by Jesus, and the Ebionites and Nazarenes who had remained faithful to the apostolic teaching were regarded as heretics. One important fact stands out perfectly clear: the primitive Christians, before the conversion of Paul, preached salvation by good works and the observance of the ten commands of the law. If Jesus ever founded a religion, these were the doctrines he taught, and not belief in himself as divine.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be concluded.)

### Acid Drops.

What an absurd thing it is to organise a great Franco-British Exhibition in London, and do the utmost to exclude French visitors. This is done by closing the Exhibition on Sundays. According to the Paris correspondent of the *Times*—which is not an "infidel" organ—it is "estimated by a competent authority that the number of visitors will thus be reduced by quite 50 per cent." Could anything be more asinine? It is a direct and heavy blow at the *entente cordiale* between England and France. The pietists of this country ought not to be allowed to play this dog-in-the-manger game. They are perfectly free not to go to the Exhibition on Sunday: why should they prevent other people from going there if they wish to? These morose bigots ought to be resisted. They are really but a minority of the population, and the majority should keep them in their proper places. We hope the managers of the Exhibition will pluck up courage and go in for Sunday opening. They need not fear the empty thunder of persons like Dr. Peake, secretary of the ridiculous Lord's Day Observance Society. He threatens them with legal proceedings if they defy Sabbatarianism. But there is no real danger, as they may see if they look at the law carefully. They could open the Exhibition on Sundays and take gate-money without the slightest risk of having to pay heavy penalties under the Act of George III. The supplementary Act of 1875 takes all the sting out of that old Statute.

Dr. Peake is simply a Bobadil. He'll swagger, but he won't fight. A good many years ago Mr. Foote defied him at the Hall of Science, and invited the reverend gentleman to come on. But he did not show a coming-on disposition; in fact, he crawled ignominiously away.

The objection raised on the ground of Sunday labor is all nonsense. If Sunday is to be of any use to the majority, the minority must work on that day. All that is necessary is to secure them another day's rest in the week. This is

done under the wise French law, which will be copied in England when we have a little more common sense.

Clergymen work like niggers on Sunday—at least they say they do—to save our souls. Why shouldn't other persons work on the same day to recreate our bodies and brighten our minds? Why should the clergy have Sunday labor all to themselves?

Dr. Clifford says that if one day's rest in seven for all the employees is arranged he does not object to the opening of the gardens and art exhibitions on a Sunday. What does it matter if he objects or not? He is only one man. Other people have rights as well as he. The Exhibition should be open altogether. Dr. Clifford and his friends could please themselves as to what parts they patronised. Other people should be able to please themselves too.

That arch-bustler among the Free Church leaders, the Rev. C. Silvester Horne, in defending foreign missions, says that "God's justice does not run the risk of failing in London because we seek to establish it all over the earth." A truer remark was never made. That which has never been runs no risk of failing. When was God's justice established in London? In what part of London is it to be seen to-day? In the West-end? In Whitefield-street, a locality which Mr. Horne himself recently described as probably the worst in the world? We should very much like to know.

"God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." "Behind all the savagery of our cities, behind all the woe and the despair," behind all the sweating, the oppression, and the injustice so common throughout the world, "God at his sure, quiet work is bringing in the Church." Well, if God is ever to succeed, he must leave the "behind," and come to the very front. What is the good of working at the farther side when all the mischief is at this? The parsons assure us that "Christ is ever coming to his own"; and yet he never arrives.

"Ralph Connor," who is the Rev. Dr. Charles W. Gordon, of Winnipeg, believes in revivalism. Every successful revivalist does. Dr. Gordon believes in "sudden and instant conversion." Of course he does, otherwise revivals wouldn't pay, and would have to be given up. But there is one thing this revivalist does not believe in—the reformation of the wicked by natural means. "Reform won't do," he cries. No, reform won't do, as long as revival preachers can help it. It would render their profession unprofitable.

The value of buildings and endowments for theological education in the United States amounts to £7,000,000, as against £3,000,000 for medical education and £800,000 for legal. But the divinity students are decreasing in number, while the number of medical and legal students steadily increases. We are glad to hear it.

They have a Missionary Exhibition at the Agricultural Hall called "The Orient in London." There seems to be everything there but—converts.

Thirteen hundred missionaries are needed for China. So says the Chinaman of the West China Missionary Conference. We do not understand that the Chinese people have expressed any desire for this number of Christian sky-pilots. It is the missionaries who want more of their kind out there. The Chinese would be only too pleased to say good-bye to the lot.

The wife of Rear-Admiral Evans does not fear any trouble with Japan. Interviewed by a newspaper correspondent in Chicago some time ago, she said: "Both the Admiral and myself, and, indeed, all our children, have the most intense admiration for the Japanese. We believe that Japan is one of the best friends that this country has in the world. I lived in Tokio for many months, and, taken as a whole, I think the Japanese social life the most admirable in the world. It may seem unpatriotic, but I think that we are crude, humdrum, and sordid in comparison. They are polished, genuinely faithful and sincere." Why should we trouble to send missionaries to such people?

"The list of victims of the murderess, Mrs. Belle Gunness, of LaPorte, Indiana, lengthens as search is made. Dr. Charles E. Jones, of Austin, Illinois, bears some not unexpected testimony to the character of the woman. Dr. Jones says that he attended Mads Sorenson, her former husband, on the day he died, and of the wife he says: 'I remember her well as a

religious fanatic type.' Mrs. Guinness was a member of the Lutheran Church, whose mind was 'unhinged by religious eccentricities.' Perhaps Mrs. Guinness knew that 'the warmest eulogy in the Bible is bestowed upon a murderess.' It reads: 'Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.' Jael committed but one murder, and was blessed above women. As Mrs. Guinness murdered a dozen, she must be twelve times as blessed. And of such is the kingdom of heaven.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The enterprising clericals who run Lourdes as a place of pilgrimage, have to boast of a few "cures" now and then. There latest advertisement is the cure of Marie Schouwey, a young Swiss woman, who went to Lourdes in a hopeless state and came away in a first-class condition. She was suffering from "an internal disease" (how precise!) and "the doctors" (how precise again!) had given her up; but while praying in the grotto her "strength and health" came back, and she is now as lively as a cricket. Well, we have heard of these cases before, and every sensible man knows what to think of them. The fact remains that thousands of pilgrims go to Lourdes and get no benefit whatever. The Duke of Norfolk, for instance, took his mentally afflicted son to Lourdes and other places of pilgrimage, but all the piety in the world, and all the supernatural power in the universe, could not supply the poor young man with the brains he wanted.

The *Liverpool Daily Post* wouldn't give a word of encouragement, or even of recognition, to any Freethought leader of to-day, but it gushes through nearly two columns over the official biography of George Jacob Holyoake. The spirit of it may be judged from the impudent statement that "Holyoake was often outraged by Bradlaugh." If there was any "outrage" in the case it was the other way about. It is a pity that Holyoake's friends—who, by the way, seem mostly Christians, or semi-Christians—should perpetuate the quarrels of his lifetime in this unmanly fashion. Holyoake began the quarrel with Bradlaugh (if the truth must be told again) by refusing to publish his Commentary on Genesis on the ground of "indecency." Anyone who turns to the work will see how perfectly ridiculous the accusation was. There never was a more punctilious person than Bradlaugh in that direction. We never heard from his lips, any more than we saw from his pen, a sentence to which the most feminine delicacy could take exception.

The *Daily Chronicle* reviewer of the Holyoake biography tried to make him out as a sort of Sunday-school Freethinker. Holyoake got six months for "blasphemy" in 1842. He had dared to assert that "the Deity should be put on half-pay"—and it was the best thing he ever said in his life. The reviewer—following Mr. McCabe, we suppose—explains it in this way: "In the course of that lecture there were one or two slightly rhetorical sentences which seemed to indicate that the lecturer had doubts of the existence of Deity and of the spiritual value of the Bible." It is really enough to make an honest man sick.

"The religious world," said Spencer in a letter to Holyoake, "is especially unscrupulous in its endeavors to injure antagonists." Quite true. And its most unscrupulous trick is to lick them all over—before swallowing them. That is generally done when they become famous.

When will Christians, in writing of Freethinkers, deal with them fairly? It looks as though the correct answer is. Never. Either they misrepresent their character, or they distort their teachings, or else they imply that they were Christians—of a sort. Here is an instance in point. Among the workers in the cause of social freedom and welfare during the nineteenth century, there are few names which stand higher than that of Robert Owen. For the betterment of the working-class he did much; for the welfare of children he did even more. He spent a fortune in social experiments, and provided a large slice of the money with which Joseph Lancaster opened his elementary schools. Yet Nonconformists, in writing of Lancaster's work, conveniently forget Owen's share, and others, in dealing with the development of working-class movements, ignore his work in this direction. And in those instances where his value is recognised, injustice is done to his

opinions on religion. The *Christian Commonwealth*, in its issue for June 3, devotes a brief article to Robert Owen. The value of his work is fully recognised, but the sting is at the end. "He was persecuted," we are told, "for his broad views on religion, and was too good for the churches of his day." The thing could not have been better put to mislead. "Broad views on religion"! So broad that they were outside religion altogether. The man who over and over again said that when he used the word "God" he meant Nature, and who publicly said that all the religions of the world were so many "geographical insanities," is said to have had "broad views" on religion! What is it, we wonder, that would make a man an Atheist if such expressions as these do not suffice? In addition, "he was too good for the Churches of his day"—as though he would have joined any of them had he lived later. Men of Robert Owen's build were not meant for any Church, old or new. For the old he felt dislike; for the new he would, in all probability, have added to his dislike, contempt.

Last week's *Christian Commonwealth* announced an "important article" by Mr. Eustace Miles in its next issue on "The Food that is To Be." What price "the Lamb"?

The new Government measure for the detention of certain classes of criminals until such time as there is reason to believe they will lead decent lives when released, moves along right lines. It would be farcical, were it not semi-criminal, to seize a man because his character is such as to make him a danger to the community, keep him in prison for a specified number of months or years, and then to release him, with the practical certainty that he will return to the course of life that first led to his arrest. It is as though we were to shut up a dangerous lunatic for a given period, and at the end of that time release him, cure or no cure. The real object in the treatment of criminals is, or should be, reform—for reform is the only ultimate preventive. So long as any person is under the sway of instincts or passions that originally led to his arrest, there is the same reason for keeping him confined as existed at the beginning. We should, in short, pay much less attention to the crime, and considerably more attention to the criminal.

The Bill is on the right lines; but much more is needed if it is to become really effective. Merely detaining a criminal will no more prevent the resurgence of evil instincts than confining a mass of unclean matter will make it sweet. All will depend upon the kind of life led inside the prison. Every care should be taken that prison life supplies, as far as is possible, those conditions—mental, moral, physical, and social—that are most likely to develop character in the right direction. And not the least among the reforms urgently needed is the special training of a prison staff that will realise that the treatment of criminals is in all substantial respects analogous to the treatment of insanity. Not only the prison staff, but society as a whole, must be brought to realise that crime, if it is to be successfully dealt with, must be treated with a view to the social and individual conditions that give it birth. The complete abolition of anti-social tendencies may never, perhaps, be accomplished; but the effective control of crime and the curative treatment of the vast majority of offenders are consummations that might be realised if only a fair amount of common sense were brought to bear on the matter.

Dr. Campbell Morgan, the Nonconformist preacher, is not a New Theology man. In the *Westminster Record* this theological back number declares his belief in the historicity of the Genesis stories of the Ark, the Deluge, and the Tower of Babel. If faith will get a man into heaven, Dr. Morgan is safe enough. But when one reads of "huge congregations" listening to men of this type, one ceases to wonder at the stories of fraud and folly that fill the columns of the daily press. People that can put up with this kind of teaching are a standing temptation to every rogue and trickster in the community.

By hook or by crook, London must be won for Christ. On that point the London Christians are at one. But how is the task to be accomplished? Ay, that's the problem. Innumerable futile attempts have been made. Moody and Sankey tried their hands at it, so did John McNeill, and Gipsy Smith, and Torrey and Alexander. Another attempt is about to be made, and in view of the admitted failure of all previous ones, the Christian leaders of to-day cannot agree as to the form it should take. We are not afraid to predict that no mission, however ably and wisely conducted, will ever convert London. The tide of modern knowledge has set in with such force that it cannot be turned back; and the history of the last three hundred years shows that

in proportion as scientific knowledge spreads the Christian Church declines.

The Free Churches feel deeply aggrieved at the fact that during the visit to London of some 140 German parsons, so much more prominence was given, at all the public functions, to Anglicans and Roman Catholics than to Nonconformists. Of course, the German pastors must have seen how vastly superior to all the others were the few Dissenters, such as Dr. Clifford and Dr. Campbell Morgan, who did take part in the welcome meetings. How easily Christian love blossoms into Christian jealousy!

The Rev. Dr. Horton has just discovered that France is "literally dancing down to death." What gives the dance its downward and deathward direction is the lack of religion in the country. "At the last census eight million people entered themselves as Atheists." How inexpressibly shocking! "Not one Frenchman in a million ever studies the Gospel for himself." Poor old France! Crime is steadily decreasing, the people's morals are rapidly improving, and the sense of true human brotherhood among them is stronger than ever; but, having no religion, France is "literally dancing down to death." How eminently logical and fair-minded are these evangelical parsons!

Dr. Horton, speaking at the annual meeting of the Paris City Mission, held in London, said there was great need of "communicating to the people of France the spirit of truth-seeking." For sheer insolence, this Nonconformist preacher beats everything. It would be insolent on the part of anyone to send a mission to a foreign country to teach its inhabitants how to speak the truth or how to seek the truth. But for such a work to proceed from England, where there is more religious cant, humbug, and moral cowardice to the square acre than any country in Europe, is peculiarly nauseating. We wonder what the French papers and French people would think of Dr. Horton and his advice if it were brought prominently to their notice?

Rev. John Henry Dudley Matthews, rector of Purley, is a nice Christian gentleman. He has driven Mrs. Moule, head teacher of the Church of England School, from her post, after trying to exact a promise from her which a person of common sensibility would have known to be impossible. His demand was practically this, that she should cease to hold intercourse with her own daughter, simply because the young woman and her husband married less than nine months before the birth of their first baby. This preyed upon the reverend gentleman's mind. He felt that he had come into the world to deal with such errors in chronology. And the result is that a thoroughly competent and honorable teacher is deprived of her situation. We repeat that the Rev. John Henry Dudley Matthews is a nice Christian gentleman—with special emphasis on the *Christian*.

Rev. W. A. Hind, Wesleyan minister and president of the Hull and District Free Church Council, was arrested the other day while on his way to a chapel to conduct divine service. The charge against him was one of indecency, and the bail demanded was £300. Such incidents are too common in clerical circles to cause much excitement. But suppose a Freethought lecturer was arrested in that way while proceeding to a hall for the purpose of attacking Christianity! What a pious shriek would go up from the religionists of the whole kingdom!

Rev. Dr. Russell Conwell, of Philadelphia, who preached at Bloomsbury Chapel the other day, is a most fortunate man. For one thing, he *knows* that we shall live for ever. This information he shouted out at the top of his voice, and all doubt took flight, and fled from the building. For another thing, Dr. Conwell never *argues* with an Atheist, but simply says to him, "You are a sinner in need of salvation, and I bring you an all-powerful Savior." The next time he looks, the Atheist is on his knees praising God for his pardoning love in Christ. Nothing could be simpler, or easier. The wonder is that there are any Atheists left.

Yes, Dr. Conwell is a very remarkable man. When at the University he became a thorough-going Infidel. Then he met an illiterate man who was yet good and a believer in the Bible, and he flung his infidelity down the winds. It is now his firm conviction that illiterate people know much more than the so-called educated, and, when brought to Christ, make by far the brightest saints. This conviction is justified by facts. It is education that is killing religion. It is worldly knowledge that is turning Christ into a myth.

It is earthly wisdom, which is foolishness with God, that is making belief in God both absurd and impossible. The ignorance in which all religions had their origin is at last passing away, and with it, of necessity, they too are reluctantly going. No wonder Dr. Conwell condemns the training given at our universities, and pronounces our present system of elementary education false and injurious. He has insight enough to know that the enthronement of King Reason carries with it the dethronement of the religion on which the preacher lives.

Pastor Labusen, of Berlin, declares that the words attributed to Jesus, "If two of you shall agree as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven," are quite true. Well, if so, why are not all mankind Christians? Have no two disciples ever agreed to ask for the instantaneous conversion of the entire world? But "my Father which is in heaven" has not done it for them, which proves that, if Jesus uttered such words, he must have been laboring under a colossal delusion, and that all his sincere followers, in all ages, have been his dupes. The Heavenly Father has never been known to do a single thing for anybody.

Last Sunday was the day of Pentecost. The Book of the Acts "gives us the impression that the significance of Pentecost lay in the fact that the disciples were miraculously endowed with the power of speaking in foreign languages." If the narrative means anything at all it means that. But the divines of to-day assure us that the writer of Acts was mistaken. No foreign languages were represented, because all present were Jews who understood Greek. What happened, then? Nobody knows. The whole narrative is legendary. What historical facts, if any, lie at the back of it, it is quite impossible to determine.

Mountain Ash has suffered much of many revivalists. Every few months fresh ones invade it; and each time it is conquered for Christ. Gipsy Smith has just re-won it for the Redeemer. A few months hence, someone else will try his hand at the same old job. Jesus was born to reign!

Judge Parry, in the Manchester County Court, had to give judgment against James Burns, a stonemason, in a case under the Workmen's Compensation Act. Burns was badly injured while working for the Salford Wesleyan Mission, and the judge held—although apparently with reluctance—that there was no liability as the Mission was conducted for charitable purposes and not for profit. It follows, therefore, that these Missions can compete in every way with ordinary commercial ventures, and yet escape the liabilities to which such ventures are exposed. Mr. Hertz, who appeared for Burns, argued that the Mission *was* a trading concern. Its own publications stated that the yard in which Burns was injured produced an income of £722 19s. 5d. in one year. It is high time that the law dealt with these "philanthropies," which are little else than "sweating" establishments for the exploitation of necessitous labor in the interest of designing religion.

The young Duc de Chaulnes, who married the daughter of Mr. Theodore Shonts, the American railway magnate, died during the honeymoon. "He passed away," the father-in-law says, "just as he and his young wife, in accordance with their custom, knelt side by side in prayer before retiring. My daughter looked up from her prayers, heard a gasp, and saw her husband's head fall forward on the bed. He was dead." A clear case of "Providence"! The duchess nearly lost her reason in consequence—which proves the great value of religious consolations!

Christ Church, Michigan-avenue, Chicago, has established a "courting-room" in an adjoining hall. It has cosy corners, screens, and softened lights. We suppose it is an effort to promote Roosevelt's ideas on the population question. Pastor Snyder says that "the church is the best place to make love"—and we daresay he is right. Religion and something else have always gone well together.

Jerusalem has seen its first motor-car, and the inhabitants were bewildered. It was worse than a certain double-donkey ride 1875 years ago.

"The Christian communities of the world are spending this year £400,000,000 on the hideous mechanism of human slaughter." So said Mr. Lloyd-George the other day (June 1) in the House of Commons. The funniest thing is that he is proud of being a Christian.

## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Lectures suspended during the summer.)

## To Correspondents.

M. E. C.—You evidently mean well, but you lack a sense of humor.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged.  
—Donations, £165; Annual Subscriptions, £186 9s.  
Received since.—J. Barry, £1; H. A. Lupton, 10s.; Manchester Telegraphists' Secular Society, 10s. 6d.;

GERALD MASSEY FUND.—B. Dobell, 5s.

E. J. JONES.—Glad you were so pleased with our article on "Socialism and Religion." Thanks for cuttings.

B. EVANS, honorary secretary of the Manchester Telegraphists' Secular Society, sends on its behalf a subscription to the President's Honorarium Fund, and writes: "That you may enjoy health and strength to continue the magnificent work you have done for Freethought in the past, is our very earnest wish."

R. J. HENDERSON.—See paragraph. Thanks.

Z.—Too late for this week; shall be dealt with in our next.

J. M. R.—It will be dealt with next week.

J. BOWMAN.—Glad to hear the recipient of the six consecutive copies was "delighted with the contents," and is now a regular subscriber. Your friend's verses show sensibility and reflection, but he has much to learn in the art of versification.

P. GOODMAN.—The Hubbard epigrams you refer to were clipped from the *Truthseeker* or other American exchanges, not from his own publications. You understand? Thanks for information and enclosures.

H. E. V.—Monday was holiday at our office as well as elsewhere, and Tuesday is too late for any but really imperative matter. Sorry. Better luck next time.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

F. CARSTEN.—Have passed it over to the N. S. S. secretary for immediate attention.

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

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

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## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote is standing out of lecturing engagements during the rest of the summer, partly to get a little relief from too hard work, and partly to deal with arrears of writing. He will, however, take part in a few Sunday Freethought Demonstrations which the N. S. S. is organising in the London Parks.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference took place at Manchester on Sunday. Delegates and visitors attended from various parts of England and Wales, but we regret that Scotland was not represented. A report of the proceedings will appear in next week's *Freethinker*. For the present we have only to state that Mr. Foote was unanimously re-elected as President, and that the well-attended and enthusiastic public meeting in the Secular Hall was addressed by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and Davies, and the President, who occupied the chair. We print this week the Annual Report which was read by the President at the morning session of the Conference.

Mr. Cohen lectures in Victoria Park to-day (June 14), both afternoon and evening. East London "saints" should bring their more orthodox friends along to hear him.

A Manchester subscriber, who has been for twenty years a Sunday-school teacher, sends us an interesting letter. "Some time ago," he says, "I received six copies of the *Freethinker* gratuitously by post, and I now learn of the system under which they were sent through my acquaintance, Mr. H. I beg to thank you for bringing it to my notice, and I now never miss purchasing the *Freethinker* at the Exchange Bookstall, opposite the Cathedral, on my return home from business every Friday evening. I think your idea a good one, for a really 'live' man who reads one issue of your paper is certain to hunger for more of the really strong mental food you provide. A barrister friend of mine tells me that he would not willingly miss reading a single copy of the *Freethinker*. He always reads the articles by the Editor 'in order to learn how to state a case in the most masterly manner,' and also....." The final compliment is really too embarrassing. But the letter shows the utility of sending us the names and addresses of persons likely to become readers of this journal if it were properly introduced to them.

We are agreeably surprised to see a paper like the *People* denouncing Sabbatarianism, and the "closing of the White Palace at Shepherd's Bush on the one day when above all others it should be opened." "Thousands of people among the lower and middle classes," our contemporary says, "will miss the greatest treat of their lives, not to mention the bitter disappointment our French neighbors will experience should it be decided that the Franco-British Exhibition, being on British soil, must bow to British hypocrisy and conventionality."

We wish every success to our American exchange, the *Blue Grass Blade*, of Lexington, Kentucky, under its new management. We particularly wish it success in resisting the persecution of the Post Office, which has served the publisher and printer, Mr. James E. Hughes, with notice that an inquiry is being made with a view to excluding it from the mails. It often amuses Englishmen to hear America called "the land of freedom." There are so many quiet, respectable tyrannies over there; and one of the worst is wielded by the Post Office officials. These gentlemen actually think that they have a call from heaven (or somewhere) to decide what the American people shall and shall not read. If they don't like a paper they say it is not good enough to be carried by the mails, and that is the principal way in which publications are distributed in the United States, so that the Post Office boycott is almost equivalent to a sentence of death. We hope the *Blade* will win in this fight.

The dear old *Spectator* admits that M. Anatole France is "the most brilliant French writer of the present day," but regrets to say he is a "pagan philosopher" who indulges in "ironical treatment of religious subjects" and "scoffs" with "irreverence" at Christian beliefs. What else did it expect from the most brilliant of French writers?

## "OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN."

Oh, Thou art pitiless! They call Thee Light,  
Law, Justice, Love; but Thou art pitiless.  
What thing of earth is precious in thy sight,  
But weary waiting on and soul's distress?  
When dost Thou come with glorious hands to bless  
The good man that dies cold for lack of Thee?  
When bringst Thou garlands for our happiness?  
Whom dost Thou send but Death to set us free?  
Blood runs like wine—foul spirits sit and rule—  
The weak are crushed in every street and lane—  
He who is generous becomes the fool  
Of all the world, and gives his life in vain.  
Wert Thou as good as Thou art beautiful,  
Thou couldst not bear to look upon such pain.

—Robert Buchanan.

## KEEPING HELL ALIGHT.

When they who have led lives of pleasure, of covetousness, of self-willed sin—when such, I say, come to lie upon their death-beds, they may perhaps feel that awful, impossible wish that they could pass into nothing; for to be nothing were better than to be in the strong grip of Satan amid the intolerable heats of Hell. Dying sinners may feel that their immortality is to be an unendingness of pain, of remorse, of despair; and the deadness and the dumbness of passing into nothing, though it surely would make even a dying sinner shudder, would be more bearable to think of than the life in Hell—the living in fire, the feeding on fire, the breathing fire, the being clothed in fire, the thirsting for cool water where all, all is fire—above, beneath, on this side, on that side, a far-stretching country of burning fire.—*The Blessed Sacrament, from the "Writings of the Saints"*

## Notes on Tour.—III.

(Continued from p. 357.)

ONE of the most attractive sights after leaving Port Said is the island-volcano, Stromboli. The summit of the island is over 3,000 feet above sea-level, and is always smoking—in fact, Stromboli has never been quiescent within the memory of man. A party of Crusaders, returning from Palestine, is said to have given an awe-inspiring account of the strange noises heard there, and Holy Mother Church, always ready to make profit out of every possible channel of human fear, declared that these noises were the groans of the souls in purgatory. Hence, some assert, arose "the institution of chantries in all the churches, masses for the dead, and eventually the system of indulgences." Stromboli is really the beginning of the Lipari group, which is full of interest to the student of geology. Some of these island-volcanoes are now, to all appearances, quiescent, while others are intermittent.

On the present occasion Vesuvius was very quiet, and it was impossible, without the aid of glasses, to see any smoke issuing from the top; but the last time I was here large volumes of smoke were visible, and the soil all up the mountain-side was extremely hot. Then I saw the house—about half-way up the mountain—where Providence allowed a whole family to be wiped out in one act in April, 1906.

"See Naples and die." So the Neapolitans say, but I heard an English visitor once declare that the saying should be altered to "Smell Naples and die"—and he certainly had some justification for suggesting the change. However, there is no denying the natural beauty of the bay and the surroundings of the city, though the principal item of interest to visitors is the ruined city, Pompeii. Perhaps there is nothing else in the world which admits of comparison with these ruins. I spent a day there two years ago, but found that a second visit only added to the wonder of the first impression. In this city of the dead—dead over 1,800 years—everything seems so real and human. There are the narrow streets with the marks of the chariot-wheels still visible, the small forum where some local Cicero or Hortensius doubtless harangued the citizens, the drinking-fountain, the loaves of bread in the bakers'-shops, the oil-jars, perfume-vases, etc. In the museum at the entrance may be seen the casts taken of the human figures found when the ruined city was first laid bare. There they are just as they were when the awful crash came in 79 A.D.—some crouching together, others clasped in one another's arms. A great many of the common objects found at Pompeii have been removed to the great museum at Naples. Here may be seen bread and eggs, tables, chains, surgical implements, toothpicks, vases, and—loaded dice. (Many other things found at the ruins also show us that they were not all Simon Pure in those days.) Another room contains the papyrus manuscripts. I believe these manuscripts, together with those found at Herculaneum, have been edited by Professor Scott, formerly of Sydney, N.S.W.

In Australia they call Adelaide the "City of Churches"; but oh! if the Antipodeans could only spend a Sunday afternoon and a Sunday evening in Naples! The South Australian capital would soon lose its exalted position. It was Sunday when we arrived, and the streets were full of nuns collecting for some church or another. In the evening small shrines, with images of the Virgin surrounded by lighted candles, were placed at all the principal street corners. As was to be expected, side by side with all this were seen the filthiest slums imaginable and most insanitary conditions. I may mention that during the passage from Australia I made the acquaintance of an Englishwoman who spent twenty years in Italy and Sicily. She told me that it would be almost impossible, for one who had not lived in the countries, to form an idea of the superstitious mind of the Southern Italian and the Sicilian, the latter,

perhaps, taking the palm, if there is any difference at all. Even Sicilians, who pass for educated, believe strongly in charms, and wear pieces of coral or horn on their watch-chains as a protection against "the evil-eye." Fitting subjects, truly, for Mother Church to operate on!

A. D. MCLAREN.

## David Hume.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY ventured to call David Hume "the most acute thinker of the eighteenth century, even though it produced Kant." Hume's greatness was no less clearly acknowledged by Joseph de Maistre, the foremost champion of the Papacy in the last century. "I believe," he said, "that taking all into account, the eighteenth century, so fertile in this respect, has not produced a single enemy of religion who can be compared with him. His cold venom is far more dangerous than the foaming rage of Voltaire. If ever, among men who have heard the gospel preached, there has existed a veritable Atheist (which I will not undertake to decide) it is he." Allowing for the personal animosity in his estimate of Hume, De Maistre is as accurate as Huxley. The immortal *Essays* attest both his penetration and his scepticism; the one on Miracles being a perpetual stumbling-block to Christian apologists. With superb irony, Hume closes that portentous discourse with a reprimand of "those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the Christian Religion, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason." He reminds them that "our most holy religion is founded on *faith*, not on *reason*." He remarks that Christianity was "not only attended by miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one." For "whoever is moved by *faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience."

Hume was born at Edinburgh on April 26, 1711. His life was the uneventful one of a literary man. Besides his *Essays*, he published a *History of England*, which was the first serious effort in that direction. Judged by the standard of our day, it is inadequate; but it abounds in philosophical reflections of the highest order, and its style is nearly perfect. Gibbon, who was a good judge of style, had an unbounded admiration for Hume's "careless inimitable beauties."

Fortune, however, was not so kind to him as fame. At the age of forty, his frugal habits had enabled him to save no more than £1,000. He reckoned his income at £50 a year, but his wants were few, his spirit was cheerful, and there were few prizes in the lottery of life for which he would have made an exchange. In 1775 his health began to fail. Knowing that his disorder (hæmorrhage of the bowels) would prove fatal, he made his will, and wrote *My Own Life*, the conclusion of which, says Huxley, "is one of the most cheerful, simple and dignified leave-takings of life and all its concerns, extant." He died on August 25, 1776, and was buried a few days later on the eastern slope of Calton Hill, Edinburgh, his body being "attended by a great concourse of people, who seem to have anticipated for it the fate appropriate to wizards and necromancers."

Dr. Adam Smith, the great author of the *Wealth of Nations*, was one of Hume's most intimate friends. He tells us that Hume went up to London in April, 1776, and soon after his return he "gave up all hope of recovery, but submitted with the utmost cheerfulness, and the most perfect complacency and resignation." His cheerfulness was so great that many people could not believe he was dying. "Mr. Hume's magnanimity and firmness were such," says Adam Smith, "that his most affectionate friends knew that they hazarded nothing in talking and writing to him as a dying man, and that, so far from being hurt by this frankness, he was rather pleased and flattered

by it." His chief thought in relation to the possible prolongation of his life, which his friends hoped, although he told them their hopes were groundless, was that he would have "the satisfaction of seeing the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of superstition." On August 8, Adam Smith went to Kircaldy, leaving Hume in a very weak state but still very cheerful. On August 28, he received the following letter from Dr. Black, the physician, announcing the philosopher's death:—

"EDINBURGH, MONDAY, AUG. 26, 1776. DEAR SIR, Yesterday, about four o'clock, afternoon, Mr. Hume expired. The near approach of his death became evident in the night between Thursday and Friday, when his disease became excessive, and soon weakened him so much, that he could no longer rise out of his bed. He continued to the last perfectly sensible, and free from much pain or feelings of distress. He never dropped the smallest expression of impatience; but when he had occasion to speak to the people about him, always did it with affection and tenderness. I thought it improper to bring you over, especially as I heard that he had dictated a letter to you, desiring you not to come. When he became weak it cost him an effort to speak, and he died in such a happy composure of mind that nothing could exceed it."

"Thus," says Adam Smith, "died our most excellent and never to be forgotten friend. Upon the whole, I have always considered him, both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit."

G. W. FOOTE.

#### "BLASPHEMY!"

Blasphemy is an epithet bestowed by superstition upon common sense. Whoever investigates a religion as he would any department of science, is called a blasphemer. Whoever contradicts a priest, whoever has the impudence to use his own reason, whoever is brave enough to express his honest thought, is a blasphemer in the eyes of the religionist. When a missionary speaks slightly of the wooded god of a savage, the savage regards him as a blasphemer. To laugh at the pretensions of Mohammed in Constantinople is blasphemy. To say in St. Petersburg that Mohammed was a prophet of God is also blasphemy. There was a time when to acknowledge the divinity of Christ in Jerusalem was blasphemy. To deny his divinity is now blasphemy in New York. Blasphemy is to a considerable extent a geographical question. It depends not only on what you say, but where you are when you say it. Blasphemy is what the old calls the new,—what last year's leaf says to this year's bud. The Jews so regarded Christ, and the Athenians had the same opinion of Socrates. Catholics have always looked upon Protestants as blasphemers, and Protestants have always held the same generous opinion of Catholics. To deny that Mary is the Mother of God is blasphemy. Some savages think that a dried snake stuffed with leaves is sacred, and he who thinks otherwise is a blasphemer. It was once blasphemy to laugh at Diana, of the Ephesians. Many people think that it is blasphemous to tell your real opinion of the Jewish Jehovah. Others imagine that words can be printed upon paper, and the paper bound into a book covered with sheepskin, and that the book is sacred, and that to question its sacredness is blasphemy. Blasphemy is also a crime against God, but nothing can be more absurd than a crime against God. If God is infinite, you cannot injure him.....The cry of blasphemy means only that the argument of the blasphemer cannot be answered. The sleight-of-hand performer, when someone tries to raise the curtain behind which he operates, cries "blasphemer!" The priest, finding that he has been attacked by common sense,—by a fact,—resorts to the same cry. Blasphemy is the black flag of theology, and it means: no argument and no quarter! It is an appeal to prejudice, to passions, and ignorance. It is the last resort of a defeated priest. Blasphemy marks the point where argument stops and slander begins.—*Ingersoll.*

In this world the sceptic seems to have the best of the argument; logic seems to be on the side of blasphemy; common sense apparently goes hand in hand with infidelity, and the few things we are absolutely certain of seem inconsistent with the Christian creeds.—*Ingersoll.*

## National Secular Society's Conference.

### THE ANNUAL REPORT.

READ BY THE PRESIDENT.

THE past year has been one of good and fruitful activity in ordinary channels, and remarkable for the first prosecution for "blasphemy" in London since 1883. That event, of course, overshadowed everything else. It also diverted a considerable sum of money from other objects, and in that way renders this Annual Report less gratifying in some respects than it might otherwise have been.

Looking first of all around the provinces, it is to be noted that the Glasgow Branch is still extremely flourishing, having had many crowded meetings during the winter, which added to its membership and financial strength. Both the Newcastle and South Shields Branches have held their own on the Tyneside. Manchester has given your President larger audiences than ever, and other lecturers report an improvement there in their own cases. The Liverpool Branch has struggled hard against the familiar difficulties of its position. These were added to before the close of the winter lecturing season by a tyrannous act on the part of the police—or rather the Chief Constable—who terrorised the lessee of the Milton Hall into closing its doors against the Branch without the decency of so much as a day's notice. Fortunately, the Picton Hall, which is Corporation property, was secured for two lectures by the President on the first Sunday in May, and these were attended by large and enthusiastic audiences. What the Branch will do next winter has yet to be decided. In any case, it will have continued support from headquarters and further visits from Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, and perhaps other lecturers. The Birmingham Branch has also fought gallantly against great odds. It is still denied the use of public school buildings, which are available to everybody in the city but the Secularists. There again, happily, the Branch enjoys the use of the splendid and capacious Town Hall by courtesy of the Lord Mayor. Your President paid two visits there during the winter, and had magnificent meetings on both occasions. Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd paid one visit each, and addressed good afternoon and fine evening meetings. Altogether, the winter's propaganda through the Town Hall gatherings was eminently successful; but the Branch is still hampered by the bigoted restriction against the sale of literature (including the *Freethinker*) at the bookstall—a restriction which is not imposed on any other society in Birmingham, and is, therefore, a pure act of bigotry on the part of the City Council.

New Branches have been formed at Bristol and Aberdare. In the latter place, large and enthusiastic audiences have welcomed the Society's principal lecturers, and the excitement caused by their visits has been reflected in the local press. The movement has been revived in Leeds and a new Branch has been formed there, and it is hoped that indoor lectures may be organised in a suitable hall next winter. Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd have also opened a comparatively new field of propaganda in Edinburgh, where the recently formed Branch has been doing some good work in the open air.

Financial aid to the work of provincial Branches has been afforded by the Secular Society, Limited. The same Society has borne the full financial responsibility of several courses of Sunday lectures in the London district; at Queen's Hall, at the Horns Assembly Room, Kennington, at the Stratford Town Hall, and at the Woolwich Town Hall. The balance sheet also shows that large grants have been made by that Society's Board of Directors to your Society's Executive. It will thus be seen how important the Secular Society, Limited, has proved itself to be to the welfare of the Freethought movement.

The Annual Dinner in London, under the Executive's auspices, was held at the Holborn Restaurant in January and was a triumphant success. Nearly two hundred members and friends participated in that agreeable function. A less elaborate social gathering was held at Anderton's Hotel in May. This also was very successful, and it is intended to hold similar social gatherings monthly during the winter.

Mention should be made of the Freethought Demonstrations held in various London parks during the summer. These were largely rendered possible by the generosity of Mr. E. Wilson in supplying a brake and pair of horses gratuitously for each meeting.

The Executive could not see its way to send delegates to last year's International Freethought Congress, which was held in Eastern Europe, but a subscription of 100 francs was contributed towards the Congress's expenses. A sum of £5 was also voted towards the *Freethinker* appeal on behalf of the late Mr. Touzeau Parris, in "special recognition of his

service to the movement at the time of the Bradlaugh struggle."

The resolution passed by the last Conference with respect to the employment of an organising lecturer was loyally taken in hand by the Executive. Mr. H. S. Wishart was sent to Bristol, afterwards to South Wales, and then to Liverpool. Since the loss of the hall in that city he has been lecturing in South Lancashire and Yorkshire. The balance sheet shows at what cost this has been done. Whether the experiment is to be continued will depend on several considerations, the chief one being of a financial character. It is not necessary to say more at this point, as the matter is on the Conference Agenda for discussion. It is only fair to add, however, that Mr. Wishart's lectures have been well appreciated at every place he has visited.

The most significant event during the past year has been a new prosecution for "blasphemy." Its intended victim, Mr. Harry Boulter, was proceeded against by the police, apparently with the sanction of the Home Secretary, on account of certain utterances in the course of Sunday morning lectures at Highbury Corner, Islington. Although "blasphemy" is not a felony, but merely a misdemeanor, and although there was not the slightest reason to suppose that the usual procedure by summons would miscarry, the police took the extraordinary step of arresting Mr. Boulter. Then, instead of taking him to the local Police Court, they charged him at Bow-street, where they probably considered, and doubtless with good reason, that the conditions would be most favorable to their policy. Their next step was similar in character and intention. A pretence was made that the words uttered by the prisoner were too shocking to be read out in open court; it was broadly hinted that they were "obscene," and great alarm was expressed lest they should creep into the newspapers and corrupt the public mind. Unfortunately, the magistrate did his utmost to assist the police in these manoeuvres; when the case came on for full hearing, after a formal adjournment, it was heard *in camera*, the public being rigorously excluded, although the magistrate lacked the courage to exclude the press, which would have been the logical course to pursue. Obviously, the project was to surround the case with a dense cloud of prejudice, under cover of which the victim might be hurried to his doom; and if this trick had succeeded there would almost certainly have been a crusade against militant Freethinkers generally. There was talk in official circles of prosecuting the *Freethinker* again, and the talk might have led to action but for its being deprecated by two members of the Government on grounds of prudence. Altogether, the situation was sufficiently serious to call for your President's intervention. Even had it been less serious he would have felt called upon to intervene. Having assured himself that there was no sort of "obscenity" in the utterances alleged against Mr. Boulter, however they might be judged from the point of view of good taste—which is always very much a personal question—your President could only consider the prosecution as an attack by Christians upon a Freethinker. The allegation that he had outraged their religious feelings was not balanced by any admission that *they* were bound to respect *his* feelings. Their attitude was one of mere persecution, however it might be disguised by specious forms of legality. When all was said and done, it was a prosecution for "blasphemy," and every enforcement of the Blasphemy Laws—which were framed for the protection of Christianity and the suppression of Freethought—is to be resisted to the uttermost. It was in this spirit that your President summoned a special meeting of the Executive, which fully discussed the situation, and pledged itself to find all the funds that might be requisite for Mr. Boulter's defence. This decision was arrived at on grounds of principle. Mr. Boulter was not a member of the N. S. S.—he was reported to be not too friendly to it—and personal feeling might have suggested that he should be left to fight his own battle, with the assistance of those who were associated with him. But this was not a high or honorable ground to take. When a principle is attacked all who can should defend it. The N. S. S. was confronted by a duty which only cowardice would evade. And cowardice was never the besetting sin of the Society established, and so long led, by the heroic Charles Bradlaugh.

The balance-sheet shows what the defence of Mr. Boulter cost. Towards the total of £223 1s. 8d. the sum of £127 13s. 4d. was raised by a special subscription through the *Freethinker*, and the balance of £95 7s. 11d. was defrayed out of the Society's funds.

It was the command of money that made all the difference in this case. Mr. Boulter was being pushed along to prison expeditiously. Not a moment's delay was allowed him. The haste was positively indecent. But when distinguished counsel were engaged in the case, and they applied for the delay necessary to a proper defence, it could not be denied. Moreover, the expenditure of money showed

that the prosecuted man had friends, and this was bound to put a fresh aspect on such a case. Further, the delay gave what public opinion there might be on the prisoner's side an opportunity of asserting itself; and it also afforded an opportunity of clearing away much of the misrepresentation by which the police, with the connivance of the magistrate, had prejudiced the prisoner's defence.

While it is unnecessary to go over the whole prosecution in this report, seeing that it was dealt with so fully in the *Freethinker*, it is nevertheless advisable to note the more important features of the case.

Mr. Boulter not being a member of the N. S. S., nor speaking from its platforms, the Executive had nothing to do with the "taste" of his advocacy. Neither was his taste of the slightest importance in considering whether he should be defended against a prosecution for "blasphemy." Bad "taste" is not criminal in itself; it only becomes so when it is made a pretext for religious persecution. Christian bad taste is never punished, but often considered highly commendable. It is difficult to conceive anything worse than the "taste" displayed by Christian Evidence and Anti-Infidel representatives, who deal in the most disgusting personalities and the most infamous slanders. When the libels of a Torrey are tolerated and even approved, how hypocritical and absurd it is to invoke the criminal law against the jocularities of a Boulter. And when the criminal law takes the form of an indictment for bringing the Holy Scriptures and the Christian religion into disbelief and contempt, it is hard to understand how any Freethinker, or even any Rationalist, could feel called upon to accept a brief for the police. Happily, there is only one professed friend of "reason" who occupies such a ridiculous position, and the condemnation of his attitude is universal and decisive.

A word must be said as to the speech of Mr. Atherley Jones for the defence. He had to appeal to the jury for an acquittal, and was therefore obliged to argue that the Common Law of Blasphemy was obsolete. In that he was undoubtedly right. It may have been excusable for the judge to say that he did not understand what was meant by a law being obsolete, but his right to press that view upon the jury was very questionable. Juries have rights and powers which judges do not possess; one of them is to give a verdict without a reason; thus they become a part of the machinery of judicial progress, and a law does become obsolete when they refuse to convict.

Your President held from the first, in spite of adverse legal opinion, that Lord Coleridge's statement of the Common Law of Blasphemy in 1883 would be followed in future cases. And the event proved that he was right. Mr. Justice Phillimore accepted Lord Coleridge's statement as final. He even strengthened it on his own account. Henceforth, it is beyond doubt that the fundamental doctrines of Christianity may be attacked with impunity as long as the "decencies of controversy" are observed. In other words, it is no longer a crime to bring Christianity into *disbelief*, but only a crime to bring it into *contempt*. This has the curious effect of leaving Freethinkers safe collectively, while in danger individually. No one can define the "decencies of controversy," and a bigoted jury, under the direction of a bigoted judge, might find almost any Freethought controversialist guilty of "blasphemy." But, on the other hand, there is no conceivable violation of the decencies of controversy in the Memorandum and Articles of such an incorporated body as the Secular Society, Limited. It was worth far more than the money spent on the Boulter case to obtain a perfect demonstration of the absolute security of this incorporation. It was built upon the rock of Lord Coleridge's judgment, and Mr. Justice Phillimore's judgment shows that rock to be as firm as Gibraltar.

There is also a gain from another point of view. Lord Coleridge was the first judge who refused to help the prosecution in a case of "blasphemy." That was a great step in advance. Mr. Justice Phillimore was the first judge who hesitated to sentence a convicted "blasphemer." That was another great step in advance. It is idle to say that nothing has been gained. The remark shows a want of sagacity. *Much* has been gained. We are at the beginning of the end. The Blasphemy Laws are doomed. And the day may not be so distant, after all, when the plain, honest Bill that Charles Bradlaugh introduced into the House of Commons will be brought forward again, to receive further and further support, and finally to become the law of the land. Half the victory—perhaps the more important half—is won already. The other half cannot be postponed for ever.

A paragraph in the last annual report dealt with the formation of the Secular Education League. It was mentioned that a large number of distinguished names in science, art, literature, and politics appeared in the list of the League's General Council. Many distinguished names have been added since, and the presidency of the League has been accepted by Lord Weardale. Your President continues to serve on the Executive Committee, to which Mr. Cohen has

been added. Mr. Harry Snell remains the active and efficient secretary. Most of the work hitherto consists in the circulation of Secular Education literature and letters to the newspapers. This will doubtless be supplemented by public meetings during the winter. One demonstration was held at the Memorial Hall in November; Mr. Halley Stewart, M.P., presided, and Mr. Masterman, M.P., and the Rev. R. J. Campbell were amongst the speakers. An allusion by the last gentleman to the presence of the editor of the *Freethinker* on the platform led to general clamors for a speech from your President, and the crowded meeting could only be pacified by an assurance that its wish should be complied with. Your President's speech was the only speech of the evening that kept entirely to the real issue, and while quite firm in substance was studiously moderate in expression. But bigots are not to be conciliated. The National Secular Society's aid in filling the hall was welcome, but its representation on the platform was resented, and most bitterly by Nonconformists, the *Christian World* regarding it as a calamity, and declaring that the meeting had better not have been held. It is to be hoped that this unfortunate attitude will be modified in the near future. It *must* be modified if the League is really going, as its Manifesto declares, to unite for common action all persons, of all parties, who accept the principle of Secular Education and desire to make it prevail.

With regard to the Education question in parliament, it is sufficient to say that the religious difficulty has resulted in the paralysis of statesmanship. The Government's third Education Bill, in the space of two years, is now hung up till the autumn, and there is a general impression that it will never be heard of again. Efforts are being made to reach some kind of compromise by means of a Round Table Conference, at which it is hoped that representatives of the various Christian Churches will sit and discuss how far they can agree in exploiting and oppressing the rest of the community. Freethinkers, at any rate, can only hope that the nation will get sick of all this quarreling and intriguing, and demand the Secular Solution as the only way of putting an end to an intolerable and dangerous nuisance.

Your Executive is not in possession of information as to the next International Freethought Congress, and has therefore no suggestion to make to this Conference.

It is pleasant to record that Senor Ferrer, being brought to trial at last, was honorably acquitted, and his sequestered property was restored. The clerical plot to get rid of the leader of Secular Education in Spain was thus foiled. But this happy issue was only the result of the pressure of international public opinion. Every part of the civilised world protested against the treatment of Senor Ferrer. Those protests first saved his life, and then his liberty.

Freethought continues to dominate France, and the transference of Zola's remains to the Panthéon puts the final seal on a nation's tribute to one of her most heroic sons. Zola was an Atheist, and to those who know what Atheism really is it is not so wonderful that in a great crisis he was the insuppressible voice of the conscience of France. Which proves how false, how fantastic, is the orthodox plea that supernaturalism is essential to the highest and noblest morality.

In America, there are many freethinking publications springing up, but the *Truthseeker* easily holds its premier position. *Secular Thought* is still issued monthly by Mr. Ellis at Toronto. Freethinking societies are springing up in many directions, and orators like Mr. Mangasarian at Chicago, and Dr. Roberts at Kansas City, attract large and appreciative audiences. Freethought appears to be spreading rapidly in South Africa, even amongst the Boers, many of whom began to mistrust "Providence" after the close of the late war. Right away at the antipodes one of your Society's vice-presidents, Mr. W. W. Collins, is conducting a weekly paper called the *Examiner* and delivers Sunday lectures to excellent meetings. No one has yet arisen, however, to carry on the work which the late Joseph Symes had to drop at Melbourne. But it is evident from papers like the *Bulletin* that Freethought is widely spread in Australia generally.

This annual report must now draw to a close, and this may well be done with a bit of good news. Your President is informed by the Chairman of the Secular Society, Limited, that this Incorporation is residuary legatee under the will of one of its members recently deceased. Mr. Charles Bowman's estate has been valued for probate at £11,800, and in the course of time, and after the payment of certain legacies, the greater portion of the estate will accrue to the Secular Society, Limited. With this good news in its mind, the Conference may now address itself to its labors with a quickened spirit of cheerfulness and confidence.

Mysterious even in open day,  
Nature retains her veil, despite our clamors.—Goethe.

## Bible and Booze.

THE jewel of consistency does not find a setting in the crown of holiness worn by the average Christian. Orthodox restraints and limitations, its restrictions and inhibitions upon individual conduct are invariably intended for the other fellow, but the moment the application is made direct and personal there is not only a kick but an evident desire and manifest purpose to break through the boundaries.

For years the clergy have practically insisted that the people must do as they say and assume a moral blindness toward their own actions. "Do as I say, not as I do" is the maxim of the average preacher and the majority of Christian worshipers have been apt scholars.

Previous comment has been made in these columns anent the Christian policy in the new State of Oklahoma towards the liquor question. Mention has been made of the number of Christian applicants for the office of County and State agencies in the dispensing of the alluring booze. Recent developments indicate that in urging the adoption of the new State's liquor laws the Christian element intended it only for the other fellow and did not anticipate that it would be enforced upon them. The reports show that a number of Christian people in McAlester have been summoned before the grand jury to testify before that body of inquisitors as to several purchases of liquor made by them in a manner not in strict compliance with the law. It is a noteworthy fact that no Freethinkers are included in the list summoned. It appears that in giving their orders for the liquor these applicants were required to set down their own signatures in a book, and with these tell-tale autographs the grand jury is said to be sure of getting all the evidence necessary.

The agent, whose name is Dreyfus, would take individual orders for either beer or whiskey. His patrons were the Christian people of the community, they who had been instrumental in getting the present liquor laws adopted. The reports go on to state since statehood this agent has disposed of two hundred cases of whiskey and fifty carloads of beer. It is certain that the Christian people of McAlester were a thirsty lot or they are possessed of an abnormal fondness for the cup that is said to cheer. Large quantities of the liquor have been seized by the police and while making a more extensive search of the premises used the order book was found. Investigation revealed the fact that the names contained in this order book were those of prominent church people, and the police have now caused them to be summoned to appear before the grand jury. Not only were the individual orders found, but the individual receipts, thereby showing that the liquor had actually been delivered to them, and we are not surprised that the discovery has caused "consternation" in the church circles of McAlester.

It was ever thus. Hell was not built for self. It was built for the other fellow. Sunday laws are the inventions of the cranks whose sole aim it is to compel recognition of their hobbies. Legal repression will run its limit, and when the reaction comes there will be a terrible awakening and orthodox Christianity will get the worst of the encounter. What a hue and a cry would have been raised had the names of infidels been found on that order book. Sermons would have followed from orthodox pulpits. The religious press would devote columns to the exploitation. But watch them now. The prohibitory liquor laws are essentially Christian and Christians are the most prominent in its violation.

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

Pray not! the darkness will not brighten! Ask  
Nought from the silence, for it cannot speak!  
Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains!  
Ah! brothers, sisters! seek.

—*Sir Edwin Arnold*. "The Light of Asia."

## Obituary.

WE regret to announce the death of one of our old members, Henry Croughan, Charles-street, Edinburgh, on 4th inst., the funeral taking place on Sunday, 7th inst. Although only fifty-eight, he was for over thirty years a member of the N. S. S., and always ready to do his share of the fighting. He could recall with interest some of the exciting incidents of Mr. Bradlaugh's parliamentary fight, and was present at the great leader's funeral; he was also a great admirer of Mr. Foote in his struggle to keep the flag of Freethought flying. The funeral was private, but the Secular Burial Service was read by his old and trusted friend, James Robertson.—N. LEVY.

**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.****OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey. Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.15, W. J. Ramsey.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, Mr. Ford, "Peace, Perfect Peace."

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

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S.: Beresford-square, 11.30, a Lecture.

**COUNTRY.**

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): Social meeting, Thursdays, at 8.15.

**OUTDOOR.**

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.

**H. S. WISHART'S LECTURES.**

LIVERPOOL: Shiel Park (corner of Shiel-road and Boaler-street), at 3, Bible Readings No. 1—"Faith in Christ v. Faith in Humanity"; Bible Readings No. 2—"Did Christ Teach Poverty?"

BOLTON: Monday, June 15, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Ballard's Reply to Blatchford."

BURY: Tuesday, June 16, Market Place, at 7.30, "Free Church, Free Will, Freethought."

WIGAN: Wednesday, June 17, Market Steps, at 7.30, "A Freethought Missioner's Reply to the Free Church Missioner."

ROCHDALE: Thursday, June 18, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Ballard, Blatchford, and That Dog."

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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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