

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*You will constantly hear me accused—you yourselves may be the first to accuse me—of presumption in speaking thus confidently against the established authority of ages. Presumption! Yes, if I had spoken on my own authority; but I have appealed to two incontrovertible and irrefragable witnesses,—to the nature that is around you—to the reason that is within you.—JOHN RUSKIN.*

## Christian Veracity.

"It is this which makes it so unspeakably repulsive to all independent and impartial thinkers, and has led a great German historian to declare, with much bitterness, that the phrase 'Christian veracity' deserves to rank with the phrase 'Punic Faith.'"—LECKY.

MR. READER HARRIS, K.C., is a most romantic gentleman for a lawyer. We know little, if anything, of him professionally, but we presume that when he is on duty, or business, or whatever he calls it, he acts like the rest of his rather dry-as-dust species. Outside it, however, he lets his imagination curvet and prance, and even gallop away with him. We do not mean that he is a poet, or a novelist, or an artist of any description. He spends his leisure in evangelising work, and on that platform he is a first-class fictionist. We have frequently had occasion to refer to his achievements in this line, which convince us that he is a diligent student of the Bible generally and of the New Testament in particular. When he is in one of his pious raptures, he remembers things that never happened, and dreams of things that never will happen. He began in a small way, like other novices, but long practice has made him quite a master of the craft. One of his many stories is that he was once an Agnostic, and a follower of Charles Bradlaugh—who never was an Agnostic. He has been asked to give the name of any Secular Society he ever belonged to, or of any Freethinker to whom he was known as a Freethinker. But he disdains to answer questions which imply a doubt of his infallibility. His reply, if we may call it so, is to tell another story. He assures the world, or the fraction of it that listens to him, that he was converted from Agnosticism in a startling and almost miraculous manner; which shows how much he is under the special care of the Almighty. But he has lately beaten all his previous performances in this direction, and it is really so extraordinary that we cannot deal with it at the end of a paragraph. We must begin a new one.

One day last April (we hope it was not the first) Mr. Reader Harris delivered an address on "How I became an Agnostic, and how afterwards God saved me," at Milton Congregational Church, Gravesend. There was a large attendance, and the Rev. W. T. Ball, the pastor of the church, occupied the chair. In the course of this address, according to the *Gravesend Reporter*, Mr. Harris made the following statement:—

"Bradlaugh was announced to speak at Colston Hall, Bristol, and while the Christians of the city were alarmed six of them banded themselves together for prayer, the outcome being that though Bradlaugh arrived in the city, he was taken ill, and could not deliver his speech. That remarkable answer to prayer made a tremendous impression upon him."

"Him" would grammatically mean Bradlaugh, but we suppose it means Mr. Reader Harris. We do not doubt the "tremendous impression," but we desire to ask a few questions. Are we to understand that Mr. Reader Harris was one of the faithful six who wrestled in prayer for the overthrow of Bradlaugh? If he was one of them, does he consider that was a fair way of playing the game? Is shutting the "infidel" up the same thing as answering him? If he was *not* one of them, how does he know—we repeat, *know*—that the story is true? Has he kept the names and addresses of the other five, or the six without himself, and will he kindly give them, or one of them? We do not ask for a dead man's address; we beg for a living one's; unless the whole five, or six, have opportunely expired.

Mr. Harris drew a picture of the crowded audience stamping their feet and crying "Time, time!" when Bradlaugh (who was the soul of punctuality) did not appear; he told how someone stepped on the platform, announced the lecturer's illness, and informed the people that they could have their money back at the door; how the six good Christians got up and started "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," how the big audience joined in the hymn, and how the meeting broke up after more singing and prayers.

Amongst the listeners to this beautiful and impressive story was a veteran Freethinker, Mr. D. Martin, of Gravesend. This gentleman wrote off to Bradlaugh's daughter (Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner) asking if the story were true. Mrs. Bonner replied, mentioning several dates on which her father had lectured in the Colston Hall, but stating that she had no recollection of any illness. Mr. Martin also wrote to Mr. Harris asking for the date of the alleged illness. Mr. Harris did not reply. Mr. Martin wrote again. Still no reply. But the romantic evangelist was not altogether silent. He wrote to the Rev. W. T. Ball—to whom Mr. Martin has also communicated—stating that he had not answered Mr. Martin's letter because that gentleman had said that he "never expected a reply" and that "Mr. Harris knew that his statements about Bradlaugh were false." Now this was another imaginative effort on Mr. Harris's part. There is no such sentence, or anything like it, in Mr. Martin's letter—a copy of which is printed in the circular that Mrs. Bonner sends us.

Having no doubt in her own mind that the whole story was fictitious, Mrs. Bonner wrote to Mr. W. H. Morrish, of Bristol, who was concerned in the arrangement of all Bradlaugh's lectures in the Colston Hall. Mr. Morrish, whose word would never be doubted by anyone who knew him, replied as follows:—

"Mr. Reader Harris, K.C., must have a very vivid imagination to make such an assertion. There is not the least truth in it. There is no one in a better position to know than myself, as I had the management of each of his lectures in that noble Hall, and each of them attracted an immense audience. He was in excellent form on each occasion, and in the best of health."

One of the grandest sights in the world, it has been said, is a good man struggling with adversity. Our admiration, therefore, must go out to Mr. Reader Harris. He is in a very tight corner. Retreat is terribly difficult, and going forward looks like annihilation. A fertile fancy is an excellent thing in its way, but it does not help you when you

are challenged for positive evidence; and there is one place in the world where it is particularly dangerous—the witness-box. No wonder that Mr. Reader Harris evades the subpoena.

Mrs. Bonner takes a very serious view of this matter. But then it is her father who is the subject of Mr. Harris's "thickcoming fancies,"—and her father was one of the last men in the world to be prayed, or frightened, or bamboozled from a lecturing engagement. The whole House of Commons, with ever so many prayerful men in it, could not shift him; and how on earth did six Christians manage it in the city of Bristol? Mrs. Bonner's indignation is perfectly natural. But on one point we venture to think she is mistaken; and in endeavoring to show this we must be as serious as she is. She says that she is "quite unable to see how such pious fables can possibly serve the cause of Christianity or discredit Atheism,"—she "would imagine they must have an entirely opposite effect." This is a very respectable sentiment, but it does not allow for the immense part which "pious fables" have played in spreading, establishing, and perpetuating the religion that has the honor of Mr. Reader Harris's patronage. There is something more than malice even in the libellous lies that have been told about prominent sceptics. Villainy of this kind is largely done on calculation. When the sceptic's mouth cannot be closed, it is obvious that the next best thing is to stop the ears of those he addresses. This is done by representing him as a moral leper, whose very presence is a contagion. In consequence he is shunned; people will not listen to him, if he speaks—nor read him, if he writes; he is intellectually boycotted, and the old religious houses continue to supply their customers in the old-fashioned way. We believe, then, that if Mrs. Bonner will think the matter over again she will find Mr. Reader Harris perfectly intelligible.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Ethics and Unbelief.—II.

(Concluded from p. 452.)

DR. WARSCHAUER, in arguing that the morality of the Agnostic is derived from his Christian surroundings, confuses two very different things. What he implies is that the Agnostic, being more or less of a mental "sport," derives his ethical ideas from the environment amidst which he moves. What he says is that, part of that environment being constituted by Christianity, he is indebted to that religion for whatever moral culture he possesses. Thus, by suggesting the first, which is more or less of a truism, he claims an assent to the second, which is—to put it very mildly—a highly disputable proposition. It assumes that Christianity is the only factor in our environment that is of any causal consequence. Obviously this is not so. Many other forces are at work. The influence of family, friends, social companionships, art, literature, government—all these, considered purely by themselves, are powerful forces operating on each of us. Christianity as a religion is at most only one portion of our environment; and for Dr. Warschauer or anyone else to ignore everything else, and to say that because Christianity is present therefore nothing else need be taken into account, is in the highest degree absurd.

It is obvious, too, that the argument, if pressed, destroys itself. The morality of the unbeliever, we are told, is due to Christianity because he has a Christian ancestry and is exposed to Christian influences. Now, if we go back far enough, we may say with equal truth that the morality of the early Christians was due to their having had Pagan parents and being surrounded by Pagan influences. So, too, at a later date we might ascribe the morality of Protestants to the influence of Roman Catholicism. If the dominant religion is to be given full credit for the morality of those who break away from it, it

must be as true of either of the instances cited as it is of Dr. Warschauer's selected example. If, on the other hand, it is held that the acceptance of a new view of life may operate by producing a healthier moral tone, why may this not be as true of unbelief in relation to Christianity as it is of Christianity in Paganism, or of Protestantism in relation to Roman Catholicism?

Really careful and philosophic thinkers have by this time divested themselves of the idea that the general morality of a people is dependent upon consciously-formulated philosophic or religious theories. As, however, Dr. Warschauer is under the impression that in some mysterious manner non-moral people suddenly say "Go to, let us become moral," and straightway become so, I may be permitted to point out that the persistence of morality, despite changes of religion, is alone enough to show there is no fundamental connection between the two. It is also laboring the obvious to point out that, with moral practices continuing much the same with all religions and no religion at all, one cannot very well attribute their persistence to any religion in particular. Permanence of results argues permanence of the conditions from which they ensue, and these are to be found in those social forces that are fundamentally identical with all. Still further it may be pointed out that it is these social forces that lead to all improvement in religious teaching. So far as Dr. Warschauer's New Theology is an improvement, the improvement has resulted from a more complete knowledge and a comparatively clarified moral sense being brought to bear upon religious teachings. The gods begin to exist as an expression of the social state of the people who create them, and they are modified by every successive stage of social evolution. The most ridiculous attributes that man has ever given to his gods are those of unchangeableness and immortality. They are really the most changeable and the least permanent of all things. They are never alike for two successive generations—hardly for two individuals. They shrivel and die before a developing human nature, acknowledging the nature of their birth in the form of their death.

When, therefore, Dr. Warschauer says that Free-thought "is in the position of not having created its own moral system, but of having accepted that of Christianity," he is completely mistaken. One need only ask him, in reply, what ethical teaching is there current to-day that is properly and exclusively Christian? The notion that Freethinkers are kept moral by the example of Christians is still more absurd. Can anyone seriously contend that the example of Christians make non-Christians more truthful than they would be otherwise? In all seriousness I say that there is no class of the community that show less aptitude for exact and accurate statement, or evidence a greater readiness to bear false witness against their neighbors, than do Christians. Christian literature and Christian preaching is one long welter of exaggeration, inaccuracy, and false statement. New Theologians dwell on this in relation to the orthodox. The orthodox retort it on the New Theologians. Catholics assert it of Protestants, Protestants affirm it of Catholics, and the behavior of all towards non-Christians is too well known to need lengthy comment. Nor—with Christian prisons filled, in the main, with Christian prisoners; with all the petty chicaneries and dishonesties of Christian business life; with the hatred and jealousies of Christian nations—is it easily possible to make out the case that it is the influence of Christians that keeps other people on their best behavior. Only the profound and deeply-rooted egotism that Christianity encourages could ever give such an idea the barest semblance of actuality.

Dr. Warschauer offers what he considers a proof that the morality of the Freethinker is due to Christianity. If, he says, we could see a fourth generation of Agnostics brought up in complete isolation from Christianity, we should then be able to see whether morality could survive the separation from religion. But this we cannot see. Just as

pure-bred Londoners—the illustration is his—die out unless the stock is replenished by country blood, so Freethought seems unable to perpetuate itself. There is a tendency to revert to Christianity, and the reversion suggests “the instinct of self-preservation, a return to the soil which made the growth of the flower possible.” He concludes, therefore, that morality could not survive the separation from religion.

One cannot compliment Dr. Warschauer upon the scientific accuracy of his illustration. The notion that a race cannot perpetuate itself in a city is one of those pseudo-scientific theories that a proper reading of evolution does not confirm. The existence of the Jews, a city race for generations, alone disproves it. The race does not, as a matter of fact, die out; it simply develops along different lines. Different values are attached to certain qualities, that is all. So with morality. It is probable that the conscious and complete separation of religion and ethics would lead to a difference in the value placed upon particular moral qualities, and, again, this is all that would occur. It is sheer bigotry to assume that because of this difference the morality would be lower. It might very easily be higher, although it would be copying Dr. Warschauer to make the bald assertion that it would.

When one is asked if anyone knows of cases where Freethought has descended from parents to children for three or four generations, I may reply that I do know of cases where the third generation is growing up Freethinkers without showing any tendency to revert, or any weakening of moral fibre. Or suppose one were to take the case of James Mill and his son, John Stuart Mill. The father was an avowed Freethinker. The son was brought up carefully shielded from religious influences. Was there any weakening in the moral fibre of the son as a result of his heredity and his education? I do not think anyone will say there was. Yet if a later generation reverts to Christianity because of an “instinct of self-preservation,” there should be at least traces of the moral weakening in the second generation. On a question of fact Dr. Warschauer's position is absurd; on a question of theory it is equally so. For a debased moral nature is not readily susceptible to lofty moral influences. It is one of the difficulties of the situation that lofty ethical ideals appeal to precisely the class of people that are best able to do without them. And if the ethics of Christianity are of so lofty a character, and if these appeal with peculiar force to the children of Freethinkers, it would really seem as though their moral nature had been raised to the point of appreciation by the influence of Freethought. Moreover, if we cannot readily produce Freethought families of several generations, we can at least produce numerous cases in which the religious convictions grow weaker with each generation. And there should, on Dr. Warschauer's argument, be an appreciable weakening of moral fibre in such cases. But I do not think that even Dr. Warschauer will dare to affirm this to be the case.

Finally, the fact of Freethinkers' children not always developing into strenuous Freethinkers is not so much a moral phenomenon as a socio-biologic one. The normal type of mind is the conventional one. Every individual is not cut out for either the part of hero or martyr. The general tendency is, and always will be, to fall into line with the conventional view of things. Judged by the mass of mankind, the Freethinker, with his assault on conventionality, is not a normal type at all; and, as in the whole organic world, the tendency is to keep the species to a mean, suppressing both those above and those below. No scientific thinker would, therefore, expect the type of mind that gives rise to unbelief to be perpetuated in a serial line. All that could be looked for would be its more frequent appearance over a wider area. And, really, as it is not unusual for wise fathers to have comparatively foolish sons, as neither great statesmen, great painters, great writers, or even great preachers invariably reproduce their kind, I fail to see why it should be taken as a reflec-

tion on Freethought that Freethinkers do not always find their beliefs repeated in their descendants.

The real meaning of the phenomenon is that one's descendants are apt to fall back to the normal type, and show an inability to withstand the social pressure that makes for conformity. The environment presses upon them, and in this case “environment” covers all the petty boycotts, and inconveniences with which religion oppresses the heretic. The real marvel is, not that unbelievers should be so few, but that they are not be so numerous. If Dr. Warschauer really wishes to see what is the strength of Freethought he should labor to get fairplay for all opinion, no matter what its character. And not a bad beginning would be for him to cease discussing intellectual differences in terms of moral value.

C. COHEN.

### The Wholesome Attitude to Death.

WHY do the majority of people live in perpetual fear of death? In Christendom nine-tenths of the population contemplate their decease with unspeakable dismay and terror. “Through fear of death they are all their lifetime subject to bondage.” We are aware that all living things share an instinctive shrinking from the hour of dissolution. This is perfectly intelligible, and may be regarded as only an aspect of the instinctive clinging to life. In this sense the fear of death is not in the least unwholesome, and may be taken as a practical proof that, on the whole, life is worth living. But that is not the fear of death which makes miserable cowards of the majority of the inhabitants of Christian countries. It is not the fact of death, but the Christian interpretation of the fact, that terrorises so many minds, and makes life itself often an intolerable burden. We read in Scripture that “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” cometh; and as no one is at any time absolutely certain whether he shall spend eternity in heaven or in hell, the judgment naturally becomes an object of fear, as also does death, the agent that ushers the soul into the presence of the judge. It is this interpretation of death that is responsible for the sickly sentiment so well expressed by Shakespeare:—

“Who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death—  
The undiscovered country, from whose bourne  
No traveller returns—puzzles the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others we know not of?”

That is an entirely unwholesome attitude to death; and being a deep philosopher as well as inspired poet, Shakespeare was bound to add:—

“Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all.”

In Browning's great poem, *A Grammarian's Funeral*, we are furnished with a striking illustration of the deleterious effect of the Christian conception of death upon character. The poor, deluded Grammarian held the gift of life in his hand, and Nature thundered in his ears, “Thou fool, why not live now whilst thou canst?” But he, unheeding, buried himself in his books, and was thus comforted: Live? No:—

“Earn the means first—God surely will contrive  
Use for our earning.”

Others were wiser, at least in theory, and their advice was this:—

“‘But time escapes:  
Live now or never!’  
He said, ‘What is time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!  
Man has Forever.’”

And thus the Grammarian died before he had begun to live. The same idea crops up in ever so many of Browning's poems. To him, as a dramatic poet at least, life on earth was a period of probation. According to that idea, we are not here to live, but to get ready to live in another sphere; and this idea is closely allied to another, namely, that we are all sinners doomed to eternal damnation, and that our

salvation is dependent upon the optional exercise of the Divine clemency. Well, the people who hold such opinions naturally dread the advent of death, because they are convinced that their destiny will then be sealed for ever. Not being quite sure whether or not they are accepted and forgiven in the Beloved, the thought of death tortures and torments them with indescribable ferocity. Even the apostle Paul was a martyr to this painful uncertainty. "I buffet [bruise] my body, and bring it into bondage," he said; "lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected."

Thus the belief in immortality not only throws the present life out of true perspective, but also sets death in a false light, and fills the minds of men with needless and demoralising anxiety. The prevailing notion is that by nature no one is fit to die. Only the other day a mother was out in the street with two children, one a baby in a perambulator, the other a boy of three toddling at her side. The baby was evidently ill, and the boy anxiously inquired, "He won't die, will he, mummy?" The mother answered: "I hope not, my darling; he isn't fit to die yet." No wonder that children brought up under such tuition consider death to be the very King of Terrors, and spend their lives in cringing bondage to it. Some forty and fifty years ago nothing was more common than the habit of warning children against doing certain things by reminding them that they might die any moment, and be called upon to render an account of themselves to the Great Judge who took strict note of all they thought, said, and did. Inevitably, the depressing thought of death was continually with them, resting like a horrible nightmare on their tender consciences. It acted as a damper at their modest little festivities, often cutting their laughter short by the sinister suggestion, "What if you were to die to-night?" Once a dear old dame was inexpressibly wretched because she had passed a whole day without remembering that she was a dying woman soon to meet her Judge. To profoundly religious people life here was a pilgrimage through the gloomy valley of the shadow of death; and the same is more or less true of such people even to-day. Are not ministers dying men commissioned to preach to dying men, that their never-dying souls may be saved and fitted for the sky?

Now, all that Christianity has to teach about death and the life beyond is of a wholly speculative character. It does not rest upon a single ascertained fact. When a preacher assures his congregation that death is not the end of life, but merely an episode in its history, or simply a change in the mode of its manifestation, he is only trying his hand at romancing. He has no right whatever to make such an assertion, because death is a point beyond which knowledge cannot go. Both our observation and experience terminate just there. What is death? you may ask. We undertake to tell you the moment you tell us what life is. If you say that life is, "in the ultimate analysis, a chemical process," we affirm that death is the cessation of that chemical process. If you define life as consisting in "a continuous alternation between the upbuild and the decay of the highly-complicated chemical unities of the protoplasm," we are prepared to describe death as that which brings that alternation to a period. Science is completely ignorant of the existence of any entity called life which is independent of, and survives, the organism. Some biologists are of opinion that a few lower organisms are immortal, but in such instances it is the organisms themselves that live on without end. "Generation succeeds generation with the utmost rapidity, and without the intervention of death; no single corpse appears in the swimming masses of animalculæ." Zoologists are by no means agreed as to the nature of this immortality, but they are all unanimously of opinion that all the higher organisms are subject to the law of death. In the history of each organism the time comes when, as an individual living organism, it utterly ceases to be. There is, therefore, no scientific basis whatever for Hamlet's "dread of something after death."

The only judgment that follows death, of which anyone should stand in awe, is the judgment of posterity; and when that judgment is delivered the individual judged is beyond its reach. The religious fear of death is as unscientific as it is irrational. Both the heaven hoped for and the hell shrunk from exist only in superstitious belief, except as actualities or possibilities of this earthly life.

What, then, is the proper attitude towards death? Is it one of indifference and unconcern? In a sense, yes. Our business is to make the most of life while it lasts, and to heroically welcome death when it becomes inevitable. "As to death," says George Meredith, "anyone who understands Nature at all thinks nothing of it." It comes to all in the natural order. "From our youth upwards," Cicero said, "we should accustom ourselves to face our last moments without fear. If not, there is an end to peace, since it is quite certain that we must die." Our misfortune, at present, is that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, death is pathological and abnormal. It comes to us before we are physiologically ready for it, and its premature advent is due to our lack of harmony with Nature, whose laws we imperfectly observe because we do not adequately understand them. When we have mastered them in all their details, and learned to conform to them with gladness of spirit, we shall cling to life with serene delight until its cycle is complete, and then we shall as heartily appreciate death as an appropriate and, in its way, happy closing scene. But, in any case, we go to make room for others to whom, if we do our duty, life will be more worth living than it is to ourselves, and to whom death will come as its natural and not unwelcome goal.

As yet, much remains to be done to extricate death from its hurtful entanglements, and success in this task is possible only through unbroken perseverance. It takes time to get rid of the preternatural and morbid developments of many thousands of years. As it was not in a day that the next world succeeded in completely invading the one that now is, and in securing death as the prime minister of its crown, so we must not expect to rescue the present life and its goal from the dominion of the usurper without a long and strenuous struggle. But the war of emancipation is already in progress, and it is comforting to know that the army of Nature has been victorious in every engagement in which it has hitherto taken part.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Rooster Crowed.

By P. H. Sercombe in "To-Morrow," Chicago.

ALWAYS on the look-out for impersonal episodes by which to illustrate corresponding conditions in human society which bias, blindness, and egomania prevent us from realising, I recently came upon one of unusual appropriateness.

It happened to be on the day of the Centenary of the New York Diocese of the "Princes" of the Roman Catholic Church at which such dignitaries as Cardinal Logue and Gibbons, with the aid of Bishops and Archbishops galore, poured into each others willing and hopeful ears the story of the Church's rise to power and affluence in America.

In the city on a shopping tour, I turned into South Water-street where teams had just delivered several carloads of poultry in crates, the same being piled up a storey and a half high, each crate containing two dozen or more birds, all of them destined to go to the butcher's block on that very day.

As I was contemplating the mass of crates piled tier upon tier, one above the other, of a sudden I was startled by a most lusty and victorious crow let off by an irrepressible cock from a crate near the bottom and about the centre of the pile.

What hopefulness! What assurance! What remoteness of all ideas of the ways of the world, thought I. What an example of optimism and

defiance of adversity. I felt like shaking hands with that rooster even as I felt like laying my arm on the shoulder of Cardinal Gibbons as he was praising the wonderful civilisation he thinks his Church has wrought. I would have pointed out to him the degeneracy and vanity of the world, with its degrading motives, its graft, its gluttony, drunkenness—its *three per cent. civilisation*—and I would have said, "come, take another look at this matter before you crow."

Again, the cardinals and archbishops seem to have overlooked that the entire system they are praising is doomed; that more accurate experimentation and investigation than the Church has ever employed, has, in the last few years, completely undermined every foundation upon which the pillars of the Church now rest. The knowledge that has been liberated during the past twenty-five years has so completely disclosed the simplicity and barbarous origin of the entire scheme of the Christian Church, and that knowledge is being placed so conspicuously within the reach of all, that only those who are downright dishonest, who are fakirs and mountebanks will continue to preach the old doctrine. And still these ecclesiastical roosters with the crates of error and ignorance piled mountain high on their heads, these living relics of mediæval superstition, buried deep in the musty *débris* of primeval guesses, raise their voices and crow as lustily as the South Water-street rooster.

But is not the world filled with these sanguine over-zealous roosters? It is not alone in the realm of decadent religious thought that they are found. In the recent convention of many thousand physicians in Chicago, a warning came that *materia medica* but awaits the same crushing defeat as ecclesiasticism; that within twenty years, simple advice as to right living will take the place of dope and chemicals, although a number of old-time medicine roosters crowed as loudly as either the clerical or feathered chanticleers.

The chief of police of Cleveland sends out a warning note in regard to drunkenness and petty larceny becoming almost extinct as a result of no longer making arrests but supplying remedies instead, all of which, in a few years, will grow into a tremendous rebuke against the *punishment roosters* who, in home, in school, in church, and through means of criminal courts, jails, and gallows are creating nine-tenths of all mankind's miseries by a wrong attitude toward delinquents.

Crow on, crow on, you reactionary roosters! Split your throats! Stretch your necks! Grow red and important in the little games that you are playing, for they are short-lived. The butcher's block awaits all of your whiskered and feathery old-fashioned ideals and policies.

### Rabelais.

FRANCOIS RABELAIS, "the grand jester of France," as Bacon calls him, was born at Chinon, in Touraine, in 1483, the same year in which Luther and Raphael saw the light. He joined the Church and became a monk. His heretical humor brought him into trouble, and he was once rescued by a military friend from the *in pace*, a form of burying alive. But this did not damp his spirits, though it made him cautious; for he dreaded the idea of being burnt alive "like a herring," seeing that he was "dry enough already by nature." He veiled his profound wisdom with the jolliest buffoonery. On one occasion he printed *âme* (the soul) as *âne* (a jackass) several times, and said it was a printer's blunder! "Rabelais," says Coleridge, "had no mode of speaking the truth in those days but in such a form as this"; his buffoonery was "an amulet against the monks and bigots." Despite the plain language of *Pantagruel*, Coleridge maintained that "the morality of the work is one of the most refined and exalted kind." Elsewhere the same great poet and critic said, "I could

write a treatise in proof and praise of the morality and moral elevation of Rabelais' work, which would make the Church stare and the conventicle groan." Coleridge, indeed, classed Rabelais "with the great creative minds of the world," with Shakespeare, Dante, and Cervantes.

"Attempts have been made, says Sir Walter Besant, "to prove that Rabelais was a Christian. To suppose this is, in my mind, not only to seriously misunderstand the spirit of his book, but that of his time." The *curé* of Meudon sapped the Church with satire from within. But on February 19, 1552, he resigned his living at Meudon and Le Mans. Besant concludes that "the old man, now that life was drawing to its close, now that his friends were dead, dispersed, and in exile, discerned at last the wickedness of continuing to say masses, which were to him empty forms, in the cause of a Church which was full of absurdities and corruptions."

Many of his friends had perished in prison or at the stake, but Rabelais died a natural death in his bed. His end came, it is said, on April 9, 1553, at a house in the Rue des Jardins, Paris. Many stories were told of his death-bed, and may be found in the bibliophile Jacob's (Paul Lacroix) introduction to the Charpentier edition of Rabelais' works. When he had received the extreme unction, he said aloud that they had greased his boots for the great journey. When the priest in attendance asked him if he believed in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the holy wafer, he replied meekly: "I believe in it, and I rejoice therein; for I think I see my God as he was when he entered Jerusalem, triumphant and seated on an ass." Towards the end they put on his Benedictine robe; whereupon he punned upon a Psalm—*Beati qui moriuntur in Domino*. A messenger from Cardinal du Bellay being brought to the bedside, he said in a feeble voice, "Tell monseigneur I am going to seek the great Perhaps." Gathering his strength for a last effort, he cried out in a burst of laughter, "Draw the curtain, the farce is over."

These stories may be partly apocryphal, yet, as Jacob remarks, they are "in keeping with the character of Rabelais and the spirit of his writings."

G. W. FOOTE.

### "THE SOURCE OF ENGLAND'S GREATNESS."

The clergy insist that the Bible is the beginning and end of wisdom, and say, or rather shout, that national degeneration must inevitably follow its removal from our schools. Let us test this sacred volume as a school-book. Much of it is totally unfit for any child's reading. Plain, unvarnished accounts of rape, incest, adultery, sodomy, and unnatural crime may be suitable reading for the adult Nonconformist Conscience; but the line must be drawn at young children. Biblical chronology is utter nonsense. Only lunatics believe the universe was created six thousand years ago. Others similarly afflicted probably believe that Adam lived to the age of 930 years, Methuselah 969 years, Lamech 777 years, Noah 950 years. Philology gets no countenance from the blunders of Babel or the perverseness of Pentecost. Biblical zoology is too funny for any words. Noah's ark is the last word in absurdity. Elsewhere the hare is confounded with the ruminants. Christ himself thought that the whale was a "fish." A snake talks, a whale has a boarding-house in his interior, a pigeon acts as a co-respondent in the inspired volume. Fiery serpents, unicorns, dragons, flaming horses, giants, and the cockatrice glare at us from the sacred pages. Astronomers must be enchanted to learn that the sun will stand still on occasion. In Biblical medicine we find the long-exploded notion of demoniacal possession being the cause of disease. Leprosy, too, is cured by a fig poultice, and blindness removed by spittle. Some happy persons died twice, and others never died at all. The Bible still insists on the reality of witchcraft long after it has been discarded by every civilised nation. Ghosts still squeak and gibber in the Holy Book. As for ethics, the lives and actions of the Patriarchs, and of David and Solomon, are only paralleled in the *Newgate Calendar*. Psalm cix. is a proof that God's ways are, fortunately, not our ways. In short, the Holy Bible, from the time Adam and Eve start life as fully-grown persons without parents until "God" ascends into the ether like a flying-machine, is a Salmagundi of unrestrained and riotous Oriental imagination.

## Acid Drops.

General Booth is badly in want of money. He says so himself. His motor-car trip round the country is simply a rattling advertisement. He causes a lot of noise and excitement, but will he get the cash? We doubt it. The Grand Old Showman's game is being played out. We always said it would be. It was merely a question of time.

We think it quite appropriate that Booth should visit workhouses and prisons. They are characteristic products of Christian civilisation.

Orating to one workhouse congregation, Booth told them that they were much better off than even the wealthy people outside. They had no cares, and could spend all their time thinking about kingdom-come. He also told them that the workhouse was the gate to heaven. But the real truth is exactly the opposite. Heaven is the gate to the workhouse. Those who think enough of the sweet by-and-bye soon find themselves paupers—especially if they follow the Sermon on the Mount.

We saw this as a newspaper headline—"General Booth in the rain." Fancy! What a martyr! J. C. himself is thoroughly eclipsed.

William Booth's swelled-head gets worse and worse, as that peculiar complaint is apt to do. He will want to "run" the whole world presently. There is little doubt that he thinks himself quite equal to the job. He was interviewed by a *Daily Chronicle* representative at Lord Carrington's mansion, and this is how the old egotist let himself go:—

"I have got the heart of this nation with me. The people love me. They will go where I tell them, and do what I tell them."

Evidently the old fellow is far gone. There are plenty of cases no worse in asylums.

Booth told the interviewer that schemes for social improvement must be thought out, and superintended by people who know. "And we know," he added. "I want the Government," he said, "to come to us. We can advise them." No doubt—for the usual consideration. But what, after all, is it that Booth has to advise? Emigration! We shouldn't mind it if he took away the drunkards, thieves, and wastrels. But he leaves these people all behind. Those he takes away are the sober, thrifty, industrious, and self-reliant. He is therefore helping forward the physical and moral decadence of England. And why? Simply because it pays him to do so. He gets a commission on the emigrants he sends out under the Salvation Army flag, precisely like other emigration agents, and from exactly the same sources. People fancy that he sends them out at his own cost, as a part of his social scheme; but he does nothing of the kind; he simply makes money at the game in order to spend it on the religious work of the Salvation Army. This truth is gradually percolating through the press conspiracy of silence, and is slowly but surely finding its way into the public mind. Hence the slump in Salvation Army finance. William Booth is being found out at last, and his great bubble is bursting.

"Grand National Hunger Marches" are going on in connection with the "back to the land" movement. A contingent gathered on Hampstead Heath the other day and marched to the City Temple, where they astonished, and probably alarmed, the comfortable congregation that listens to the Rev. R. J. Campbell's cheap and easy gospel of social salvation. The object of the "marchers" was to invite the preacher to take some steps to put his precepts into practice. Their leader actually rose after the benediction and demanded to be heard. He was allowed a few minutes in the pulpit. But all the practical result was a collection of £2 17s., with which, the press says, the "marchers" refreshed themselves at a neighboring restaurant. Such is "Christian salvation" after nearly two thousand years. How the "only true religion" has developed the intellect and character of its adherents!

Rev. J. Scott Lidgett, the new president of the Wesleyan Conference, talked politics a great deal in his presidential address. Naturally he had something to say about the Education question, and one of his observations is worth noting. "They would not yield," he said, "to any demand for a secular solution, and the elimination of Christian teaching." We are glad to see this open confession. It justifies all that we have been saying for so many years about the policy of the Nonconformist leaders. They are simply engaged in a

fight with the Church leaders as to which of the two gangs shall control the religious education of the children of England. "Church, Chapel, and Children," as we long since put it, is the whole of the dispute in a nutshell. The rights of the nation are ignored. Which is natural. For the bamboozlers of children are the exploiters and oppressors of men and women.

It is easy enough for the Wesleyan President to say that he and his "pals" will never yield to any demand for a secular solution. They will have to when the bell rings. The quarrel between the Churches for possession of the child cannot possibly end in one of them obtaining the prize. From the nature of the case, peace cannot come in that way. And as peace must come in some way, sooner or later, it is bound to come in the only other way open. The Churches might settle everything, including their opponents, by agreeing; but as they cannot agree, because they hate each other more than they hate even the common enemy, they are necessarily driving the State into the acceptance of Secular Education. It is "The Only Way."

Rev. Thomas Law, secretary of the National Free Church Council, assures his friends that they need have "no fear as to the action of the Government" with regard to the Education Bill. He has the Prime Minister's assurance that "it will be dealt with in the early autumn." The reason is, apparently, that all the talk about a Round Table Conference between the various Christian Churches was blarney. "The Bill," Mr. Law says, "will be proceeded with as previously introduced. There is no suggestion as to concessions at all, and, whatever may happen, at present there are no 'Round Table Conferences' going on. As a matter of fact, no basis has been found for a conference, so that the Government will go forward with the measure as it now stands." We are glad to hear it. While the Churches fight each other over this question there is a good hope that Secular Education may triumph in the near future. When certain people fall out, other people have a chance of coming by their own.

The erection of a monument to Servetus in Paris, after its refusal by the city of Geneva, where he was burnt to death under the auspices of John Calvin, leads the *Catholic Times* to lament that "the erection of monuments to men who suffered for infidelity or heresy has become something of a mania in France." Well, the mania for honoring such men is better than the mania for murdering them. "Infidel" France has this advantage over Catholic France.

The Rev. Dr. Lyman, of Brooklyn, says that only the people who love the Bible are competent to sit in judgment upon its contents. Without reverence all criticism is a Sin. Unless you believe the Bible to be the word of God you are not fit to meddle with it. Or, as Dr. Lyman so logically puts it, true criticism "ever seeks to open the way to a deeper and truer sense of Christ." To common sense such talk is unmitigated nonsense, and it is to escape the penalty of listening to such nauseating stuff that the masses of the people have left the churches.

Even the parsons are becoming Freethinkers. Mr. McNeile, B.D., Fellow, Dean, and Theological Lecturer of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, has published a large volume on the *Book of Exodus*, in which he denies the historicity of Moses, and describes the Ten Commandments as "the immediate result of the teaching of Amos and Hosea." The *Church Times* declares that, if Mr. McNeile's contentions are true, the *Book of Exodus* "is worthless as a history of the Mosaic period." And yet some people solemnly assure us that Freethought is a thing of the past!

"A London Vicar" admits that the tide of Materialism is a "growing" one; and so alarmed and shocked is he at this humiliating fact, that he is even prepared to give women the suffrage. "I fail to see," he says, "what Women's Suffrage has to do with irreligion, but I can foresee that the votes of good women will do much to stem the growing tide of Materialism." Does the reverend gentleman forget that many suffragettes are avowed Freethinkers, and would not be likely to cast their votes in favor of the religion which has done so much to degrade their sex?

In West Riding, Sunday, as a day of religious observance, is decidedly on the wane. The churches are deserted, the masses taking no interest whatever in the worship of God. "To stand in the main exit avenues of any of our cities on a Sunday morning is to watch an apparently endless procession of motorists and cyclists on pleasure bent." From reports we learn that such clubs as the Leeds and Bradford

Motor-Cycle Clubs have much to answer for, in that they deliberately "assist in the desecration of the Rest-day." "More deplorable than this is the fact that some who were a few years ago regular in their attendance at a place of worship now devote their Sundays to this God-forsaking pursuit" of pleasure.

This rapid secularisation of Sunday is attributed to a growing lack of reverence for sacred things. The people, it is alleged, are becoming indifferent to the grand realities of religion. True enough; but what accounts for this lack of reverence and this indifference? *The decay of faith.* As long as people believe in sacred things they will revere them; and as long as religion is a reality to them they will attend to it, but no longer. Sunday is becoming a secular day because the multitudes are becoming pure Secularists. The ancient formula, "Thus saith the Lord," has lost both its terror and fascination for them, because they no longer have any faith in a Speaking Lord—or, in other words, because Christianity is dying.

At Bloomsbury Chapel occasional "Testimony Meetings" are held. Two Sundays ago there appeared at such a gathering "a Freethinker from Lancashire," who "told us that he believed humanity had suffered from too much reliance on Christ." This was shocking; and, more shocking still, "his testimony was received with respect and applause"; and, most shocking of all, the Rev. Thomas Phillips admits that the man was "manifestly sincere." However, the Freethinker did not wreck the meeting, for "the Spirit of God was also present giving his testimony"; and, as Shakespeare says, "All's well that ends well."

Some Wesleyan Methodists are commencing an agitation to induce the Conference to permit women to attend in the capacity of delegates. It may be remembered that some fourteen years ago the Wesleyan Methodist Conference declined to allow women to attend the Conference as delegates. What comes of the agitation we shall see later. But it is safe to prophesy that if the agitation is successful we shall be told that this is an act of *Christian* justice. Which leads one to point out that the resolution excluding women was obviously an act of *Christian* injustice. And if one redresses the other the honors are equal. What we should like to see would be the scriptural authority for placing women on an equality with men.

The *Christian World* asserts that religion regulates the whole of life, and is the mother of morals, manners, and customs. We are quite aware that religion is the mother of numerous manners and customs, most of which are objectionable and injurious, but we should very much like to know in what part of the world, or on what planet, "religion regulates the whole of life" and begets its morals. Perhaps our contemporary will be good enough to enlighten us on the point. We are strongly tempted to affirm, in the absence of proof to the contrary, that *if* religion regulates the whole of the life of Christendom, and is the mother of its morals, then the sooner Christendom gets rid of religion the better for all its inhabitants—except the priests.

Speaking at a Methodist dinner recently given in the House of Commons, Sir Percy Bunting, a well-known Wesleyan layman, presumably quoting an observation made by Prince Ito, of Japan, to a Chinese nobleman, said: "You will find that religion is at the bottom of Western civilisation and power. If you want a proof, look at Turkey. She has guns and armaments of the best kind, but not the Western religion, and she is hopeless." With all due deference to Sir Percy and the Prince, we beg to make this simple retort:—If you want a proof that religion does not secure a nation's moral greatness, look at Russia. She has guns and armaments of the best kind, as well as the Western religion, and she is hopeless.

The Rev. S. Skelhorn writes in the *National Review* on the character of Nonconformist preachers. Being a Nonconformist preacher himself, he ought to know what he is talking about. At any rate, this is what he says. After stating that he found among the Nonconformist churches, instead of liberty, tolerance, and sincerity, bondage, tyranny, partisanship, and prejudice, he adds:—

"The personnel of the ministry is deteriorating—its message is exhausted.....its moral and intellectual impact upon the national life is a diminishing force.....New men, however excellent in their way, are orbs that pale in comparison with the brilliant suns of yesterday.....The future promises no new names. Now and again a new name is rumored.....but whereas these new men become known because they are 'boomed' (in sensational prints or sectarian

organs), the men of old time drew attention by the gravitation of greatness and inherent power. In short, ability is becoming more rare, mediocrity more common, in the Nonconformist churches. This was admitted the other month by a powerful Nonconformist magazine when it bewailed the lack of brains in the ministry."

What a pity it is that these people do not read the *Freethinker* regularly! Then they might have discovered the truth of the above years ago.

"I am the most heterodox man in England," exclaimed Dr. Horton at the international Congregational Council Conference. The reverend gentleman's eyes must be in the back of his head.

We see by the *Brixton Free Press* that the Rev. A. J. Waldron has been giving his opinion of Atheists. His opinion on that or any other subject is a matter of very trifling importance, but as it is reported it may take a moment's notice. Mr. Waldron said of Atheists that "they might be told by their faces." Christians were better-looking and better in themselves than Freethinkers. "Concerning the appearance of Atheists," he said again, "it was a fact that persons of that description could be picked out in a crowd." Now, if we were to imitate Mr. Waldron's manners, we should say that faces and heads of *his* type are well-known at Scotland Yard. But as we do not wish to imitate his manners we will not say it.

Mr. Waldron's mental calibre may be judged by two facts. He asked Atheists "why they did not start an orphanage and maintain it on faith?" He also said "he believed it was possible to take a photograph of a soul." These are samples from bulk.

Mr. Raymond Blathwayt is a well-known interviewer, but why on earth did the *Daily Chronicle* turn on this rather ostentatiously pious gentleman to review Dr. Albert Wilson's new book on *Education, Personality, and Crime*? Mr. Blathwayt's qualifications for such a task were apparent in his opening sentences. He represented Dr. Wilson as teaching that "there is an actual physical basis of character" and that "mind is based on matter." Every properly instructed person, of course, agrees with this. But it seems to surprise the amateur reviewer. In consequence of it, he looks upon the book as "absolutely revolutionary." Dr. Wilson himself would laugh at that description. Not to go back to antiquity, one sees that Mr. Blathwayt knows nothing of Cabanis, Bichat, Lawrence, Morgan, Lewes, Bain, Maudsley, Darwin, Huxley, Büchner, and Haeckel. We dare say he is acquainted with the names of many of these thinkers, but he is clearly not acquainted with their thoughts. Yet it is men like Mr. Blathwayt who are hired by what is called "the glorious free press" to enlighten and stimulate the minds of their dear public.

Carlyle used to speak of "the condition of England" question as the one really important question—above the babble of politics and the cackle of Churches. What would he say, if he were alive now, of the recent great meeting in the Queen's Hall, London, convened by the Church Association, with the support of eighty members of parliament and forty-one peers? The object of this meeting was to protest against "Mass vestments" in the Church of England. But what on earth does it matter to the people of England how these "attorneys in the court of heaven" dress themselves? How are the people of England able to dress themselves?—that is a question of far greater importance. While thousands of little children go about in rags, what sane man will trouble himself about the right or wrong uniform of comfortable parsons? That such a question is being discussed at all at this time of day is a sufficient condemnation of Christianity.

We have already shown that Thomas Paine was the pioneer of Old Age Pensions in England. Now let us glance at the other end of the matter. The present Old Age Pensions Bill was carried in the House of Commons by 315 votes to 10. Four of the ten represented English universities—the fifth university representative being absent. And who are the constituents of these members? They are mostly country parsons. So we see how Christianity is the real friend of the working classes.

Rev. William Peace, of Lansdowne-place, Brighton, left £57,060. Good God, how hot he must be now! Earthly thermometers could not register his temperature.

Father Vaughan sometimes reminds us of the clown you may occasionally see at certain holiday resorts performing with a donkey. The other day, for instance, he spoke on

behalf of the Life Boat Institution at Leeds, and wound up by saying that he himself belonged to the old original life-boat, manned by the Twelve, the barque Peter, which had rescued countless souls along the coastline and the open sea. Talking shop in this way, and securing a good advertisement for your trade, is a common practice amongst the clergy of all denominations. But that is not our principal point. We wish to observe that the old barque that Father Vaughan refers to was not manned by the Twelve—for Judas, the purser, ratted before she left harbor for her first voyage. We also wish to observe that, while the lifeboat-men around the coast have plenty of hard work and danger and very little pay, the lifeboat-men in the service to which Father Vaughan belongs have more pay and less work and no danger. We wish to observe, finally, that "the barque of Peter's" rescues are all imaginary, or at least beyond substantiation. Millions of them are said to have been safely landed at Port Salvation, but we must get there ourselves before we can be sure of the fact—and perhaps we shall not get there at all; for it may easily turn out that Heaven only exists on the map of faith.

The great Goethe, when dying in his arm-chair, said to his servant, "Open also the second shutter in the room, so that more light may come in." This simple and natural fact has been distorted by the mystery-mongers, who make him cry "More light!" as though he wanted some, or had just received it, from a supernatural source. The old poet's eyes were growing dim at the approach of his last sleep, and he called for "More light" in consequence. This is stated once more in the third volume of Bielschowsky's classical *Life of Goethe* just published in English. But the *Daily Chronicle* reviewer, in spite of the plain facts of the case, persists in sticking to the sensational legend. This is how romantic-minded people act in the full blaze of knowledge. Why should we be surprised, therefore, at their doing worse in the darkness of ignorance?

Scores of people were killed by the great heat wave in New York. "He doeth all things well."

What incredible nonsense men of God will talk when they get together, and pat each other on the back, and play at the good old game of make-believe! At a recent meeting of the International Council of the Congregational Church, at Edinburgh, the assembled soul-savers discussed "The Bible and Sunday"—two of their most precious possessions, so it may be guessed how drastic the discussion was. One of the speakers, the Rev. Dr. C. R. Brown, had come all the way from California, and he delivered himself in this wise:—

"The coarse attacks on inspiration made by Paine, Ingersoll, and Bradlaugh, which had a great influence upon the unthinking, and especially upon the young, had become altogether impossible for our day and generation. If brought out to-day these writings would be ruled out of court as incompetent and irrelevant."

This statement was received with loud applause. Both the speaker and his audience felt that they had got the true measure of these three detestable "infidels." But they were mistaken. Paine, Ingersoll, and Bradlaugh attacked the Christianity which prevailed in their day. They attacked, for instance, the doctrine of the "inspiration" of the Bible, and whatever "coarseness" there was in their attacks was due to the abominable coarseness of large parts of the Bible which are no longer considered as "inspired." The old doctrine of "inspiration" is dead and damned. The very word "inspiration" is only kept by emptying it of all definite meaning. The old theory was that "the Bible is the Word of God"—the new theory is that "the Bible contains the Word of God." It is there somewhere. All you have to do is to find it. Yes, the Bible contains the Word of God as a bed contains a flea. And it is easier to catch the flea in the dark than it is to find the specific "inspiration" in the Bible.

The Bible is not what it was. Christianity is not what it was. And the change is fundamentally due to outside criticism. The Higher Criticism only repeats in a learned and laborious way some of the arguments of dead sceptics. So much for the failure of Paine, Ingersoll, and Bradlaugh.

Bradlaugh was a great orator, but not a great writer. Paine and Ingersoll wrote what was bound to be read long after they were dead. Dr. Brown is mistaken if he really thinks (which we doubt) that Paine and Ingersoll are no longer read. We would bet our last penny, if we were as fond of betting as Christians are, that either of them has a hundred, perhaps a thousand, readers for every one possessed by the Rev. Dr. C. R. Brown, of California. Ingersoll's collected writings, to say nothing of cheap portions, are sold extensively in America in the great Dresden Edition at £5 a

set. Paine's *Age of Reason* even now, ninety-nine years after his death, sells to the extent of thousands of copies annually. And if the Christians do not fear Paine and Ingersoll any longer, why do they continue to tell malicious lies about their characters? The plain truth is that Dr. Brown was talking nonsense to an audience which was built to find it "grateful and comforting."

A writer in the *Church Times* assures his readers that twentieth-century Rationalism favors neither Theism nor Deism, but is, in its general tendency, "on the Atheists' side of the solution." This writer is in the habit of listening to the orators of the National Secular Society and the "Free Lances" in the parks, and declares that both they and the bulk of their supporters are openly Atheistic. "There is no room for God" seems to be their permanent motto. Of course, their "concern is not with Theism, but with Christianity"; and rightly so, because "the disappearance of the greater will be followed by that of the less." There are other excellent letters in the same journal in confirmation of the contention of "A Bachelor of Science" that the overwhelming majority of scientific men are as anti-Christian to-day as ever.

Four young ladies (we won't print their names) went over from Cambois to Alnwick with a Sunday-school party, and went into several shops, stealing articles from the counters, which led to their appearance before the magistrates, where a minister of religion spoke to their "respectability," on account of which they received the benefit of the First Offenders' Act. That is all right. But how lucky it was that they did not take a trip with a Secular beanfeast!

Good news for Wesleyan murderers! According to an Exchange Company's telegram, prisoners connected with Wesleyans who may be sentenced to death will have their spiritual welfare attended to by a Wesleyan minister instead of by the prison chaplain. We hope it won't lead to a rush.

We are never too old to learn. A Benedictine monk computes that there are ten women in heaven for one man; but he seems to imply also that one man is worth as much as ten women, which is a queer method of equalising the sexes in the glory land. One wonders how the monk solves the equation problem down in the other place, where the men are so enormously in the majority.

In the *Methodist Times* there is a column entitled "In the Class-Room," and in the issue for July 16 the passage of Scripture under discussion is Matthew v. 33-37. Other passages are referred to, but they all bear on what is called the Law of Truth. Now, the curious thing is that more than one-third of the column is devoted to the subject of kindness to animals. Leaders of junior classes are exhorted to impress upon children how essential it is that the lower animals should be treated with sympathy and love. But the New Testament does not mention this subject either directly or indirectly. Indeed, Paul goes the length of stating positively that God does not care for animals (1 Corinthians ix. 9), and that the command not to muzzle a working ox (Deuteronomy xxv. 4) was not intended for the ox's good, but for man's. One of the characteristics of the religion of Jesus, as expounded in the Gospels and the Epistles, is its persistent scorn both of matter and of animals.

Folkestone—even Folkestone—has decided to have Sunday bands. The Mayor, in closing the discussion on the Town Council, said something very much to the point. He noticed that "certain people who clamored against the introduction of the Continental Sunday generally 'let themselves go' when they crossed 'the silver streak.'" We may add that these same hypocrites are responsible for a good deal of the "immorality" of Paris. What they call "seeing Paris" is hunting up everything disreputable.

According to a newspaper cutting, one of the prison missionaries of the Church Army tells the following story in connection with the mission at York. A notorious pickpocket was so impressed by the services that he wanted to put something into the collection. Unfortunately, he had no money, so he picked the next man's pocket, and dropped in a contribution. Such is the inspiring influence of religious zeal!

We congratulate Jacob Popp. He is a High Wycombe shopkeeper, and he has been prosecuted nearly 350 times by the pious chief constable for doing a little harmless necessary business on the Lord's Day. But the magistrates have now taken to dismissing the summons, so the game is up. Three cheers for the insuppressible Popp!



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 26, Freethought Demonstration, Parliament Hill Fields, London, N., at 6.15 p.m.

August 9, Freethought Demonstration, Victoria Park; 16, Freethought Demonstration, Regent's Park; 23, Freethought Demonstration, Brockwell Park.

September 6, 13, 20, 27, Queen's (Minor) Hall.

October 4, Glasgow; 25, Stanley Hall, London.

## To Correspondents.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £200 3s. 6d Received since.—Horace W. Parsons, £5 5s.; S. Edmonds, 5s.; Fred Collins, 5s.; Vivian Phelips, £1 1s.; W. Cromack, 3s.

HORACE W. PARSONS, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes: "I endorse all that has been said by others about the intellectual treat the *Freethinker* is weekly, and how stimulating it is to the mind. What would be the result to the Freethought party if, from the editor's ill-health, or any other cause, we were deprived of the paper, conducted as it is with such originality, intellectual power, and fearlessness?"

F. J. VOISEY.—Thanks for the cutting. Freethinkers get praised by the ordinary press, and especially by the religious press, in proportion to their ineffectiveness.

PROBART.—The books you mention are not of much market value. Conway's monumental edition of Paine's works renders all previous editions of minor importance, and little more than objects of curiosity.

H. GOOD.—Pleased to hear you have "taken the *Freethinker* from the day of its birth," and still "think it the best and most instructive paper" you "have ever had the pleasure of reading."

R. MARSDEN writes: "I am a coal miner, and have been a reader of your paper for about twelve months, and I think it splendid. It is the first thing I look for when coming out of the pit on Friday." This correspondent wishes to know how he should answer a Catholic priest who makes much of Jesus having foretold his own death. We reply that the Gospel story is all, or nearly all, pious fiction. Many divines agree now that many words were put into his mouth which he never uttered. We regard the whole lot as imaginary. Jesus, if he ever lived, did not write what he had to say to the world, and it is absurd to trust to anonymous reporters, who frequently contradict each other.

R. J. HENDERSON.—Glad you appreciate Mr. Mann's excellent articles.

G. F. H. M.—Thanks. We understand.

E. RICHMOND.—We have dealt with the matter in "Acid Drops." We really have not time to answer such letters as yours by post.

E. McNULTY.—You do us no offence by writing to us; on the contrary, we are always glad to hear from Freethinkers who have any suggestions to make for the good of the movement. It never occurred to us that we were either omniscient or infallible. We will think over your first suggestion. The second as to the collection of subscriptions from "saints" by local representative men is good in itself, but the difficulty is to find the men for such a job. As the case stands now, many (as you say) do not respond to financial appeals because they hate the trouble of getting postal orders, etc., and writing letters. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

L. SIMMONS.—Thanks, but the cutting gives us no idea of what the lecturer really said. The reporter was too anxious to puff the Archbishop.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your welcome cuttings.

C. HEATON.—Your suggestion shall be considered. The President's Fund will be open throughout the year, as it is intended to be annual, as long as necessary.

AVON.—You will find the facts as to Voltaire's death set forth in our *Infidel Deathbeds*. The book you quote from puts itself out of court in the first sentence. Voltaire could not have "wished to return to that God whom he had often blasphemed." Voltaire was not an Atheist, but a Deist, and wrote eloquently in favor of the existence of God.

H. B. SAMUELS.—You overlooked the point of our "Sugar Plum" with reference to the *Truthseeker* article. We want Socialists to be Freethinkers; you want Freethinkers to be Socialists. The former object comes within the scope of this journal; the latter does not.

FRED COLLINS writes: "Please accept my hearty congratulations on the noble work you have done for the cause of Freethought. I sincerely hope the suggested amount of the Honorarium Fund will be exceeded, and that you will live for many years to lead the movement on a few more steps nearer to the ultimate victory of Reason over Superstition."

VIVIAN PHELIPS writes: "Please find a cheque enclosed for one guinea (I wish I could afford 100) towards the President's Honorarium Fund. I consider myself fortunate in having been introduced to the *Freethinker*, and feel that it would be a loss both to myself personally and to the cause of Freethought should the editor's work be any way crippled for want of funds."

T. MATHER.—Thanks for cuttings. Pleased to hear that Mr. Wishart's meetings at Wigan are still so successful.

MEDDYLIWR RHYDD.—We are glad to have been of intellectual service to you. Thanks for all your good wishes. The "badge" matter cannot be rushed. It is having attention, and announcement will be made in due course.

W. CROMACK.—Thanks for encouraging letter.

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

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

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

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

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

## Sugar Plums.

North London "saints" will note that the first of four Sunday Freethought Demonstrations, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place this evening (July 26) at 6.15 at Parliament Hill Fields. Mr. E. Wilson has kindly promised to provide a brake (with a pair of horses) to serve as a platform. Mr. G. W. Foote, the N. S. S. President, will speak on this occasion, and will be supported by Mr. C. Cohen and Mr. F. A. Davies. No doubt there will be a strong rally. It is possible that the rainy weather will have worked itself out by then.

The second of these Freethought Demonstrations will take place on Sunday, August 9, at Victoria Park; the third on Sunday, August 16, at Regent's Park; and the fourth on Sunday, August 23, at Brockwell Park. Mr. Foote hopes to speak at all of them.

The second Social Gathering, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street, at 8 p.m. on Thursday, July 30. As before, there will be no charge for admission. Provincial "saints" who may happen to be in London that day will be warmly welcomed if they drop in and announce themselves. Members of the N. S. S. will be able to introduce a friend. Non-members wishing to attend must apply for a ticket to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. Mr. Foote, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Davies, and other well-known Freethinkers will be present. There will be a little vocal and instrumental music, and plenty of opportunity for introductions and conversation.

Mr. Wishart's lectures at Wigan have raised up formal opposition in the shape of the Christian Defence League. Finding that their opposition only helped the Freethought speaker and his cause, the leaders of this League have adopted a more brilliant policy. They stand in the crowd taking voluminous notes, and then go round the corner of the market, and reply at another meeting. This is easy, but not very effectual. We wish the League leaders more courage.

The West Stanley Branch holds an important business meeting this afternoon (July 26) at 3 o'clock in the Independent Labor Institute. All members should attend.

Shareholders of the Freethought Publishing Company, Ltd., who have received a circular letter from the Board of Directors, and have not yet replied to it, are requested to do so at once if they intend to do so at all.

The *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, Kentucky, did not die with Editor Moore. It appears to be going more strongly than ever. Certainly it is issued in a more convenient and elegant form. The last number to hand has a special editorial article on the National Secular Society's Annual Conference. One passage will interest some of our readers:

"The *Blade* congratulates Mr. Foote upon his re-election to the office of President, and it congratulates the National Secular Society for having elected him. Mr. Foote is the one essential man for the place. There is no temporising, no make-believe, no compromise in his intellectual character. These elements are essential in a leader of men and women."

The last sentence is true, anyway.

## Freethought in Many Lands.

### I.—INTERNATIONAL FREETHOUGHT.

THE "International Freethought Federation," which concentrates for common action the various Freethought organisations in different parts of the world, arose in 1880. It was formed at Brussels by a number of distinguished men in philosophy, science, and politics who shine amongst the highest glories of humanity: César de Paepe, Charles Bradlaugh, Buchner, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Moleschott, Charles Renouvier, Clémence Royer, Giovanni Bovio, Herbert Spencer, Ramon Chiés, and Carl Vogt.

Since its foundation, the International Freethought Federation has organised a long line of Congresses, the last five of which—those at Geneva, 1902; Rome, 1904; Paris, 1905; Buenos Ayres, 1906; and Prague, 1907—marking important epochs in the general history of the Freethought movement. For instance, the organised Freethought movement in Italy practically dates from the memorable occasion when my friend, Professor Arcangelo Ghisleri—till that moment unknown to Freethinkers outside the frontiers of Italy—invited the Congressists at Geneva to foregather at Rome in September, 1904, in order to demonstrate in the very heart of Christianity the growing strength of International Freethought. Similarly, in France, the political movement towards Separation became inevitable after the demonstration made at Rome in 1904, and in the following year at Paris, in favor of complete divorce between Church and State. In like manner the action of the Federation at Buenos Ayres imparted an enormous increase of vitality to the latent energies of South American Freethought; whilst the Congress of Prague last year was of incalculable advantage in stirring up the Czechs, the Poles, and their neighbors, the Austrian Germans, into united hostility against the powers of darkness represented by religion.

The Central Bureau is at Brussels (50 rue du Remblai), and its General Secretary, to whose splendid enthusiasm and ceaseless labors the International movement is so deeply indebted, is Monsieur Léon Furnemont, the well-known Belgian orator and deputy.

In anticipation of the forthcoming International Freethought Congress at Brussels in 1910, intended to celebrate the thirtieth year of the Federation's activities, the Brussels Bureau has just issued the first number of its illustrated Annual for the current year.

### II.—A FREETHOUGHT BLUE-BOOK.\*

The "Almanach" in the hyphenated title of this unique document is quite a misnomer. The only thing in the Annual pertaining to calendars and the flight of days is the brief sketch, appended to each of its seventy or more excellent portraits of men and women well known in the International Freethought movement, recording in bare outline the story of their work for Freethought.

This handsome, well-printed volume of 214 large pages, profusely illustrated and marvellously cheap, is crammed with statistical and biographical details as to the status and organisation of the Freethought movement in many countries. As a book of reference, giving fuller details than elsewhere can be found of the manifold ramifications of the Rationalist movement throughout the world, it ought to find a permanent place in every Freethought library.

Amongst the numerous photographs in the Annual that English Freethinkers will be glad to see will be those of Francisco Ferrer, founder of the *Escuela Moderna*; Léon Furnemont, and his distinguished colleagues, Raphaël Rens (Secretary of the permanent Bureau at Brussels) and Eugène Hins, editor of *La Pensée* and the writer of a weekly *chronique* on International Freethought in the *Journal de Charleroi*. The last two names, known as yet to few English Freethinkers, represent two of the most valuable

workers in the Freethought cause. From every part of the world these two stalwarts receive, week by week, the teeming productions of the Freethought press. To their skilful pens are due many of the translations appearing in journals published in distant lands and dissimilar tongues, of articles written by Englishmen for Englishmen, or by Freethinkers of one country primarily for the men and women of that country. They first cull the ripe grape from the rich and varied vineyard of Freethought, and then express a generous wine of comment, criticism, or review into the pages of *La Pensée*, of *Le Journal de Charleroi*, or of *L'Action*. The stores thus garnered are again tapped by translation, and poured in copious streams for the refreshment and delight of hosts of Freethought readers in every part of the Old and New World. Perhaps these modest workers—as unassuming and enthusiastic as was our own lamented Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, with whom indeed they have many gifts of mind and heart in common—are more effectually building the Temple of Freethought than many a fiery orator whose eloquence moves for the time being the hearts of enraptured multitudes. No one admires more than the present writer the unflagging zeal with which Raphaël Rens and Eugène Hins have year by year devoted their talents to the widening and deepening of our common knowledge of the essential greatness and catholicity of Freethought. Of the cosmopolitan character of Freethought the present "Annual" is itself a shining fact.

### III.—POLISH FREETHOUGHT.

The "Annual" contains a striking photograph of Andrzej Niemojewski, around whose fearless personality the battle of Freethought in Poland is raging at the present time. Niemojewski, like so many of our fighters, is both a lecturer and an editor, and has, like the editor of the *Freethinker*, fallen amongst Christian thieves. Some account, therefore, of Andrew Niemojewski's work, and of the position and progress of Freethought in his native Poland, will perhaps serve to fill a void in our present knowledge of our movement in the land where "Freedom shrieked when Koschiusko fell," and where to-day a larger measure of liberty than that for which Koschiusko fought is being battled for by Niemojewski and his comrades in their great fight for Freethought in Poland.

Organised Freethought in Poland is but two years old, and practically dates from the stirring events of the Congress at Prague, where Niemojewski was one of the commanding figures. The leading newspapers in Varsovia at first only published brief accounts of the themes and discussions at the Congress, but in the Polish provincial papers carefully reasoned articles appeared dealing with the Congress. A Czech paper, the *Volna Myslenka*, stated that the articles published "were so bold, so excellently conceived, and written with such full comprehension, that the Congressists may justly feel satisfied with the good seed sown by them at Prague." On September 1, 1906, Niemojewski started the publication of a remarkable Freethought review, *Mysl Niepodlegla* (*Independent Thought*), a special number of which, in forty-eight octavo pages, gave a detailed account of the proceedings at Prague. On his return from the Congress, Niemojewski set to work in order to organise Freethought in Poland. He went forth on an extended Freethought lecturing tour throughout Galicia, the ancient kingdom of Poland, and over a great part of Russia as far as the shores of the Black Sea, and wherever Polish colonies are established. In this connection, it may be noted that shortly after the Congress (December 1, 1907) a monthly Freethought review, entitled *Panteon*,\* was published at Paris, where the Polish element has for more than half a century been so numerous and influential.

In the columns of his review, published in November, 1907, Niemojewski announced the pre-

\* *Almanach-Annuaire illustré de la Libre-pensée internationale*. (1908.) Brussels: 50 rue du Remblai. Price 1 franc.

\* Office, 4 rue Lhomond, Paris; Editor, Joseph Wuseroug.

liminaries for the formation of a national Free-thought Union at Varsovia. In response to his appeal 681 members, of whom 154 belonged to the provinces, assembled at the Museum at Varsovia and formed there and then the first Freethought organization in Poland. The meeting elected as its Chairman Mikolaj Zahorski, of Bogdanof, who had already taken an active part at the Prague Congress and was now anxious to carry on the good work in his native country.

Niemojewski, the initiator of this movement, has lived a full and varied life. Born on January 23, 1868, in the village of Rokitnica, he studied law at Dorpat. After having lived as an employee in a colliery district he devoted himself, in 1897, to literature. In 1902 he published a volume called *Legendy (The Legends of Christ)*, which was at first confiscated both in Russia and Austria; but after a vigorous resistance by the author, and an active campaign conducted on his behalf, Niemojewski gained the day, so that the circulation of his book was no longer stopped. During 1904 he delivered forty-six Freethought lectures, specially addressing himself to the rising generation. The authorities first deported him to Lublin and then to Wilno, and afterwards, on the denunciation of Bishop Ropp, he was driven out of Russia. At Lemberg he narrowly escaped ten years of imprisonment at the hands of Austrian justice on account of his fearless journalism. As a writer both in poetry and prose, as a traveller in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Italy, and elsewhere, and latterly as a student of Oriental languages, Niemojewski, the apostle of Polish Freethought, is decidedly a man of mark.

His was a pioneer's work. By means of the scientific explanation and criticism of the so-called sacred books, given in tracts and volumes printed and sold by thousands, he has spread the gospel of Freethought amongst his countrymen. The party in Poland, as in so many other countries, is principally recruited from amongst the intelligent proletarians and the "intellectuals."

According to the Varsovia correspondent of *La Razione* (Rome: Via Uffici del Vicario, 21; June 18, 1908), of which Professor Arcangelo Ghisleri, already referred to, is the accomplished editor, the open and avowed supporters of Niemojewski's Freethought review already exceed three thousand, whilst two thousand others, who actually adhere to the propaganda, hold back their names from motives easily to be inferred. The demands of the newly-formed party comprise the following items:—

1. The Secularisation of the schools.
2. Civil marriages and divorce.
3. The recognition of the civic rights of Freethinkers.
4. Abolition of religious oaths.
5. A demand of a grant of land from the government in order to found a free community of Atheists and Freethinkers—the Russian law not recognising the existence of people without religion!

Notwithstanding the obstacles offered by the government, the Secular schools in private hands are already making progress. Without waiting for the concession of civic marriage, the Polish Freethinkers have substituted a truly original form of declaration, signed by both parties contracting the union, conceived in the following terms:—

"Considering that the sanction of the magistrate is unobtainable, and not desiring that of the priest, the pastor, or the rabbi, we beg our friends and acquaintances to regard us from henceforward as man and wife."

This declaration is published in Niemojewski's review and reprinted in the democratic and advanced journals.

For some time the Christians disguised their resentment, expecting that the movement would fizzle out. When their anticipations were defeated, they gave vent to their religious resentment. On March 19, 1907, the Catholic Bishop of Wloclawek addressed a pastoral to his flock, enjoining the faithful to *destroy all the books and journals distasteful to his sanctimonious palate*; and, after scheduling a list of

godly publications, exploded a pious bomb of indignation against the Polish Freethinkers. Niemojewski's reply—at once contemptuous and crushing—aroused the Bishop to the utmost indignation. Other prelates joined him in the fray, and organised a boycott of Freethought books and papers. The result was disastrous to the bigots. The denounced books at once leapt into public fame, new editions were poured forth, and the booksellers and publishers reaped a golden harvest.

Furious at the untoward result of his unfortunate polemic, the Bishop lodged a formal denunciation against Niemojewski. The bilious Bishop so overloaded his accusation that the Governor-General of Poland—be it said to his credit—seemed anxious to dismiss the complaint. The matter was at length referred to the Imperial Procurator, by whose directions Niemojewski stands incriminated under two charges of blasphemy—the first on account of an article published in *Mysl Niepodlegla*, entitled "Commentary on the Catechism," and the second being a bibliographical article on Eugène Hins' pamphlet, *Que penser de Jésus?* which follows in large measure on the lines of Mr. Foote's pamphlet, *Was Jesus Insane?*

Niemojewski has not yet been brought to trial. He is out on bail for a thousand roubles. The prosecuted article, reprinted in book form, sells freely in spite of the Bishop and the bigots.

As far as can be judged, the Russian authorities are not over-anxious to convict Niemojewski, whose minimum sentence, in the event of conviction, will be three years' confinement in a fortress.

Niemojewski is not the only Polish Freethinker who has felt the sharp fangs of Christian bigotry. A little while ago his colleague, Kurcysz, wrote an article entitled "New Tendencies of Social Reform" in a weekly paper called *Prawda (Truth)*, containing the following incriminated passage:—

"Society, captivated by the genius of the hero and the thinker, of the man of noble character and talent, brushes aside all paltry disputes of genealogy and descent. This fact is shown by the circumstance that humanity erects its monuments to persons of so-called illegitimate birth, like Jesus of Nazareth, Theodoric the Great, Leonardi da Vinci, Aretino, Dumas fils, and others."

The Archbishop of Varsovia lodged a complaint of blasphemy against the writer on April 23, 1907, and the case only came to trial on May 25 this year. The result—tell it not at the Old Bailey!—was the victorious acquittal of the prisoner.

Every English Freethinker will fervently hope that this rebuff of the enemy is of happy augury for the triumph of Niemojewski over the Polish bigots and for the strengthening of the forces of Freethought in the land newly awakened to intellectual activity by the rousing appeal of international Freethought.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

THINK.

When the clouds of gloom are blackest,  
And when the skies are dark as ink;  
Get away from things distracting,  
Quit the sham, the useless acting,  
Draw away from all the hustle,  
All the turmoil and the bustle.  
Go somewhere alone, and think.

When you're facing problems mighty,  
And you stand upon the brink;  
Steal an hour from the battle,  
Leave its glamor, quit its rattle,  
Draw away from all the hurry,  
From the men and man-made worry,  
And alone in silence, think.

Ah, the mighty men, who conquer,  
And the men whose words we drink,  
Are the men who quit the jangle,  
Quit the turmoil and the wrangle  
Of the world, and turn their faces  
To secluded, silent places,  
Where in solitude, they think.

—Detroit Free Press.

### Our Prostituted Press.

JOURNALISTS write for money. This simple fact explains why the entire press of a civilised country ignores such an awful catastrophe as an Indian famine, which means death from want of food of thousands of men, women, and children, and gives an exaggerated publicity to the domestic details of royal personages. Whether Her Most Gracious Majesty has two lumps of sugar in her afternoon tea is a matter of very little consequence; but the welfare of thousands of human beings is of vital importance. It also helps us to understand why a "free and enlightened" press was moved to ecstasies of admiration at the sight of an ignorant charlatan like "General" Booth in the robes of our oldest university. After this, we are not surprised that Freethinkers are invariably subjected to insolence and wilful misrepresentation. The liberal and democratic London *Echo*, throughout the whole of its career, invariably insulted the memory of a great man by calling him "Tom" Paine; but it never once made the mistake of alluding to "Billy" Gladstone. When Gerald Massey died, our prostituted press impudently dubbed the dead man a "Christian Socialist." He was neither the one nor the other; but he spent the half of a long life in attacking Christianity. M. Anatole France is, at present, the most distinguished man of letters on the continent, and he is a militant Freethinker. The scholarly *Spectator*, realising that its readers might know M. France's numerous books, regrets his scepticism; but the *Daily Chronicle* hoodwinks its less educated readers by unblushingly suggesting that, although he has been called a Pagan he is constantly haunted by the pre-occupation of Christ. This is literary prostitution, and it is only part of a Christian tradition. The fortunes of a really great writer like Shelley have, for example, been greatly influenced by this wilful misconception. Shelley's known Atheism incurred the *odium theologicum*, and no enmity is more unscrupulous, more relentless, or more venomous. The mere abuse which was supposed to have killed Keats was politeness itself to the assault and battery made upon Shelley by journalists who turned Christian for half an hour to earn a few shillings. If Byron awoke one morning to find himself famous, Shelley awoke many mornings to find himself infamous. The garbage was thrown at Shelley of set purpose. It was meant to discredit the writings of a man whose subject was not the Christian superstition but the Regeneration of Humanity and the Triumph of Liberty.

M.

### Pious Yarns.

A FALSE story about the boyhood of General Grant, printed by the *Christian Advocate*, is corrected by a number of its readers, who refer the editor to Grant's Memoirs for the refutation. The story was that when General Grant was a boy his mother sent him out to borrow some butter from a neighbor. He went into the house without knocking, and there overheard a letter read from the son of the neighbor, who was then at West Point, stating that he had failed in examination, and would have to come home. The story ran that the General got the butter, took it home, and, without waiting for breakfast, ran to the office of the Congressman for the district, the Hon. T. L. Hamer. The story puts this in the lips of young Grant: "Mr. Hamer promised. The next day the defeated lad came home, and the Congressman, laughing at my sharpness, gave me the appointment. Now it was my mother's being without butter that made me General and President." There is no truth at all in the narrative, as the editor of the *Advocate* now admits. One of his correspondents suggests that it may be placed alongside of "Washington and his hatchet." It ought to be stuck on that bronze tablet in Wall-street which perpetuates the myth about Washington praying at Valley Forge. And while the *Advocate* is correcting its mistakes, why not expose the error of the Rev. Carr, who, in his contribution to that paper, has Lincoln talking pious twaddle to General Sickles, and predicting victory at Vicksburg two or three days after the surrender, and when everybody knew what had happened?—*Truthseeker* (New York).

### The World of Books.

Mr. John Manson issues through Messrs. Routledge a six-penny edition of his powerful, and apparently unanswerable, book on *The Salvation Army and the Public*. This is not a mere reprint of the earlier and more expensive edition; it is augmented and brought right up to date, and is thus remarkably cheap and extremely valuable. Mr. Manson makes his indictment of the Salvation Army more formidable than ever, and we do not see how General Booth is going to avoid some sort of vindication. His policy of silence and contempt is a failure. Something else will have to be done. But the very moment that General Booth tries to defend his methods and his finance, he will be marching towards his Philippi. He is thus between the devil and the deep sea.

\* \* \*

Interested persons have started the tale that Mr. Manson was at one time an official of the Salvation Army. He denies the statement. He says that he "has never had any official or other connexion, or any relations—direct or indirect, financial, commercial, or otherwise—with that body or those who conduct it." We are glad to see this plain and preemptory denial.

\* \* \*

Mr. Manson refers to a great number of publications in these pages, and he does not overlook the *Freethinker*. In a footnote on p. 85 he quotes a telling passage from one of Mr. Cohen's articles, and says that it "accurately and admirably summarised this aspect of the Army's relations with the Press."

\* \* \*

We are delighted to see Mr. Manson's book entering upon a new career. At the price of sixpence it will reach the people. We hope it will reach them by the myriad. It would please us immensely to hear that a million copies were in circulation. The size and get-up of the book preclude the idea of profit. Mr. Manson is fulfilling a public duty, and is entitled to the warmest thanks of all lovers of honesty and sincerity.

\* \* \*

May we just venture to say that the earliest open criticism of the Salvation Army appeared in the *Freethinker*, which has always been a pioneer paper. Amidst the chorus of flattery all those years ago when General Booth launched his "Darkest England" Scheme, one voice was raised in criticism and protest, and that voice was our own. We amplified our *Freethinker* articles and reprinted them in pamphlet form, under the title of *Salvation Syrup*. That pamphlet is still in print, and those who read it will see that we anticipated nearly all the damaging points which are now being pressed home against the Salvation Army.

\* \* \*

While this book-column was in abeyance we received the first volume of a new edition of Mr. F. J. Gould's *Concise History of Religion* (Watts & Co.). We spoke highly of this work on its first appearance in 1893. We can speak still more highly of the revised issue. We do not know of anything that equals it within the same compass. The facts are well selected, well arranged, and well presented, with a warm human touch throughout, an excellent and often beautiful style, and a rare sense of the struggling-forward of the race through all the history of its superstitions. Mr. Gould is a good guide, and we hope many will take hold of his hand. In plain prose, this is a very useful and interesting book, and should find a large number of purchasers.

\* \* \*

We have been far too busy to read Mr. McCabe's biography of George Jacob Holyoake yet—and, as it is the life-story of a man who lived over eighty years, the book can very well wait a bit longer. Some of the reviews in the ordinary press, however, we have read, or run through, and found more or less amusing. Last week's *Athenaeum*, for instance, in a long notice of the book, represented Holyoake as a most "respectable" character, and even rebuked Mr. McCabe for not making this sufficiently apparent:—

"We could have wished that less space had been taken up with the Free Thought question. Holyoake for many years did not allow this to intrude on his work. The freedom he had fought for in his early years had been attained, and those who knew him felt in their association with him that they were in the presence of one who regarded with the greatest reverence what he considered as the unknowable. For many years Holyoake frequently attended religious services, and formed friendships with liberal minded men of various denominations."

This stodgy English is worthy of the sentiment it expresses. We surmise the writer to be a clerical of one of the "various denominations" referred to. "We could have wished" simply means "We wish." A thing may be "attained to"

but cannot be "attained." But even "attained to" is wrong in this connection; for things that are fought for are not "attained to" but *won*. The third sentence of this wonderful passage is worthy of a country pulpit on a Sunday afternoon. There is a certain amount of truth in the second and fourth sentences, but a Freethinker would have stated it differently. Yes, the reviewer *must* be a Christian, and probably a professional one.

\* \* \*

There is one glaring falsehood in that extract from the *Athenaeum* review. The freedom that Holyoake had fought for in his early years had *not* been won. Holyoake himself would have laughed at the very idea. To the very last he was Chairman of the Liberty of Bequest Committee, and associated with the Society for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. True, those bodies never did much, but Holyoake was not a man of action. His imprisonment for "blasphemy" occurred in 1842. Forty years afterwards, when Holyoake was an oldish man, a good deal over sixty, the worst outbreak of bigotry in modern England raged round the "Atheist" Bradlaugh, who was forced into a tremendous battle against the most terrible odds. Bradlaugh was victorious in the end, but the struggle killed him. It sapped his titanic strength, and left him only a few years' service as a legislator. Bradlaugh has been dead seventeen years and a half, and the freedom that Holyoake fought for in his early years is not completely won yet. The Blasphemy Laws still exist, and every militant Freethinker remains in peril.

\* \* \*

Lovers of good reading may look forward to a treat in September, or early October. Messrs. Chatto & Windus will then publish Mr. Swinburne's *The Age of Shakespeare*, a volume of prose on the greatest period of English literature.

\* \* \*

Mr. Bernard Shaw (the "George" seems dropped altogether now, at least on title-pages) has issued through the New Age Press, 140 Fleet-street, a reprint, with Preface, of an American article of his, written some thirteen years ago, in reply to Max Nordau's interesting theory, so comforting to nincompoops and dullards, that men of genius are all degenerates, or, as Mr. Shaw puts it, "depraved lunatics." There never was a sillier theory. It is simply putting the cart before the horse, or taking an effect for a cause. Men of genius are more highly strung than ordinary people, and are therefore more liable to nervous disturbance. A man cannot go mad without the brains to do it with; those who haven't the brains merely go "dotty" or imbecile when their day of trouble arrives. Those who believe as we do on this point will enjoy Mr. Shaw's pounding of Max Nordau; though finally doubting, perhaps, whether he was worth all the trouble. Mr. Shaw's new Preface is delightful reading, besides incidentally showing how much better he writes now than he did thirteen years ago, as well as the vein of moral sanity which underlies his sparkling and sometimes fantastic social criticism. The last four pages are particularly good. We have forgotten to say that the title of the reprint is *The Sanity of Art*, and the price is one shilling.

#### WHAT AN INFIDEL DID!

Walt Whitman, the great-hearted American poet, made his home for four years in a small garret in Washington. Here he lived on the simplest fare, earning what he could as a newspaper correspondent, and spending every spare moment in the soldiers' hospitals. See him enter the wards with cheerful face and hands full of flowers, laying them on the beds as he passes with a smile or a kind word. Every sad, wearied face brightens as he passes. He sits for hours by the wounded, writing letters and receiving farewell messages. Dying men pass away in his arms, soothed and comforted by his presence, when their need was sorest. Four long years of this incessant battle with death and disease broke his magnificent health, and the icy touch of paralysis chilled his blood. This grandly-moulded man, who, in his prime, was an ideal of manly beauty, had become a lifelong invalid in the service of his suffering fellows. Truly his life was his most beautiful poem. In the world's great antiphon there are many sweeter, many nobler singers than this great American Freethinker; but those who have caught the undertone of his free and fearless verse recognise within it the deepest message known to the sons of men. Whitman is one of the heralds of the dawn. Raising our tired eyes towards the everlasting hills, we see the mists are riven, and through the orange light of widening morn we behold the dawn of that fair and glad some day when the world will be one country and to do good the only religion.

M.

#### The Bird of Freedom.

THE cage-birds caught a fledgling eagle once,  
And in the ear of every passing dunce [cried,  
They chirped and chattered. "See," at length they  
"A songless monster, and nought else beside."

They penned him most unfairly—fettered so  
That he could barely waddle to and fro;  
Then down each market-way and sacred grove  
Proclaimed his advent—even 'fore great Jove.

"Behold thy eagle. The ungainly fowl  
Had reason in retirement—a very owl.  
The fable of his high aspiring flight  
But ill befits this clumsy acolyte.

His voice is most obscene. His cumbrous throat  
Fellows the sin-got color of his coat.  
Was never seen a more unwholesome beast,  
In naked truth."

Thus—thus the din increased. [glamor,  
They flocked and gathered 'neath the moon's cold  
At dawn of day redoubling their mad clamor,  
Till such a twittering discord ne'er was heard  
In motley slander of a royal bird.

The sun, meanwhile, from his horizon rolled  
And swung midway his globe of shimmering gold;  
So had the captive perished soon or late  
And my unworthy song had shared his fate.

But he, most potent of the gods, looked forth  
Upon the shallow tumult—flinging in wrath  
His cloud before his face—sent his quick shaft.  
The cage flew wide, and loud the storm-king laughed,  
Even to tearfulness, as 'twere, to see  
Our bird of freedom shake his trammels free,  
Whirling from every feather such sweet song  
To every billow of far-reaching heaven  
That silence fell on all the slavish throng—  
Hushed every hymn of field and forest even,  
As upward beating to the eye of day  
Beyond their view, he winnowed his proud way  
Amid the sunlit vapors of the sky.

And Jove—great Jove—with ever-beaming eye,  
Yet 'neath a thund'rous brow, from his high seat  
Stretched forth his arm, 'tis said, as 'twere to greet  
His winged favorite. "Henceforth," spake he,  
"One only song shall live o'er earth and sea,  
And wide through heaven, thy song of Liberty!"

G. W.

#### Correspondence.

##### ETHICISTS AND SECULARISTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your favorable notice of my *Faith in Man* you speak somewhat unkindly of my "affected ignorance of the Secularist movement." The truth is that I could not possibly acknowledge all that I owed to various movements—Secularist, Rationalist, Comtist, and so on. It is even possible that I learned the phrase "social salvation" in the days when I was a member of the National Secular Society and a great admirer of Ingersoll.

After all, the main thing is that two such movements as the Secularist and the Ethical movement should be fundamentally agreed on the great problems of life and existence.

GUSTAV SPILLER.

#### Obituary.

LAST Saturday, Hannah Eliza Moore, aged 84, wife of G. W. Moore, was laid to rest in Burnley Cemetery. Mr. H. S. Wishart, who had been very hurriedly informed, conducted the ceremony. Mrs. Moore had been the strong supporter of militant Atheism and advanced movements along with her husband. A family of four, with the youngest 9 months' old, is left; and a sad feature is that it was Mr. Moore who, with his wife's help, had just arranged for Mr. Wishart to pay a regular visit to Burnley.

**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, F. A. Davies; 6.15, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Charles Bradlaugh as I Knew Him." Brockwell Park, 3.15, F. R. Theakstone; 6.15, W. J. Ramsey.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, J. W. Marshall, "Clinging to the Cross."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 6.15, Free-thought Demonstration. Addresses by Messrs. G. W. Foote, C. Cohen, and F. A. Davies.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, A. Allison, "Frauds of Christian Socialism."

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.**

BOLTON: Town Hall Square, Monday, July 27, at 7.30, T. Dearden, "How Did Christ Die?"

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 2.30, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S.: Corner of Shiel-road and Boaler-street, Thursday, July 23, at 8, Sidney Wollen, "His Satanic Majesty." Sunday, July 26, at 3, "God's Heavenly Poultry"; 7, "The Folly of Religious Belief."

WIGAN: Market Steps, Wednesday, July 29, at 7.30, T. Dearden, "The Crucifixion of Christ."

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

WIGAN: Sunday, July 26, Market Steps, at 11, "False Faith, Helpless Hope, and Cursed Charity"; 3, "God Condemned by His Works"; 7, "What Would Jesus Do in Wigan?"

BURY: Tuesday, July 28, Fair Ground, at 7.30, "The Uselessness of Christ."

BURNLEY: Wednesday, July 29, "The Salvation Army a Fraud."

WARRINGTON: Thursday, July 30, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Beware of the Salvation Army."

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